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**TEXTS ADOPTED**

*Provisional edition*

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**P8\_TA-PROV(2015)0232**

**The strategic military situation in the Black Sea Basin following the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia**

**European Parliament resolution of 11 June 2015 on the strategic military situation in the Black Sea Basin following the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia (2015/2036(INI))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Ukraine, in particular its resolution of 15 January 2015<sup>1</sup>,
- having regard to its resolutions of 12 September 2013 on the maritime dimension of the Common Security and Defence Policy<sup>2</sup>, of 12 September 2012 on the Annual Report from the Council to the European Parliament on the Common Foreign and Security Policy<sup>3</sup>, of 3 July 2012 on the trade aspects of the Eastern Partnership<sup>4</sup> and of 14 December 2011 on the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy<sup>5</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 20 January 2011 on an EU Strategy for the Black Sea<sup>6</sup>,
- having regard to the EU Council conclusions of 17 March 2014, 21 March 2014 and 18 December 2014,
- having regard to the Council's (Foreign Affairs) conclusions on Ukraine of 17 November 2014 and 29 January 2015,
- having regard to the latest declarations of the Foreign Affairs Council of 9 February 2015 and 16 March 2015,
- having regard to the EU's Association Agreements with Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia,

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<sup>1</sup> Texts adopted, P8\_TA(2015)0011.

<sup>2</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2013)0380.

<sup>3</sup> OJ C 353 E, 3.12.2013, p. 77.

<sup>4</sup> OJ C 349 E, 29.11.2013, p. 38.

<sup>5</sup> OJ C 168 E, 14.6.2013, p. 26.

<sup>6</sup> OJ C 136 E, 11.5.2012, p. 81

- having regard to its previous resolutions on the Russian Federation, with particular reference to its resolution of 13 March 2014 on the invasion of Ukraine by Russia<sup>1</sup>, of 17 April 2014 on Russian pressure on Eastern Partnership countries and in particular destabilisation of eastern Ukraine<sup>2</sup> and of 18 September 2014 on the situation in Ukraine and the state of play of EU-Russia relations<sup>3</sup>,
  - having regard to the Wales NATO Summit Declaration of 5 September 2014,
  - having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure,
  - having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (A8-0171/2015),
- A. whereas the Black Sea Basin is one of the world's most strategic regions, of key importance to the EU and its Member States, in particular with regard to ensuring their security and defence, and to the EU Neighbourhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership; whereas the importance of strengthened cooperation between the European Union and the countries of the region was recognised by Black Sea Synergy – the EU's regional policy launched in 2008; whereas all existing protracted conflicts in the Republic of Moldova (Transnistria), Georgia (South Ossetia and Abkhazia) and Nagorno-Karabakh are located in the Black Sea Basin;
  - B. whereas the Black Sea Basin is a very important external border of the European Union;
  - C. whereas the European Council has strongly condemned the Russian Federation's annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol – in violation of the UN Charter, the Charter of Paris and the OSCE Helsinki Final Act, and in violation as well of Russia's obligations under the 1994 Budapest Memorandum – and will not recognise it; whereas Russia has acted to destabilise the situation in the east of Ukraine; whereas restrictions on trade between the EU and Crimea have been imposed as a consequence;
  - D. whereas NATO has condemned the Russian Federation's military escalation in Crimea, its illegal and illegitimate annexation of Crimea and its continued and deliberate destabilisation of eastern Ukraine in violation of international law;
  - E. whereas the military balance in the Black Sea Basin has shifted following the illegal annexation of Crimea, with Russia now unlawfully controlling hundreds of kilometres of the Crimean coastline and the adjacent waters facing NATO and EU maritime borders; whereas Russia has fuelled aggressive actions on Ukrainian territory;
  - F. whereas prior to the illegal annexation, Russian land and air forces in Crimea were minimal and concerned mainly with the defence of Sevastopol – main base of the Russian Black Sea Fleet – and two adjacent naval bases; whereas the annexation of Crimea has seriously weakened the armed forces of Ukraine, affecting in particular its navy which was taken over by Russian troops; whereas through a military build-up in Crimea and in the Black Sea Basin following the annexation, Russia has moved to create an offensive joint striking force comprising the navy and land and air forces;
  - G. whereas Russia has accelerated the expansion and modernisation of the Black Sea Fleet following the annexation; whereas the Black Sea Fleet modernisation plan is one of the

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<sup>1</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2014)0248.

