



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1363 Vienna, 17 March 2022

EU Statement on the Russian Federation's ongoing aggression against Ukraine

1. Mr. Chair, the European Union condemns in the strongest possible terms President Putin's premeditated, unprovoked, unjustified and brutal invasion of an independent and sovereign State. Russia's illegal war of aggression must stop immediately. We stand with Ukraine. This message of support was also conveyed, earlier this week, by the Prime Ministers of three EU Members States, the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovenia, who, in a sign of European solidarity, went to Kyiv to meet President Zelensky and Prime Minister Shmyhal.
2. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine is entering today its fourth week. Three long weeks of terror, devastation and unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe for Ukraine and its people. This week, the Kremlin claimed that "the operation is proceeding in accordance with the original plan and will be completed on time and in full". Despite the fact that, since the start of their military build-up along the Ukrainian border in April 2021, Russian authorities have been lying to the international community that this was not a preparation for an invasion of Ukraine.
3. Since the beginning of President Putin's deliberate war, civilians have been killed daily in indiscriminate attacks conducted by Russian forces, including in and near populated areas. These deliberate attacks directed against civilians and civilian objects, including the indiscriminate and disproportionate use of explosive weapons in populated areas, constitute unacceptable breaches of international humanitarian law and may amount to war crimes. OHCHR has also confirmed the reports of the indiscriminate use by Russia of cluster munitions affecting the civilian population.
4. The humanitarian situation in Ukraine continues to deteriorate rapidly, and in some cities, it is catastrophic. Mariupol remains encircled and under heavy shelling. To

date, at least 2,187 residents are reported killed by the bombings of the Russian forces, including in residential areas. According to ICRC, hundreds of thousands of the city's residents are facing extreme shortages of basic necessities like food, water and medicine. They also lack heating and electricity. We strongly condemn the recent mortar strikes, also near the SMM premises. We reiterate our call for the safe evacuation of all people inside the premises, including the SMM's local staff and the Greek Consul General.

5. Kharkiv, Mykolaiv, Chernihiv, Zhytomyr and many other cities remain under nonstop artillery, mortar, and rocket shelling. Russian troops even bombed a train heading to Kramatorsk to evacuate civilians, killing a train attendant. Last Sunday, Russia, in a further provocative escalation, launched an airstrike on the International Center for Peacekeeping in Lviv, 25 km from the Polish border, which killed 35 people and injured at least 134 people.
6. We call on Russia to fully abide by its obligations under international humanitarian law. It must ensure safe and unhindered humanitarian access to the victims and internally displaced persons in Ukraine, and allow safe passage for those civilians who want to leave. In addition, we deplore that many media actors, from national and international media, have been killed or injured due to the Russian aggression, and we echo the call of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media to ensure their safety.
7. We deplore the indiscriminate attacks of the Russian Armed Forces on several nuclear sites, which put at risk nuclear power plants and other nuclear facilities, posing a serious threat of a major nuclear accident. This is completely unacceptable and extremely worrying. Moreover, because of the infrastructure damage in the country, there is pollution of groundwater and surface water. We also took note of alarming reports regarding high risk for environmental disaster in the Black Sea.
8. People continue to flee Russia's aggression every minute. As of today, more than 3 million people have fled to neighbouring countries and more than 2 million are already internally displaced. According to the UNICEF, 1.5 million children have been forced to flee Ukraine, which means that every second, one Ukrainian child becomes a

refugee. The EU and its Member States are working at all levels to provide humanitarian, medical and financial aid to all refugees and the countries hosting them. We would like to convey our special gratitude to the Republic of Moldova for all its efforts and underscore our readiness to provide continued support in this regard.

9. We strongly condemn that the Russian Armed Forces have kidnapped democratically elected mayors and other local representatives, including in Dniprorudne, and demand their immediate release. We have also seen reports that Russia may also be planning another fake “referendum” at gunpoint in Kherson as well as in other places in Ukraine. It would follow the well-known Russian pattern of persecutions of legitimate authorities’ representatives. Let us be clear: the European Union has never recognised the illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula nor the two illegally self-proclaimed entities of Ukraine. Nor will we ever recognize any other attempt to take over a sovereign State’s territory by force. Russia will be held accountable for its blatant violations of the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act.

10. Mr. Chair, these are only a few examples of the consequences of President Putin’s premeditated, unprovoked, unjustified and brutal invasion of an independent and sovereign State. The UNHCR and WFP guest speakers further illustrated in their interventions those dramatic consequences for Ukraine and at a global scale. This is a war. A planned war. A plan to destroy a sovereign, independent and democratic nation - this is the plan that the Kremlin shamelessly dares to declare that will be completed “on time and in full”. This will not remain without a proper response. Yesterday, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted a decision to expel Russia from the organisation. In addition, the EU welcomes the order of the International Court of Justice, issued yesterday, and the provisional measures approved by the Court. This order confirms that the Russian aggression against Ukraine is illegal. We also welcome the decision of the International Criminal Court’s prosecutor to open an investigation into the possible war crimes by Russia in Ukraine. All those responsible will be held accountable.

11. Moreover, Putin's regime is qualifying as "Russophobia" any public disagreement with, condemnation of or protest against its war of aggression in Ukraine. We note with deep concern that the Russian external aggression is accompanied by ever-increasing repression of Russia's own citizens. We strongly condemn the unprecedented institutional and judicial crackdown on human rights and fundamental freedoms, and outright censorship in Russia. Throughout this period, we have witnessed how Russia is dismantling the last remnants of its democratic façade. By threatening with up to 15 years in prison for calling a war, a war has led to a situation where media cannot perform its watchdog function, exposing the actions of the government and helping citizens to hold their government to account. To date, more than 15.000 people have been detained in peaceful anti-war protests. We applaud Russian independent media, NGOs and brave individuals such as Marina Ovsyannikova, who aspire to end this war and continue to defend, at a great personal risk, the values of democracy, rule of law and freedom, and strive to inform the Russian people of the true situation on the ground in Ukraine.

12. And the truth is that Russia, with the participation of the Lukashenka regime in Belarus as co-aggressor, bears full responsibility for the loss of life, injuries and destruction. The EU demands that Russia immediately and unconditionally cease its military actions, withdraw all its troops from the entire territory of Ukraine and fully respect Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders and territorial waters. This demand was expressed by 141 States through the adoption of the relevant UN GA resolution on 2 March 2022. We also reiterate our call on Belarus to stop enabling the Russian aggression and to abide by its international obligations. The EU resolutely supports Ukraine's inherent right to self-defence, and the Ukrainian armed forces' efforts to defend Ukraine's territorial integrity and population in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter. The EU will continue to provide coordinated political, financial, material and humanitarian support and we have just adopted a fourth package of restrictive measures against Russia. Ukraine belongs to our European family. We stand with Ukraine!

I kindly ask that this Statement be attached to the Journal of the Day.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, GEORGIA, ANDORRA, and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.