



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council N°1099
Vienna, 5 May 2016**

**EU Statement on "Russia's Ongoing Aggression against
Ukraine and Illegal Occupation of Crimea"**

The European Union welcomes the commitment made in Minsk by all sides on 29 April to fully respect the ceasefire as of Saturday before the Easter celebrations throughout Ukraine. While the violence appears to have abated with a lower number of observed ceasefire violations, the situation remains very fragile. We call for effective and immediate steps to fully disengage, de-escalate and consolidate a strict ceasefire. All Minsk-regulated weapons must be unconditionally and verifiably withdrawn and the SMM must have full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine without further delay. These are necessary steps in order to advance a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments.

We reiterate our call on the sides in the Trilateral Contact Group and its working groups to agree on concrete steps that advance the full implementation of the Minsk agreements. This includes the disengagement proposal put forth by the Chief Monitor and agreeing on the modalities of local elections in certain parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in accordance with Ukrainian legislation, OSCE standards and monitored by ODIHR. We reiterate our firm position that established conditions for ODIHR monitoring, including ensuring security and access, must be met. We welcome the planned Foreign Ministers' meeting on 11 May in the Normandy Format and hope it will ensure progress to this end.

We are disappointed that the envisaged exchange of prisoners could not be agreed during the last Humanitarian working group meeting. We therefore reiterate our call for the release of prisoners in an all for all exchange at the earliest opportunity.

We remain firm in our call on all sides to swiftly and fully implement the Minsk agreements and honour their commitments. In this regard, we underline Russia's responsibility and also yet again call on Russia to use its considerable influence over the separatists it backs to meet those commitments in full. We also again call on Russia to immediately stop providing financial and military support to the separatists. The duration of the European Union's economic sanctions against Russia is linked to the complete implementation of the Minsk agreements. While we commend the renewed commitment to the ceasefire which has resulted in a significant decrease in violence, we call on all sides to ensure it is fully respected. We call for the complete withdrawal of all foreign armed formations, military equipment, and mercenaries from the territory of Ukraine, the return of Ukrainian control over its state border, and safe access and provisions for humanitarian aid to people in need. We reiterate our deep concern about information on the presence of Russian military equipment and personnel in separatist-held areas.

Mr Chair, the European Union recalls its unwavering support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine, and calls upon Russia to do likewise. We urge Russia to recognise these fundamental principles that it has itself invoked many times, to contribute, by acts and public pronouncements, to stabilise the situation and to reverse moves that contravene these principles. We reiterate our strong condemnation of the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol to the Russian Federation and we will not recognise it.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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