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## **Statement on the escalation of the war on the east of Ukraine and massive build-up of Russian troops along the Ukrainian border**

Since the beginning of March, the Russian Federation and terrorist groups of pro-Russian separatists have been constantly violating the ceasefire in the war in the eastern Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine, established 27<sup>th</sup> of July, 2020. After the unilateral break of the truce by the pro-Russian separatists, 28 Ukrainian soldiers have died, including 9, died in April. These losses add to the 44 thousand of conflict-related casualties, including 13,300 killed in eastern Ukraine since it began in 2014. Together with continuous provocations of representatives of the Russian-controlled separatists in the Trilateral Contact Group, ignoring of the OSCE meetings and avoiding fulfilling any of the obligations laid down under the Minsk Agreements by the Russian Federation have led the negotiations to deadlock.

At the same time with escalating the war in eastern Ukraine, the Russian Federation is amassing thousands of its troops close to the Ukrainian border and on the annexed Crimean Peninsula. Troops being transferred to Ukraine's borders from western and central Russia, including artillery from as far away as Siberia. These forces are complemented by 42 thousand troops accumulated by the Russian Federation since the occupation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014. Along with more than 10 navy vessels, including landing boats and artillery warships that are being moved from the Caspian Sea to the Black Sea under the guise of so-called military exercises, huge Russian military presence near the Ukrainian borders and on the occupied territories of Ukraine poses a serious threat to the military security of Ukraine.

Along with the accumulation and threatening maneuvers of its troops along the border with Ukraine and in the occupied territories of Ukraine, the Russian Federation continues to use threats and disinformation as a tool of its hybrid war against Ukraine and its Western allies. Thus, pro-Kremlin media are presenting Ukraine as a Nazi/Fascist aggressor, committed genocide of



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Russians in Donbass, and claiming that Ukraine is not even a state. Such serious accusations are unfounded and completely undermine the credibility of the Russian media and its politicians who support and disseminate these unacceptable narratives. Statements by the top Russian authorities that any attempt by Ukraine to use its troops to resolve the conflict in the east of the country would force Russia to protect its citizens and will put an end to Ukraine should be taken as a direct threat of the Russian military intervention to Ukraine.

YEPP urge the Russian Federation to stop escalating the war and breaking ceasefire in eastern Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine and to immediately withdraw its troops from the Ukrainian borders as well as to start fully respect the principles of, and obligations laid down under, international law and immediately start the process of de-occupation of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine as well as the Crimean Peninsula. We also call on the European Union and NATO Member States to keep close attention on the massive build-up of the Russian troops along the Ukrainian borders and to provide all possible support and assistance to Ukraine.

YEPP calls upon the European Parliament to make a statement condemning the massive build-up of the Russian troops along the Ukrainian borders as well as in occupied territories of Ukraine and to consider the possibility of implementing additional sanctions against the Russian Federation.