



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°1046 Vienna, 24 May 2023

EU Statement on Russia's ongoing military aggression against Ukraine

Madam Chair, today marks precisely 15 months since **Kyiv and the whole of Ukraine woke up to the sound of air raid sirens, missiles and falling bombs.** **Russia started its brutal, unprovoked and illegal full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine, which we condemn in the strongest possible terms.** The Kremlin apparently assumed that the invasion would be over in a matter of days, with Russian troops bringing parade uniforms with them. However, for a year and three months now, Russia has not only been held at bay but has also been successfully repelled by the Ukrainian Armed Forces at Kyiv, Kharkiv and Kherson. Even the most disjointed and fantastical Russian propaganda we confront here weekly cannot hide the truth. Russia's invasion is not going according to plan, as anyone can see. No one is harming Russia more than the Kremlin itself.

Russia has recently escalated its incessant and shameful drone and missile attacks on Ukrainian cities, attempting to intimidate the civilian population and to overextend the air defense. Throughout this month, Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine, has been attacked almost daily. Yet, the Ukrainian spirit remains unbroken. Ukraine's air defence, further enhanced with international support, has successfully neutralised Russia's attacks. The Ukrainian people and its Armed Forces deserve the utmost commendation for their impressive resilience, skills and steadfastness. We have stood with Ukraine from the onset and we will continue our comprehensive support for as long as it takes.

Madam Chair, **Russia's calls for Ukraine's partners to cease their military assistance to Ukraine are hypocritical and baseless.** It is Russia itself that has yet again violated international law by invading a sovereign state and deliberately targeted civilians and infrastructure. Ukraine, as the victim of this aggression, has the full right to receive military aid for its exercise of self-defence. The support the international community provides to Ukraine is transparent, in accordance with the UN Charter, and aimed at strengthening Ukraine's capability to defend its people and sovereign territory. It helps the Ukrainian Armed Forces to protect their homeland and their airspace, including against missiles boasted by Russia as "undefeatable". We will continue to support Ukraine's right to self-defence and uphold the principles of the UN Charter, the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter, despite Russia's attempts to distort the truth and shift blame.

Just last Friday, here in the Hofburg, we were moved by the harrowing testimonies of **Ukrainian civilians, victims of Russia's ruthless tactics of hostage-taking.** Maryna Kostyuk, a mother of two, recounted the ordeal of her husband Oleksandr. A civilian who had volunteered to evacuate another family from the Sumy region, Oleksandr, has been missing since 5 March 2022. Maryna and her daughters have no information regarding his location or well-being, only an assurance that he is a captive of Russia and possibly still alive. Vyacheslav Zavalnyy was taken hostage by Russian soldiers while attempting to evacuate his wife and children from Mariupol. He endured mock execution, was forced to dig his grave, and was transferred between Russian prisons, where he suffered brutal beatings and unspeakable cruelty. Fortunately, he was exchanged for Russian prisoners of war. Still, as we speak, many others continue languishing in Russian prisons, illegally detained, without legal recourse. **Russia must immediately stop these barbaric acts and unconditionally release all civilian hostages and fully respect international humanitarian law.**

There will be **no impunity for war crimes and other atrocities**, such as Russia's attacks against civilians and civilian objects. Accountability is of utmost importance to ensure respect for international law and protect the rules-based international order.

Madam Chair, the Russian aggression against Ukraine has caused immense human suffering, death, injuries, massive displacements and deportations of people, including children, and extensive material damage. **Entire Ukrainian cities lie in ruins** as a result of Russia's ruthless military tactics. This fate befell Mariupol, Popasna, and now

Bakhmut. Together with partners, we will continue to explore ways of using Russia's frozen and immobilised assets for Ukraine's reconstruction and reparation purposes in accordance with EU and international law. **We also welcome the establishment of the International Registry of Damages Caused by Russian Aggression**, in the framework of the Council of Europe, in cooperation with Ukraine and to meet the request from the UN General Assembly. **The principle of the "aggressor pays the damage" must be upheld**, and it will be.

We remain gravely concerned about the **situation at the illegally seized Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP)**. We support the work of the IAEA and the efforts of DG Grossi in the protection of the power plant. Russia must withdraw all military personnel and equipment from the power plant and hand back control of the ZNPP to its rightful owner – Ukraine.

The EU and its Member States **remain resolute in their support** for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity and demand that Russia **immediately stop its war of aggression** and 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 cease their support for, and refrain from any further involvement in or facilitation of Russia's illegal war of aggression.

Madam Chair, we remain determined to work with Ukraine and our international partners **to find a just, lasting and comprehensive peace based on full respect for international law**. The EU supports President Zelenskyy's Peace Formula and is ready to work with Ukraine on the 10-point peace plan. We will continue to support Ukraine and the Ukrainian people in their fight for freedom, sovereignty, and their European future.

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 as 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