



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1334 Vienna, 2 September 2021

EU Statement on “Russia’s Ongoing Aggression against Ukraine and Illegal Occupation of Crimea”

Final (1008 words)

1. Madam Chair, we would like to congratulate Ukraine on the successful organisation of the International Crimea Platform Summit held in Kyiv last week and the adoption of the Joint Declaration, supported by 43 participants, including the EU and its Member States. Regrettably, the 30th anniversary of Ukraine’s independence, marked on 24 August, was tarnished by the fact that Russia, over seven years ago, illegally annexed the Ukrainian peninsula of Crimea. Our policy is clear, and was outlined by the President of the European Council Mr Charles Michel at the Summit: independence means sovereignty; and it means territorial integrity within internationally recognized borders. We therefore reaffirm the EU's unwavering stance: we do not and will not recognize the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol by Russia. We will continue to staunchly enforce our non-recognition policy. And we will stand tall against any violations of international law. The International Crimea Platform has therefore our utmost political support.
2. The Summit did however not only display the steadfast support of the international community to the territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders, but it was also a vivid reminder to the Russian Federation to comply with its obligations under international humanitarian law. This includes the need to stop all violations and abuses of human rights of Crimea residents and to provide full and unimpeded access to Crimea for international monitoring mechanisms, including the OSCE SMM, as per its mandate.
3. We welcome the fact that Ambassador Kinnunen attended his first TCG as the new Special Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office in Ukraine last week. We assure

him our full support in his important task in seeking and finding solutions for a peaceful settlement of the conflict. We are pleased that during the TCG meeting last week the participants of the political working group were able to engage in formal consultations on the development of an action plan in full compliance with the Minsk agreements during its last meeting. However, at the same time we regret that discussions in the humanitarian working group have stalled due to controversy over a new expert appointment, hindering discussions on important issues such as exchange of detainees and the freedom of movement across the contact line. We join Ambassador Kinnunen in calling on the participants to be responsible and seek a swift way out of this impasse.

4. We note with concern that the security situation is fragile with about 180 ceasefire violations per day during August, as reported by the SMM, as well as increasing numbers of civilian casualties and damage to civilian infrastructure. In this context, we regret that the vicinity of the disengagement areas near Zolote and Petrivske have become hotspots for ceasefire violations. The disengagement areas came about as an important confidence building measure in order to build trust for a comprehensive ceasefire. We are equally saddened by the events on the morning of 28 August when the government-controlled city of Avdiivka was targeted by heavy artillery shelling by weapons prohibited by the Minsk Agreements. This resulted in damage to civilian infrastructure and wounded several Ukrainian servicemen.
5. The safety and security of the SMM is our top priority. We therefore regret that an SMM patrol experienced ongoing fire close to its vicinity in the eastern part of Krasnohorivka last week. We are also concerned that there is a narrowing corridor for the SMM in its freedom of movement in the non-government controlled areas, especially close to the Ukraine-Russia border. We urge Russia to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs in order to lift the impediments to the SMM's work. We also call on the sides to give all the security guarantees so that the mission can carry out its monitoring without impediments. In this regard, we hope that the long-range UAVs flights will resume as soon as possible.
6. We deplore the continued militarisation of the Crimean peninsula, as well as further attempts to restrict freedom of navigation through the Kerch strait including to and from the Sea of Azov. We are also concerned about the new legislation imposed by the de-

facto authorities whereby only Russian citizens are allowed to own land in assigned “border areas” of the peninsula. This legislation and all other violations of international law have the potential to destabilise the security situation, not only in Ukraine, but also in the Black Sea and for the region as a whole.

7. The EU remains firm in its call on all sides to swiftly and fully implement the Minsk agreements and honour their commitments in full in order to achieve a sustainable political solution to the conflict in line with the OSCE principles and commitments. We call on Russia to fully assume its responsibility in this regard and to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs to meet the Minsk commitments in full. Respect for these principles and commitments must be restored. We again call on Russia to immediately stop fuelling the conflict by providing financial and military support to the armed formations, and we remain deeply concerned about the presence of Russian military equipment and personnel in areas held by Russia-backed armed formations. The duration of the European Union’s sanctions against Russia is linked to the complete implementation of the Minsk agreements.
8. The EU recalls its unwavering support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders, and calls upon Russia to do likewise. We urge Russia to uphold these fundamental principles that it has itself invoked many times and to contribute, by acts and public pronouncements, to stabilising the situation and reversing moves that contravene these principles. We strongly condemn the clear violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity by acts of aggression by the Russian armed forces since February 2014 and the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol to the Russian Federation, which we will not recognise. The European Union will remain committed to fully implement its non-recognition policy, including through restrictive measures.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

* Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.