<sup>2</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2014)0457.

<sup>3</sup> Texts adopted, P8\_TA(2014)0025.

most ambitious parts of the Russian State Arms Procurement programme for 2011-2020; whereas in December 2014 the Russian Government approved a new military doctrine which considers NATO as a main security threat to Russia;

- H. whereas in 2007 Russia suspended its participation in the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE); whereas on 11 March 2015 Russia ceased its participation in the Joint Consultative Group within the framework of the CFE and, as a result, has fully withdrawn from the Treaty;
- I. whereas Turkey is an EU candidate country, a NATO ally, a naval power, an active regional foreign policy player and a key partner for the EU, not least in matters concerning energy and border security; whereas Turkey's strategic location is also of high relevance to the other major threat facing both NATO and the EU, the self-proclaimed Daesh (Islamic State); whereas Turkey can play an important role in countering the Black Sea threats and Daesh; whereas Turkey, despite considering Russia's annexation of Crimea to be illegal, has not yet expressed a clear position on it or on its consequences; whereas Turkey's recent diplomatic stances, in particular with regard to nearby conflicts have left room for ambiguity and have not been consistent with the positions of the EU and of NATO; whereas Turkey is a strategic security partner and has an important role to play in the Black Sea region, including as mandated by the terms of the Montreux Convention of 1936;
- J. whereas the reaction of the EU to Russia's aggression towards, and violation of the territorial integrity of, Georgia in 2008 may have encouraged Russia to act in a similar way in Ukraine; whereas the EU, NATO and the US have condemned the "treaties" signed, in November 2014 and March 2015, respectively, between Russia and the separatist authorities in Abkhazia and in South Ossetia, and have reaffirmed their support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia; whereas these "treaties" violate the fundamental principles of international law as well as Russia's international commitments, including those taken under the Ceasefire Agreement of 12 August 2008;
- K. whereas since the occupation by Russian forces, Abkhazia, the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, and – most lately – Crimea have been the scenes of human rights abuses; whereas in Crimea the human rights abuses are affecting minority groups and opponents of Russian occupation, in particular the indigenous Crimean Tatars, pro-Ukrainian and civil society activists, and people wishing to retain their Ukrainian citizenship;

### ***Change in the strategic and security landscape of the Black Sea***

1. Firmly supports the non-recognition of Russia's annexation of Crimea; reiterates its commitment to the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations, in particular its Article 2; fully supports the European Council's conclusions that the EU will not recognise the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol; stresses that the annexation also violates the 1997 Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership between Ukraine and the Russian Federation; emphasises the need for the EU and its Member States to speak with one, united voice on EU relations with Russia;
2. Notes with concern that the illegal annexation of Crimea has precipitated a significant change in the strategic landscape of the Black Sea Basin and the adjacent area; considers that the aggressive actions of Russia represent its return to a hostile, block-to-block type approach; warns that by occupying the entire peninsula, Russia has gained a very

important launching pad facing both west (the Balkans, Transnistria and the Danube Mouths) and south (the Eastern Mediterranean), where it has established a permanent naval task force, and that the illegal annexation of Crimea offers Russia a 'southern Kaliningrad', another outpost directly bordering on NATO;

