



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°1038 Vienna, 1 March 2023

EU Statement on Russia's ongoing military aggression against Ukraine

Mr Chair, **24 February 2022** will forever be remembered as **the day when Russia launched a brutal, unprovoked and illegal full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine**, which **we continue to condemn in the strongest possible terms**. As we have entered the second year of this war, even the most shameless Russian propaganda cannot hide the truth. This imperialistic war is Russia's biggest strategic mistake. It is not going according to the Kremlin's plan, and all the world can see it.

The Ukrainian people and its Armed Forces deserve the highest praise **for their incredible strength and perseverance in defending their homeland** against Russian aggression. They have been fighting since 2014 against an aggressor that has since then been sending troops and military equipment across the border. All of Ukraine has **shown remarkable resilience and dignity** in the face of unspeakable crimes committed by Russian forces. And still, Russia, its leadership, and its diplomats in this Forum, continue to deny these crimes, even though the truth is undeniable, as exemplified in reports such as the recent Human Rights Watch report on the bombing of the Kramatorsk train station in April 2022 that killed 58 Ukrainian civilians. The report clearly and unsurprisingly assigns the responsibility for this attack to Russian forces.

Reports of **forced deportation of Ukrainian children to Russia** and their subsequent forced adoption into Russian families illustrate a clear violation of international human rights and international humanitarian law, notably the Fourth Geneva Convention. This **is another abominable example of Russian behavior** in the territories under its temporary military control. The recent public gratitude expressed by Russian

Commissioner for Children's Rights Maria Lvova-Belova towards President Putin for making it possible for her to adopt a child from the devastated city of Mariupol - a city that Russian forces razed to the ground - is an absolute low point. Such crimes must be brought to light. No effort should be spared to bring the children back to their families and to hold the perpetrators accountable. In this context, another discussion, co-sponsored also by the EU, with the participation of a Ukrainian NGO "The Voices of Children Foundation" will take place shortly in the Ratsaal.

President Putin's threats, including irresponsible nuclear rhetoric, failed to have any impact. **No country has the right to invade its neighbour or to violate the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of another State.** This prohibition of the use of force is the foundation of the rules-based international order, which was established by all of us. **The vote last Thursday in the UN General Assembly was again a powerful message.** It shows that the overwhelming majority of the international community condemns the clear-cut case of a grave violation of the UN Charter by the Russian Federation and is committed to uphold this rules-based international order. This vote also confirms Russia's growing international isolation.

We do not know how long this war of aggression, unleashed by Russia and supported by the Belarusian regime, will last. In any case, **the EU and its Member States will continue to stand in solidarity with Ukraine** for as long as it takes. Ukraine is exercising its **inherent right of self-defence**, in line with Article 51 of the UN Charter, and all States across the globe have the right to help repel this aggression. **The war is costing the Kremlin dearly, and these costs will only rise the longer it lasts.** Last Friday, the EU, in coordination with partners, adopted its tenth package of sanctions, further weakening Russia's war efforts.

All perpetrators and those responsible for this unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression **must be held accountable** for their actions. We support the peace formula of President Zelenskyy and are committed to actively working with Ukraine to garner support for a just, comprehensible, and sustainable peace based on respect for international law and the UN Charter, meaning respect for Ukraine's sovereignty and

territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. It is also essential to clearly name the aggressor, which is the Russian Federation.

Last but not least, **we urge Russia to release the three illegally detained OSCE staff members and to return the stolen OSCE SMM vehicles** to their legitimate owner, the OSCE participating States.

Mr Chair, our response to the question asked by the Head of the Russian delegation last week in this Forum, what to do further, is very simple and straightforward. **Russia has to stop its war of aggression** and immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraw all its troops and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders. We also **urge the Belarusian authorities to stop their support** of and refrain from any further involvement in or facilitation of Russia's illegal war of aggression.

Thank you!

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

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