



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1374 Vienna, 19 May 2022

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

1. The European Union warmly welcomes the Mayor of Okhtyrka, Pavlo Kuzmenko, to the Permanent Council today and thanks him for his first-hand account of the devastation that the Russian illegal war of aggression has brought to his city and its people. We were particularly appalled by the indiscriminate shelling by Russia's Armed Forces of residential areas and civilian infrastructure in your city, including the attack on a nursery and kindergarten on 25 February, which, according to Amnesty International, involved cluster munitions and killed three people, including a child, as they sought shelter. We express our sincere condolences for those killed and wish swift recovery for those injured.
2. During the last 12 weeks we have witnessed the most devastating war on European soil since the Second World War, as Russia continues its aggression and its attempt to subdue the peaceful and democratic neighbouring State of Ukraine by the use of force. However, this attempt has failed. The Russian Armed Forces have now shifted their focus to the southern and eastern parts of Ukraine. The indiscriminate targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure, the shooting of innocent civilians in their heads and backs that the whole world witnessed last week, the looting of homes and businesses, demonstrate the deplorable tactics of the Russian army, many of which may amount to war crimes. During the last week alone, we saw civilian infrastructure under Russian shelling and bombing in the Luhansk, Donetsk, Kharkiv Chernihiv, Lviv, Odesa and Sumy regions.

3. The torment of Mariupol, a city of 400 000 inhabitants, and other Ukrainian cities and towns that Russian shelling have reduced to ashes, will forever live in infamy. Dozens of thousands of Mariupol's residents have been injured, killed or forcibly deported by Russian Armed Forces, including to so-called "filtration camps". We are closely following the fate of the civilians and Ukrainian servicemen who have been trapped in the "Azovstal" plant for weeks while being under constant Russian shelling. We remind Russia that prisoners of war must be treated according to international standards. The fierce fight and heroic resistance of the Ukrainian people to defend their homeland, freedom and Europe will never be forgotten.

4. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine is not only being waged with tanks, shells, mines, trenches and terror, it is also being pursued through disinformation and information manipulation, intimidation, false narratives, and a campaign of cultural destruction. We condemn the deliberate targeting of Ukraine's cultural and historical artefacts, including statues, monuments, museums, archives, theatres, libraries, and schools that represent Ukraine's distinct historical and contemporary identity. The Ukrainian Ministry of Culture has recorded more than 330 cases of damaged or destroyed Ukrainian cultural heritage sites in 13 regions. This wilful campaign targets the foundations of the Ukrainian identity, aiming at erasing the existence of Ukraine as a sovereign, independent nation. We recall that Russia is bound by the 1954 Hague Convention and its first Protocol to protect cultural property during armed conflict as well as by the UNESCO's 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property. Intentionally directing attacks against a protected cultural heritage site is a war crime. The EU urges Russia to immediately stop its attacks on cultural heritage sites and the looting of cultural property and historic collections in Ukraine.

5. We strongly condemn Russia's undertakings to set up illegitimate alternative administrative structures in areas under Russian military control. Russia has installed puppet "administration figures" in the Kherson region of Ukraine, blocked access to Ukrainian television channels and replaced Ukrainian internet service providers with Russian ones. We also deplore the replacement of Ukrainian curricula with a Russian one. In addition, we reiterate our condemnation of Russia's recognition of the non-

government controlled areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk areas of Ukraine as separate entities; any so-called “officials” claiming to represent these areas are illegitimate. We call on Russia to fully respect Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders and territorial waters.

6. Russia’s aggression in Ukraine has already created a humanitarian disaster, especially in the regions under Russian military control where the so-called “authorities” are not able to provide the local population with food, medicine and other basic goods. In addition, the situation for elderly is particularly worrying, as the majority of them cannot or do not want to leave their homes and many are dependent on support from social services, charities and international institutions. Given that Russia is destroying health care facilities and blocking humanitarian support, including medication, their situation is likely to get even worse.
7. Russia is also targeting Ukraine’s agriculture, including fields, farm equipment, warehouses, fuel storage facilities and markets, apparently intending to cripple Ukraine’s agricultural economy, thereby cutting off a major source of Ukraine’s income but also creating a food crisis, possibly of global proportions. Before the invasion, Ukraine supplied 12% of the planet’s wheat, 15% of its corn and half of its sunflower oil. Russia’s blocking of the exit routes for Ukraine’s grain, including its ports, makes the world face a worsening state of food insecurity and malnutrition. This is at a time when 43 million people are already one-step away from famine. The EU and its Member States are supporting Ukraine in restoring its grain export capabilities to the global market.
8. Furthermore, we have already recorded examples of how human rights and democratic principles were eroded where Russia has interfered in past years. This includes in the non-government controlled areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine and in the illegally annexed the Crimean peninsula, where political opposition is stifled and persecuted, civil society curbed, journalists silenced and the rights of persons belonging to different communities, in particular Crimean Tatars, suppressed. Yesterday, Ukraine marked the sombre 78th anniversary of the deportation of Crimean Tatars. These deportations from Crimea in the past are

replicated today in areas under Russian military control in other parts of Ukraine. Over a million Ukrainians have been deported already, including hundreds of thousands of children, according to the Ukrainian Human Rights Ombudswoman. The OSCE Moscow Mechanism expert Mission's report also showed systemic violations and abuses of human rights by the Russian Armed Forces, including references to forced deportations, as well as gross violations of international humanitarian law.

9. The current internal repression in Russia leaves almost no way for Russians to express their opposition to the Kremlin's policies. By shutting independent media outlets, labelling dissidents as foreign agents, and banning civil society organizations, President Putin's regime is trying to ensure that its version is the only one heard. Those who try to speak out against the war face immediate retaliation. We again urge Russia to uphold its international human rights obligations and OSCE 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. The European Union condemns Russia's premeditated, unprovoked, unjustified and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine in the strongest possible terms. We call on Russia to immediately and unconditionally cease its military actions and withdraw all its troops and equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine, including the illegally annexed Crimean peninsula. We also reiterate our call on Belarus to stop enabling the Russian aggression and to abide by its international obligations.
11. The world stands united in condemning Russia's invasion and expressing solidarity with Ukraine and its people. Three UN General Assembly resolutions adopted with the overwhelming support of the UN Member States demonstrate that international law and the multilateral rules-based order matter, and that attacks against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state will not be tolerated. The use of force and coercion has no place in the 21st century.
12. The European Union supports all measures to ensure accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, including violations and abuses that may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. We

welcome the adoption of the 12 May HRC resolution on the deteriorating human rights situation in Ukraine stemming from the Russian aggression. We also welcome the work of ODIHR, the ICC and international mechanisms such as OHCHR's Human Rights Monitoring Mission and the HRC-mandated Commission of Inquiry, and the progress made so far by the Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine in its national investigations. All perpetrators must be held to account.

13. The EU commends the Ukrainian people's strength, courage, and resistance in withstanding Russia's aggression. As all Ukrainians and their friends mark today the Day of Vyshyvanka, we reiterate that we will continue to stand in firm solidarity with, and actively support, Ukraine and the Ukrainian people until they prevail.

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, 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.