3. Believes that the change in the geostrategic landscape, the evolving military situation in the Black Sea Basin and the forceful annexation of Crimea by Russia are indicative of broader and systemic challenges to the post-Cold War, norms-based European security architecture; believes that the EU and the Member States must have a security response to these challenges and reconsider their foreign and security policies in light of this, which must be reflected in a reviewed European Security Strategy, in the European Maritime Security Strategy and in the EU Strategy for the Black Sea; is concerned about the intensified Russian pressure on the EU eastern border, including on Romania, Poland and the Baltic States, which represents a major risk;
4. Stresses that the EU should strengthen its own resilience and respond to the challenge of weaponised information and information security; welcomes the Council decision of 19-20 March 2015 regarding the launching of a project to counteract Russian propaganda and which includes the financing of several Russian-language TV channels;
5. Is deeply concerned about Russia's current defensive and offensive military build-up in the Black Sea, and the planned expansion and modernisation of Russia's Black Sea Fleet, involving the addition of six new modern diesel submarines of the Rostov-on-Don type and six new frigates of the Admiral Grigorovich type; recalls that the positioning of offensive air force assets, and the upgrading of Crimean military infrastructures, will enhance Russia's offensive military posture as well as its ability to project power beyond its territory;
6. Notes with concern Russia's continuous military build-up in the occupied Abkhazia and Tskhinvali/South Ossetia regions of Georgia; notes that this military infrastructure of both defensive and offensive character, with its wide operational range, poses a serious threat to the whole Black Sea region;
7. Notes with concern that Russia has bolstered its air and naval defences in the Black Sea Basin considerably, deploying new naval defence (anti-ship) missiles (with a range of 600 km, able to reach the Bosphorus) and ensuring that Russian fighter planes control about three quarters of the Black Sea Basin airspace (by practically tripling the number of airports in Crimea); notes, in this regard, that Russia has bolstered its capabilities in both strategic and tactical terms: strategically, long-range bombers, capable of carrying cruise missiles, and reconnaissance aviation operating close to the western shores of the Black Sea, have the potential to penetrate deep into Central Europe; tactically, two naval infantry brigades – potentially supported by Mistral-type helicopter carriers – pose a significant potential landing threat; welcomes France's decision to reconsider the delivery of the Mistral amphibious assault ships to Russia and salutes France's negotiations to unequivocally and finally cancel this deal;
8. Is deeply concerned by President Putin's declaration that he was ready to put Russian nuclear forces on alert during Russia's seizure of Crimea, had the West intervened against the annexation; is also deeply concerned by the statements made in a threatening manner by high ranking Russian officials that Russia has the right to deploy and host nuclear weapons in Crimea, which would have global consequences; notes with concern that during a military drill in March 2015, Russia deployed an undisclosed number of strategic

nuclear-capable Tu-22M3 bombers in Crimea; is concerned by the new Russian military doctrine of December 2014 which permits the use of nuclear weapons against a state that does not have such weapons;

9. Notes that potential Russian deployment of dual-capable weapon systems in Crimea place in doubt Russia's good intentions when it comes to achieving progress on the multilateral nuclear disarmament agenda in the forthcoming Non-Proliferation Treaty review, undermining the efforts already made in that direction;
10. Regards the recent close overflights by Russian fighter aircrafts of NATO warships and exploration platforms in the Black Sea as a clear indication of a more aggressive Russian posture in the Black Sea Basin, and warns of a heightened risk of escalation; calls for direct military-to-military lines of communication in order to avoid tragic misunderstandings that could have far-reaching military and security consequences;
11. Is deeply concerned by the extremely serious situation in eastern Ukraine – where war is leading to the destabilisation of Ukraine and the region as a whole – including the possible threat of establishing a land corridor linking Russian territory with Crimea through separatist-controlled territory along the western shore of the Azov Sea (Mariupol), as a result of which Ukraine could be completely cut off from the sea; urges Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova to take measures to prevent the provision of arms and military supplies to the Transnistria region, both by land and by air;
12. Condemns the fact that Russia is providing direct and indirect support to the separatist groups in Ukraine, including in the form of weapons and recruitment, thereby facilitating the continuation of war; is concerned by reports of war crimes committed in the region controlled by Russia-backed separatists, including the shooting down of the civilian passenger plane MH-17, an incident currently under an independent and international investigation; urges Russia to withdraw all its military forces from Ukrainian territory immediately and to adhere to the Minsk Agreements; urges Russia and all parties involved to use their influence to halt hostilities and prevent further war crimes and new victims; reiterates that no amnesty can be given for the war crimes committed;
13. Regrets that the Black Sea regional security cooperation initiatives BLACKSEAFOR and Black Sea Harmony, designed to demonstrate to the outside world that the littoral states can take primary responsibility for their own security while preserving their potential to revive future possible cooperation among these states, are currently paralysed;

