

Donald Tusk, President, European Council

Jean-Claude Juncker, President, European Commission

Federica Mogherini, Vice-President of the European Commission, High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

Antonio Tajani, President, European Parliament

Johannes Hahn, European Commissioner for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations

Angela Merkel, Chancellor of Germany

Sigmar Gabriel, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Germany

François Hollande, President of France

Jean-Marc Ayrault, Minister of Foreign Affairs, France

Ministers of Foreign Affairs, EU Member States

António Guterres, Secretary-General, United Nations

Lamberto Zannier, Secretary General, Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)

Sebastian Kurz, OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Foreign Minister, Austria

Christine Muttunen, President, OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General, Council of Europe

Pedro Agramunt, President, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Petro Poroshenko, President, Ukraine

Volodymyr Groysman, Prime Minister, Ukraine

Andriy Parubiy, Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada, Ukraine

Pavlo Klimkin, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ukraine

1 February 2017

**Statement by the Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum
on the Escalation of the Conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine
by the Russian Federation**

The Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum expresses its deep concern with regard to the intensification of Russian sponsored separatist forces in the Donbas region of Ukraine and urges international community not to remain silent.

During the past few days the Russian forces have carried out large-scale military attack across the frontline using all kinds of available weapons, including the ones prohibited by the Minsk Agreements. The number of casualties among Ukrainian armed forces is growing every day.

Civilians suffer from heavy shelling of the residential areas. The towns of Yasinovataya and Avdiyivka with more than 400,000 civilians in the area have been left without electricity, water supply and central heating, while the temperature outside reaches 15 degrees below zero Celsius.

The abovementioned actions of the Kremlin should be qualified as a war crime, a blatant violation of the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, “extensive destruction and appropriation of property, not justified by military necessity and carried out unlawfully and wantonly”. The Russian Federation once again demonstrates grave disregard of international law and peace.

The current escalation in Donbas indicates that the Russian Federation continues to flagrantly ignore its obligations under the Minsk Agreements by actively destabilizing the situation and undermining any progress in the field of security and humanitarian protection.

We demand that the Russian Federation ceases hostilities immediately and complies strictly with the ceasefire.

We call on the EU institutions and international partners to strengthen political and diplomatic pressure on the Kremlin in order to stop the dangerous escalation in Donbas and to avoid a humanitarian catastrophe in the region.

We urge the EU Member States and EU institutions to increase the pressure and enhance the sanctions against Russia.

We call on the international partners and EU institutions to develop efficient policies on conflict prevention and resolution in the Eastern Partnership region.

Members of the Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum