



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1274 Vienna, 9 July 2020

EU Statement in response to the Update by the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson in Office in Ukraine and in the Trilateral Contact Group, Ambassador Heidi Grau and to the report by the Chief Monitor of the OSCE SMM to Ukraine, Ambassador Yaşar Halit Çevik

Mr. Chairperson, the European Union warmly welcomes Ambassador Heidi Grau and Ambassador Yaşar Halit Çevik to the Permanent Council. Dear Ambassadors, we wish to express our appreciation and full support for your tireless efforts towards a sustainable peace in Ukraine despite the difficult conditions exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Ambassador Çevik, it is with great concern that we note in your quarterly report that the security situation in eastern Ukraine remains volatile and that the number of average ceasefire violations is high with spikes of violence also occurring near populated areas. We deeply regret the high number of civilian and military fatal casualties. In the last three months, the SMM has reported 26 civilian casualties, including six children, with the first half of May showing the highest spike in reports of civilian casualties in the last two years. In addition, the security incidents near the Donetsk Filtration Station are worrying, given that about 380,000 civilians depend on its potable water supply. We also note with concern the increase of military and military-type presence inside and outside the security zone on both sides of the contact line in Donetsk and Luhansk regions and a significant increase in the number of individuals inside the Zolote and Petrivske disengagement areas during evening and

night hours, as well as reports on the renewed fortification works by Russia-backed armed formations inside Petrivske disengagement area.

It is also highly concerning to hear from you, Ambassador Çevik, that the restrictions on the freedom of movement of the SMM in the non-government controlled areas, introduced under the pretext of the Covid-19 pandemic, are constraining SMM's ability to implement its mandate. It is absolutely unacceptable that the Russian-backed armed formations are hindering the SMM from travelling without undue restrictions across the contact line, as it hampers the work of the mission to the extent that sustaining operations in non-government controlled areas could soon become impossible. We also note that similar restrictions seem not to be imposed on the segment of the Ukraine-Russia state border that is currently not under control of the Ukrainian government. The EU calls on Russia to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs in order to ensure that the mandate of the SMM is respected.

In addition, as depicted in your report, Ambassador Çevik, there are also other violations of the SMM's mandate. Signal interference and small-arms fire on SMM's technical equipment are reducing the SMM's ability to effectively conduct monitoring, including in the disengagement areas. We regret the deliberate destruction of SMM cameras and note that there were four incidents only in June. We look forward to a thorough investigation of these incidents with the results reported to the Permanent Council. The presence of mines, UXO and other explosive objects are further restricting the freedom of movement of the SMM. We also note in the report that the SMM has observed a convoy of cargo trucks entering and another one exiting Ukraine on a dirt road near Cheremshyne at night where there is no border crossing infrastructure. It also observed stationary trucks near Hlynka, Stepne and Manych and a cargo train exiting Ukraine near Vyselky. However, when the SMM has approached these areas, the members of the armed formations asked the SMM to leave soon after arrival. We are grateful to the SMM for being able to provide this important reporting, despite the restrictions. We urge the Russian Federation to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs in order to make sure that all undue restrictions of the SMM are removed.

All of these security incidents are occurring notwithstanding the commitment to a full and comprehensive ceasefire adopted in the Trilateral Contact Group in December 2019 in line with the conclusions of the Normandy Summit in Paris on 9 December. We urge the sides to recommit to the ceasefire and welcome the UN Security Council Resolution 2532 (2020) on COVID-19, expressing its support for the Secretary-General Guterres' appeal for a global ceasefire amid the pandemic.

Ambassador Grau, we take note of the constructive discussions within the TCG during the last meetings under your firm leadership. We hope to see tangible progress soon in areas such as agreeing on a simultaneous re-opening of the remaining temporarily closed entry-exit crossing points, an updated demining plan and another release and exchange of conflict-related detainees. In this context, we commend the political will and constructive approach by Ukraine on the settlement of this conflict.

As a signatory of the Minsk agreements, Russia has accepted its responsibility for a sustainable political settlement of the conflict and the implementation of the provisions of these agreements. We urge the Russian Federation to assume this responsibility by acting constructively within the Trilateral Contact Group and the Normandy format. We remind Russia that the recently prolonged EU economic sanctions targeting specific economic sectors of the Russian Federation are linked to Russia's full implementation of the Minsk agreements.

The European Union does not recognise the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol by the Russian Federation, and, therefore, condemns the voting procedures on amendments to the constitution of the Russian Federation concluded on 1 July 2020 that took place in the Crimean peninsula, in violation of international law. The EU deplores the participation in the voting procedures of residents of the non-government controlled areas of Ukraine, to whom Russian passports have been selectively issued in a simplified procedure, in disregard of the spirit of the Minsk agreements.

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 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 economic sanctions against Russia is linked to the complete implementation of the Minsk agreements.

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*, the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

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