

## **Statement by the North Atlantic Council on the so-called referendum in Crimea**

We consider the so-called referendum held on 16 March in Ukraine's Autonomous Republic of Crimea to be both illegal and illegitimate. The referendum violated the Ukrainian Constitution and international law, and Allies do not recognise its results.

Furthermore, the circumstances under which it was held were deeply flawed and therefore unacceptable. This was demonstrated by the rushed nature of the poll under conditions of military intervention and the restrictions on, and the manipulation of, the media, which precluded any possibility of free debate and deliberation and deprived the vote of any credibility.

We urge the Russian Federation to de-escalate the situation, including by ceasing all military activities against Ukraine.

The so-called referendum undermines efforts to find a political solution to the crisis in Ukraine.

We further call upon the Russian Federation to honour all its international commitments, return to the path of dialogue and seek a peaceful, political solution, including through direct dialogue with the government of Ukraine. We therefore urge the Russian Federation not to take any steps to annex Crimea, which would be a clear violation of the United Nations Charter.

NATO Allies reiterate their full support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, and for the principle of the inviolability of its internationally recognized borders.