

# UK statement on Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine

I fully agree with the statement just made by the European Union and allow me to add a few additional points. This week, as Ambassador Cevik prepares to report to our colleagues in the Permanent Council tomorrow, I would like to focus on the importance of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission.

The SMM are the eyes and ears of the international community – their impartial, facts-based reporting is vital in updating us on the security situation on the ground and enabling us to identify emerging trends.

For example, the UK is concerned by SMM reporting for the last few weeks which has shown increasing ceasefire violations inside the Petrivske disengagement area, and the repeated presence of members of the Russia-backed armed formations inside the area, sometimes bearing weapons.

Yet all too often, the SMM is obstructed in its vital work. To return to the example of Petrivske – from the 21st January, the Russia-backed armed formations hindered SMM ground monitoring in the area and denied SMM patrols access to the Mission's camera there for six consecutive days. SMM UAV flights over the area have been repeatedly subject to signal jamming.

This clearly illustrates the importance of asking ourselves, not just where is the SMM being hindered, but by whom and why.

The UK condemns the persistent interference with the SMM's cameras and UAVs, and the obstructions of SMM patrols – the vast majority of which are the work of the Russia-backed armed formations. The SMM must have full, safe and unhindered access throughout Ukraine, in accordance with their mandate, which covers Crimea and the entire length of the Ukraine-Russia State border. We underline Russia's particular responsibility in this regard, and call on them to use their influence over the armed formations they back to end restrictions like the ones we've seen in Petrivske.

Let me reiterate the UK's resolute support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders, including its territorial waters. We firmly denounce Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine, including its illegal annexation of Crimea, which we do not and will not recognise and its instigation of conflict in eastern Ukraine. We call on Russia to end their illegal annexation of Crimea, and to fully implement their obligations under the Minsk agreements. The UK, together with our international partners, will continue to exert pressure on the Russian Federation to return to full respect of international law and OSCE principles and commitments, including through the use of restrictive measures.