### ***Staying firm and communicating with Russia***

14. Underlines that the relationship with Russia, being a major actor in the international system, should, in general, be cooperative rather than confrontational in the long run; is of the view, however, that, in the short and medium term, owing to a lack of trust following Russia's latest actions, any resumption of cooperation must be based, firstly, on the strong strategic reassurance offered by NATO to its eastern members and, secondly, on a change of Russian policy towards Ukraine, in particular the full and unconditional implementation of the Minsk agreements of September 2014 and February 2015 (which apply only to the conflict in eastern Ukraine) and the return of Crimea to Ukraine, thus restoring the status quo ante and the control of the Ukrainian authorities over the country's territory within internationally recognised borders;

15. Expresses hope that the Minsk ceasefire agreement reached on 12 February 2015 will hold and, in so doing, provide the time for a negotiated political solution; is concerned by the numerous indications of violations of the agreement by the Russian side and the separatists; underlines that the current international legal framework must be fully respected;
16. Believes that, in the event that Russia does not fully implement the Minsk ceasefire agreements and continues the destabilisation of eastern Ukraine and the illegal annexation of Crimea, the sanction regime should be continued and strengthened, as well as the support to Ukraine in enhancing its defence capabilities; stresses that the EU must demonstrate unity, solidarity and commitment in sanctioning the Russian actions against the applicable rules of international law;
17. Calls on EU Member States to remain firm and united in their commitment to the agreed sanctions against Russia, also by freezing all military and defence cooperation and by cancelling contracts, such as for the delivery of Mistral class amphibious assault ships to Russia; and looks forward to the successful conclusion of the negotiations to cancel the contract;

#### ***Energy, maritime, border and human security in the Black Sea region***

18. Welcomes the implementation of the EU energy policy aimed at promoting energy security for all Member States; urges the Member States to take the steps needed to reduce their energy dependence and to ensure the security of oil and gas exploitation and transportation activities in the Black Sea region; calls on the EU to sustain initiatives for the diversification of Black Sea energy resources, including through investment and financial measures as part of an energy-independence strategy; calls on the Commission to resume the work towards the construction of the Nabucco gas pipeline; is of the view that a constructive relationship of trust among the neighbouring countries is the best guarantee for the Member States' energy supply;
19. Is concerned that the benefits of oil and gas exploitation and transportation in the Black Sea are increasingly dependent on the level of militarisation triggered by the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia and the subsequent build-up of its capabilities in the area; reaffirms that, given the potential for instability and, in particular, Europe's dependence on the Black Sea for the transit of energy supplies, the EU has a strategic interest in deterring regional actors from brinkmanship and, for that purpose, may need to mobilise European naval and airspace assets to the Black Sea; appeals to the Member States to take the steps needed to guarantee the security of exploitation of oil and gas and transportation in the Black Sea region;
20. Underlines that the current crisis affects cooperation in other important fields, such as border management and security (in particular migration control), trafficking and combating organised crime;
21. Condemns the violations of human rights in Crimea that have occurred since the occupation by Russian forces, including intimidation and a growing number of enforced disappearances<sup>1</sup>, censorship of freedom of speech and the persecution of minorities, in particular ethnic and national minorities; condemns the systematic persecution of the native Crimean Tatars who have participated in demonstrations to support Ukrainian

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<sup>1</sup> Within the meaning of Article 7(1)(i) of the Rome Statute (2002).

territorial integrity; recalls that thousands of Crimean Tatars have fled their homeland for fear of persecution and have sought refuge in other regions in Ukraine; expresses solidarity with them and calls urgently for the situation to be improved; calls on the Russian authorities immediately to stop harassing the executive body of Crimean Tatars, the *Mejlis*; calls on Russia to respect fully the human rights of the local population in Crimea, and calls on Ukraine, the EU and its Member States to monitor the respect for human rights in Crimea;

