



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°1034 Vienna, 1 February 2023

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

Mr. Chair, today as every other day since 24 February 2022, the European Union and its Member States **reiterate their strongest and unequivocal condemnation of Russia's brutal and illegal war of aggression** against Ukraine. This war is a **flagrant breach of international law, including the UN Charter and OSCE principles and commitments, starting with the Helsinki Final Act**. Russia's policy of territorial expansionism, its denial of Ukraine's statehood, its actions aggravating global energy and food security, its attempts to intimidate Europe and, last but not least, its irresponsible nuclear rhetoric, have put global security and stability at risk.

The Kremlin's narrative, presented in this room and elsewhere, portraying Russia as an alleged victim of "the so-called West", is a complete distortion of reality. There can be **no ambiguity** in this unjustified war. **Russia is the aggressor, Ukraine is the victim**. Russia had a choice to abide by international law, to engage in dialogue and to acknowledge and respect agency of its sovereign neighbours. Russia deliberately decided to follow a different path, a path of brute force and destruction, unleashing unspeakable suffering and human tragedy. The devastating consequences for all of us of such actions, in particular for Ukraine, but also for Russia, will reverberate for generations to come.

The EU and its Member States **stand unequivocally for international law and the principles and commitments of this Organisation**. In fact, we simply follow the path of law and our values because this is the only right thing to do. We resolutely support Ukraine's **inherent right to self-defence** in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter. Our political, military, financial and humanitarian assistance will continue for as long as it takes. We **reaffirm our firm solidarity with Ukraine and its people** and

pay tribute to all those who have sacrificed their lives in defence of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Ukraine.

As this shocking war continues, **Russia**, in its appalling *modus operandi*, **continues to deliberately strike terror** into Ukraine's civilian population, destroy civilian infrastructure and kill the innocent, the weak and the vulnerable. Last week was no exception. Russia launched another wave of aerial attacks against Ukrainian cities. While Ukrainian air defences work increasingly effectively, some of the missiles, yet again, caused senseless human suffering and destruction. We strongly condemn Russia's **systematic attacks on civilians and critical infrastructure** in Ukraine. Targeting of energy, heating, water supply facilities and other indispensable infrastructure for the survival of the civilian population is cruel and cynical. These continued attacks underscore once more the need for Ukraine to acquire more effective air-defence systems. EU Member States will continue to work towards this objective.

We **urge the Russian Federation to fully comply with international humanitarian law**, notably by treating all prisoners of war humanely, by providing them with appropriate medical treatment and basic necessities as well as protecting them from humiliating and degrading treatment. **The International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) must be allowed access** to all Prisoners of War in order to verify this. It is now six months from the explosion in the Olenivka facility where more than 50 Ukrainian PoWs were killed and Russia has not up to now allowed the access by the ICRC. We again strongly condemn the repeated threats voiced by the Russian delegation in this very room that foreign nationals serving in the Ukrainian Armed Forces could be liquidated. All combatants must be treated in accordance with the respective Geneva Conventions.

Mr. Chair, **accountability is key**. Justice takes time but in the end, it prevails. The court cases concerning Russia's downing of Malaysia Airline Flight MH-17 in July 2014 are a good example in this regard. We are engaging with Ukraine and international partners to ensure full accountability for war crimes and the other most serious crimes in connection with Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, including ways to secure accountability for the crime of aggression.

Mr. Chair, against the overall tragic background of Russia's aggression, we must keep exposing **outrageous actions conducted by Russia**. In the last two weeks we addressed the issue of the **illegal transfer of more than 70 OSCE SMM armoured vehicles** from Russia to eastern Ukraine. This is plain theft. Russia must return all

OSCE assets to their legitimate owner, all OSCE participating States, and prevent any misuse related to its war of aggression. Russia must also immediately and unconditionally release the three OSCE staff members, arbitrarily detained since April 2022.

As the Russian delegation here seems to have an unacceptable and flawed interpretation of international law and territorial integrity, we wish to reiterate our firm position. We have not and will never recognise the illegal annexation by the Russian Federation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, which are Ukrainian territories. We equally reiterate our strong condemnation of Russia's attempted farcical illegal annexation of other Ukrainian territories. **Crimea, Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk and Luhansk are Ukraine.**

In conclusion, we **urge Russia to stop its war of aggression and to 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 its** support of and **refrain from any further involvement in** Russia's illegal war of aggression.

Thank you.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ALBANIA*, UKRAINE and REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, 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.

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