



**EUROPEAN COUNCIL**

**Brussels, 6 March 2014**

**Statement of the Heads of State or Government on Ukraine**

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1. We met today with the Prime Minister of Ukraine Arseniy Yatseniuk who informed us about the situation in his country. We applaud the courage and resilience shown by the Ukrainian people these last months and weeks.
2. We endorse the conclusions adopted by the Council on 3 March. We strongly condemn the unprovoked violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity by the Russian Federation and call on the Russian Federation to immediately withdraw its armed forces to the areas of their permanent stationing, in accordance with the relevant agreements. We call on the Russian Federation to enable immediate access for international monitors. The solution to the crisis in Ukraine must be based on the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine, as well as the strict adherence to international standards. We consider that the decision by the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea to hold a referendum on the future status of the territory is contrary to the Ukrainian Constitution and therefore illegal.

3. The European Union has important relations with Ukraine and the Russian Federation and stands ready to engage in a frank and open dialogue with them. It has a special responsibility for peace, stability and prosperity in Europe. We will pursue these objectives using all available channels and ask the EU representatives to take all necessary initiatives. The European Union will also participate in the multilateral mechanism (contact/coordination group) being prepared to deescalate the situation which should have as its objectives inter alia to build confidence between the parties, watch over the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the country, protect all citizens against intimidations, watch over the rights of minorities, help to prepare free and fair elections, and monitor implementation of agreements and commitments.
4. The European Union's and the Russian Federation's common objective of a relationship based on mutual interest and respect of international obligations needs to be promptly restored. It would be a matter of great regret if the Russian Federation failed to work in that direction, and in particular if it continued to refuse to participate in a productive dialogue with the Government of Ukraine. We have today decided to take actions, including those envisaged by the Council on 3 March, notably to suspend bilateral talks with the Russian Federation on visa matters as well as talks with the Russian Federation on the New Agreement. We support the decision of the European Members of the G8 and the EU institutions to suspend their participation in G8 Summit preparations until further notice.
5. The solution to the crisis should be found through negotiations between the Governments of Ukraine and the Russian Federation, including through potential multilateral mechanisms. Such negotiations need to start within the next few days and produce results within a limited timeframe. In the absence of such results the European Union will decide on additional measures, such as travel bans, asset freezes and the cancellation of the EU-Russia summit. The Commission and the EEAS will take forward preparatory work on these measures.  
  
Any further steps by the Russian Federation to destabilise the situation in Ukraine would lead to additional and far reaching consequences for relations in a broad range of economic areas between the European Union and its Member States, on the one hand, and the Russian Federation, on the other hand.

6. The European Union commends the measured response shown so far by the new Ukrainian government. We encourage the Ukrainian authorities, through an inclusive process, to pursue their efforts to ensure free and fair elections, to advance constitutional reform and to investigate all acts of violence. Efforts should continue to reach out to all Ukrainian regions and population groups and to ensure full protection of the rights of people belonging to national minorities, drawing on the expertise of the Council of Europe and the OSCE.
7. We stand by Ukraine and commit to provide it with strong financial backing. We welcome the presentation of the comprehensive assistance package by the Commission and task all relevant Council bodies to process it rapidly. IMF support will be critical to unlocking assistance from the European Union. The immediate priority is to restore macroeconomic stability through sound fiscal, monetary and exchange rate policies. At the same time, we call on the government to launch urgently an ambitious set of structural reforms, including to fight corruption, enhance transparency. We welcome the Council decision to freeze and recover assets of persons identified as responsible for the misappropriation of State funds. We are also prepared to respond immediately to humanitarian assistance requests.
8. The European Union and Ukraine have already taken an important step in deepening our relation by the initialling of the Association Agreement, including a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area. We reiterate the European Union's commitment to signing the Association Agreement, including a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area. As a matter of priority, we will sign very shortly all the political chapters. The European Union intends to adopt unilateral measures which would allow Ukraine to benefit substantially from the advantages offered in the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area. Such measures would entail an offer to apply provisions related to the import of goods by reducing tariffs and opening tariff rate quotas by so called autonomous trade measures.
9. The European Union reiterates its commitment to enhance people to people contacts between the citizens of the European Union and Ukraine, i.a. through the visa liberalisation process, in line with agreed conditions in the framework of the Visa Liberalisation Action Plan.

10. Energy and energy security are an important part of the Union's external relations. We will continue our efforts to ensure security of supply. We also call for the effective and consistent implementation of the Third Energy Package by all players in the European energy market. The European Union also stands ready to assist Ukraine in securing its energy supply through further diversification, enhanced energy efficiency, and effective interconnections with the European Union.
11. The European Union expresses its objective to further strengthen the political association and economic integration with Georgia and the Republic of Moldova. We confirm our aim to sign the Association Agreements, including the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas, which we initialled in Vilnius last November, no later than at the end of August 2014.

