



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1367 Vienna, 7 April 2022

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

1. Seven weeks ago, President Putin decided to wage a war of aggression against Ukraine in blatant violation of the UN Charter and OSCE principles and commitments. With every passing day, we see images with graphic details of the horrifying consequences and immense suffering Russia's war has inflicted on the Ukrainian civilian population: Thousands of lives have been lost due to the aggression of the Russian Armed Forces, 10 million people – most of them women and children - have been forced to leave their homes. Over 500 schools and 52 hospitals have been shelled and entire cities have been razed to the ground. The presence of explosive ordnances and mines, including drifting naval mines recently discovered in the Black Sea are further increasing the risk of more casualties, also beyond the borders of Ukraine. This senseless barbarity must stop.
2. The European Union is shocked and appalled by the reported atrocities committed by the Russian Armed Forces. As stated in the Special PC earlier this week, we condemn in the strongest terms the massive atrocities committed in Bucha and Borodianka as well as in Irpen Hostomel, Ivankiv and other places that have now been liberated by Ukraine. Those acts could be constitutive of war crimes and crimes against humanity. We are equally shocked by the ongoing ghastly siege of Mariupol and the constant shelling of other places, including Chernihiv and Kharkiv. People are left without water, food, medicines, heating or electricity while schools, hospitals, and residential buildings are being continuously shelled. There are indiscriminate attacks, including in densely populated areas, as well as on civilian facilities. We also receive deeply disturbing reports, including from OHCHR, of cluster munitions and other UN-prohibited weapons being used in populated areas alongside reports of forced displacements, torture and ill treatment as well as gender-based violence.

These horrendous acts are illegal according to International Humanitarian Law, by which Russia is also bound.

3. All perpetrators must be held to account. We welcome the investigation by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court into alleged crimes under international law, including war crimes and crimes against humanity. We urge Russia to abide by the provisional measures of the International Court of Justice ordering Russia to suspend its military operations immediately. We will soon have the opportunity to discuss the report of the OSCE Moscow Mechanism expert Mission about violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law in the context of Russia's war against Ukraine. We also appreciate ODIHR's initiative to document violations of human rights and international humanitarian law standards. Moreover, the EU is assisting the Ukrainian Prosecutor General and Civil Society in collecting and preserving the evidence of war crimes and crimes against humanity. With a view to making the best use of these efforts, we encourage close and continuous cooperation among all those involved.
4. President Putin's invasion of Ukraine also aims to erase Ukraine's identity, distinct history and culture. UNESCO has confirmed that at least 53 historical sites, religious buildings, and museums have so far been damaged during Russia's military aggression. Russia is bound by the 1954 Hague Convention to protect cultural property during armed conflict. Intentionally directing attacks against a protected cultural heritage site constitutes a war crime. We demand that Russia stops its senseless attacks against cultural heritage sites in Ukraine.
5. It is also absolutely unacceptable that the Russian Armed Forces are continuing to kidnap, torture and execute democratically elected local leaders. To name a few: We are repulsed by the abduction and reported brutal execution of Mayor Olha Sukhenko by the Russian Armed Forces. Her body, as well as the bodies of her family members, were found in a hole in the ground outside their hometown Motyzhyn. Furthermore, local leader Alexei Shibayev has been reportedly abducted by the Russian Armed Forces, while accompanying humanitarian cargo. We condemn all kidnappings and demand Russia to immediately release all hostages. We steadfastly support Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised

borders and territorial waters. Any attempt by Russia to create illegitimate alternative administrative structures in Ukraine will be considered null and void. The same goes for similar attempts in other places where Russia has interfered in past years.

6. Moreover, the EU deeply regrets that Russia is not only disregarding every obligation under international law and dismantling every single security guarantee on the ground, but is also hampering any opportunity for impartial information and reporting of the true security situation in Ukraine. As we stated last week, the Russian announcement that it is not in a position to consent to the extension of the Special Monitoring Mission's mandate is deeply regrettable, although not surprising. Against the backdrop of Russia's military aggression and destabilising activities in Ukraine since 2014, the SMM has been carrying out invaluable work in gathering information and reporting impartially as well as facilitating dialogue, negotiating local ceasefires and improving the lives of the Ukrainian people. We again strongly urge Russia to engage constructively in the consultations as proposed by the Chairmanship and to reconsider its position in order to allow the SMM to continue its work.
7. Furthermore, as a regional security organisation under the UN Charter with a multifaceted conflict cycle toolbox as outlined in Vilnius MC Decision 3/11, the OSCE has a unique role to play in conflict situations. We support all efforts of the OSCE Chairmanship, the OSCE executive structures and autonomous institutions in this regard, including through the coordination and facilitation of humanitarian assistance, supporting safe pathways and humanitarian convoys as well as assessing human rights and humanitarian impacts of Russia's aggression. We urge all participating States, in particular Russia, to make use of the tools at hand and to cooperate with the OSCE institutions in good faith.
8. The war is not only fought on the ground, but also in the digital sphere. It is clear that the Kremlin is attempting to twist and turn historical narratives of World War Two in a shameful disinformation campaign in order to hide the real facts of Russia's attacks on civilians in Ukraine. Reliable information has therefore never been as important as today. We commend the work of fact-checkers all over the world, especially those in Ukraine, working every day to push back against lies and manipulations. In this context, we deeply regret that journalists and other media actors in Ukraine are falling

victims to Russia's war, including the famous Lithuanian documentary filmmaker Mantas Kvedaravičius, the Franco-Irish photojournalist Pierre Zakrzewski and the well-known Ukrainian photojournalist Maksim Levin. We convey our deepest condolences to their families. Journalists are civilians who perform a critical role in providing information during a conflict and must not be a target.

9. We are dismayed by Russia's disregard for international legal norms and political commitments, including those Russia has subscribed to within the OSCE. We again urge Russia to uphold its commitments: Russia must immediately release all those arrested in peaceful protests, as well as those imprisoned on politically motivated charges, including all media actors.

10. We are also witnessing massive internal displacement of people and huge numbers of people fleeing Ukraine to neighbouring countries, mainly women and children, as well as elderly people. The EU and its Member States are providing shelter as well as humanitarian, medical and financial aid to the more than four million people who have fled Russia's violence. They also have access to education and labour market. As discussed during the 22nd High-level Alliance against Trafficking in Persons Conference this week, women and children are particularly vulnerable to human rights abuses in all conflict situations or situations of displacement. It is therefore of utmost importance to protect them against gender-based violence and trafficking and other forms of exploitation, as required by international humanitarian law, a duty that falls in particular on the occupation forces.

11. The European Union condemns Russia's premeditated, unprovoked, unjustified and brutal war of aggression against Ukraine in the strongest possible terms. We demand that Russia immediately and unconditionally cease its military actions and withdraw all its troops from the entire territory of Ukraine, including the illegally annexed Crimean peninsula. Russia must also urgently provide safe pathways, both for civilians to evacuate to other parts of Ukraine, as well as for those delivering humanitarian assistance. We also reiterate our call on the co-aggressor, Belarus, to stop enabling the Russian aggression and to abide by its international obligations. The EU will continue to firmly support Ukraine and will advance, as a matter of

urgency, work on further sanctions against Russia and Belarus. We stand in full solidarity with Ukraine and the Ukrainian people in these sombre hours.

I kindly ask that this Statement be appended 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, the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA, MONACO, 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.