22. Calls for investigations of, and for better access for international human rights monitoring organisations to all cases of serious human rights abuses in Crimea; calls on the Ukrainian Government to use all means at its disposal to investigate and prosecute war crimes committed on its territory; calls on the international community, including the Hague Tribunal, to commence an investigation into the potential crimes committed during the illegal annexation of Crimea and the conflict in eastern Ukraine;
23. Draws attention to the extreme environmental vulnerability of the Black Sea basin; underlines that the growing militarisation of the region poses further risks to this delicate eco-system, and calls for the setting up of an effective incident-prevention mechanism with a reliable system for exchange of information between all the littoral states in the event of an emergency;
24. Recalls that, faced with the Russian hybrid war in Ukraine, the EU must stay united and speak with a single voice; strongly believes that unity is the prerequisite of an effective response to all security threats and political challenges resulting from the mix of Russian military and non-military actions in Ukraine;

#### ***Role of the EU and international actors***

25. Underlines that the Black Sea region should have real priority for the EU; considers that the current Black Sea Synergy (BSS) format is outdated; calls again on the Commission and the EEAS to draw up, as soon as possible, a comprehensive EU Strategy for the Black Sea region; stresses that the provisions of the EU Maritime Security Strategy should also be applied in the case of the Black Sea; calls for a review of the European Security Strategy, and expects that the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy, taking in all relevant programmes covering the region, will bring about increased CSDP cooperation with Black Sea littoral partner states;
26. Stresses that, in spite of the fact that the BSS is practically on hold, effective cooperation with the states in the Black Sea Basin should continue; welcomes the ongoing CSDP missions – the EU Advisory Mission, the EU Monitoring Mission and the EU Border Assistance Mission – as important components of the EU’s contribution to resolve the protracted conflicts in the region; welcomes the efforts of the Member States to enhance the military capabilities of the Black Sea littoral states and thereby increase their potential to respond to crisis situations in the region; considers that EU needs a bold and result-oriented approach, especially in the areas of economics, defence and security, in order to strengthen the EU internally, update and improve existing instruments, and amplify the Union’s reaction capacity to developments in the neighbouring area that affect European security;
27. Stresses the critical importance of coordinating with NATO, in particular with the Black Sea littoral states that are members of the Alliance, and with the United States, as the Black Sea Basin is a key component of Euro-Atlantic security; stresses that modernising

and enhancing the military capabilities of those Black Sea littoral states that are members of EU and NATO is of key importance to ensuring security and stability in the region; welcomes the commitment of NATO to support regional efforts of Black Sea littoral states aimed at ensuring security and stability; underlines the necessity of EU and NATO support for maintaining the Black Sea as an open economic area; calls on the OSCE to enlarge the scope of its efforts with regard to Black Sea security; calls on the EU to support a reinforced OSCE presence and new OSCE initiatives in the region aiming at easing the security situation;

28. Recalls that, particularly in light of the security situation in the Black Sea Basin, all EU Members states need to enjoy the same level of security in line with article 42 (7) TEU;
29. Welcomes the commitment by the NATO member states to collective security and, if necessary, to enact Article 5 of the Washington Treaty; welcomes the NATO Wales Summit decision on strategic reassurance measures and the Readiness Action Plan, important elements for the security of the most-affected NATO member states; calls on NATO to continue to develop its cyber and missile defence capabilities, including in the Black Sea region, and to develop contingency plans for deterring and countering asymmetric and hybrid warfare;
30. Urges the Commission to support the Member States in their efforts to identify solutions for increasing their defence budget to the level of 2 %; welcomes the pledge made by members of NATO during the last NATO Summit in Newport to ensure that their defence spending reaches a minimum of 2 % GDP by 2024; expresses concern over announcements by some allies of their intent to make new cuts in defence spending; recalls, in this context, Article 3 of the Washington Treaty;
31. Recalls that although in 2008 Georgia's and Ukraine's applications to join the NATO Membership Action Plan were not accepted, at the Bucharest Summit NATO declared that Georgia and Ukraine will become members of the Alliance; notes that following the 2008 war in Georgia and the 2014 illegal annexation of Crimea, Russia has territorially crippled the two countries, making them ineligible for NATO membership; considers that, while not being able to defend them directly, NATO has a moral obligation to support Georgia's and Ukraine's ability to defend themselves;
32. Underlines that NATO should preserve its general naval and air superiority in the Black Sea Basin and maintain its capacity to monitor the area;

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33. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the governments and parliaments of the EU Members States and all the Black Sea countries.