



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council No. 1337
Vienna, 30 September 2021**

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

1. The ongoing conflict, following Russia’s continuous acts of aggression against Ukraine, continues to pose a threat to the safety, security and well-being of all civilians in the conflict zone. We particularly welcome the SMM thematic report on the gender dimension of its monitoring work. We appreciate the report’s focus on the many contributions women make in reducing tensions and promoting peace by engaging in advocacy, dialogue and training, including within civil society.
2. The report also highlights how women are affected by the conflict. Women and girls comprise about a third of all civilian casualties, many of which occurred in settlements close to the contact line where many inhabitants are elderly. It is sad to read the personal testimonies of how women were killed or injured by mines, UXOs and other explosives when trying to meet their families’ day-to-day needs. We also regret by the fact that women and girls also face more often other security risks such as economic hardships and conflict-related gender-based violence.
3. In addition, the closed entry and exit checkpoints remain a key issue for the civilian population. The majority of persons who want to cross the contact line are women and many are travelling to collect pensions. We regret that, despite the agreed conclusions of the N4 Summit almost 18 months ago, the Zolote and Shchastia checkpoints are still closed on the non-government controlled side. We call on Russia to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs to ensure the opening of these two EECPs, as well as the reopening of all other currently closed EECPs. We urge the sides to work towards improving the humanitarian situation and restoring people-to-people contacts

and economic links and in this vein, we welcome the steps taken by Ukraine to open these EECs and to provide services at these checkpoints for the residents of the non-government controlled areas.

4. The EU deplores the introduction of Russian laws and legislation in Ukrainian territory. We do not recognise the holding of Russian elections in illegally annexed Crimea and we deeply regret the involvement of residents of the non-government controlled territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in Ukraine into these elections. These actions are the latest violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity by Russia. We also regret that the participation of Ukrainian citizens in these elections was facilitated because Russia has issued Russian passports on a massive scale in a simplified and selective manner.
5. Monitoring of the Ukraine-Russia state border is an important requisite of the Minsk agreements and consequently an integral part of a sustainable resolution of this conflict. We are therefore deeply disappointed that Russia, as a party to the conflict and one of the signatories of the Minsk agreements, decided to not agree to an extension of the mandate of the OSCE Border Observation Mission to Gukovo and Donetsk. This happened at a time when the SMM is systematically being denied access to the border areas in non-government controlled areas of Ukraine. It is an unfortunate step back confirming Russia's lack of political will to contribute to the implementation of the Minsk agreements and a peaceful resolution of the conflict.
6. 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.

7. 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 the REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN 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.