



## **EUROPEAN UNION**

### **OSCE Permanent Council No. 1362 Vienna, 10 March 2022**

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

1. Mr. Chair, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, today entering its third week, is causing an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe, including for the country's 7.5 million children who are exposed to the horrors of war. Just to name a few examples, in recent days, we have witnessed appalling scenes, including a Russian military strike in Irpin which killed a family with two children and other civilians fleeing the Russian invasion. Twenty-one people, including two children, were killed in air strikes on the besieged city of Sumy. Two days ago, the settlement of Malyn was shelled leaving five people, including two one-year old children, dead. We have seen peaceful protesters in Kherson being shot by Russian forces and journalists being attacked near Kyiv. Heart-breaking reports are coming from Mariupol, which has been under siege for 10 days; Russian artillery and airstrikes have decimated entire parts of the city and Russian forces have destroyed almost all the infrastructure which provides basic services to the local population, including water, electricity and heating. Civilians are stuck without access to food, water and medication. Hospitals are overcrowded with the injured. Yesterday, Russia carried out an air strike on a children's hospital and maternity house during an agreed ceasefire period that was meant to allow the evacuation of civilians. This is a despicable and heinous war crime. We condemn President Putin's premeditated, unprovoked, unjustified and brutal invasion of an independent and sovereign State in the strongest possible terms.
2. Thanking the CiO Special Representative on Gender, Liliana Palihovici, for her remarks, we express our solidarity with the Ukrainian women. They are showing resilience and courage, in uniform and in civilian roles, defending their country and democracy in the face of the brutal and unjustifiable military attack by Russia. The

current situation puts the lives and safety of all civilians at risk. However, as in all conflict situations or situations of displacement, women and children are particularly vulnerable to human rights abuses. Hence, it is of utmost importance to protect them against sexual and gender-based violence, trafficking and other forms of exploitation, as required by International Humanitarian Law, a duty that falls in particular on the occupation forces. Furthermore, women journalists' safety needs to be ensured, both online and offline, as the RFoM rightly pointed out in her recent statement.

3. Hand in hand with Ukraine and together with our partners and countries from all parts of the world, we demand that Russia immediately end the aggression and its military activities. We underscore that abiding by International Humanitarian Law, notably the Geneva conventions, is not optional. Civilians and civilian infrastructure must never be targeted and the indiscriminate use of explosive weapons, particularly in densely populated urban areas should never occur under any circumstance. Furthermore, the widely reported use of cluster munition and thermobaric bombs by the Russian armed forces targeting residential areas is deeply worrying and absolutely condemnable. The Resolutions adopted last week in the UN General Assembly and by the Human Rights Council (HRC), by an overwhelming majority, send strong messages from the international community condemning Russia's aggression. In addition, by establishing a Commission of Inquiry, the HRC has taken a further practical step in the fight against impunity. Last week's invocation of the OSCE Moscow Mechanism by 45 participating States, including all EU Member States, furthers this aim. We also welcome the opening of an investigation by the ICC Prosecutor into possible war crimes or crimes against humanity in Ukraine after referrals by 39 ICC States Parties, including all EU Member States. Those who violate International Humanitarian Law will be held accountable.
4. We thank UN Under-Secretary-General, Martin Griffiths, for his remarks and join him in underlining the importance of setting up safe pathways and the necessity of urgently suspending all fighting in order to deliver relief without delay to all people in need. We strongly condemn that Russia is not only impeding safe passage but, deplorably, also violating agreements reached by continuing to deliberately shell these areas and mine the roads. We also categorically reject Russia's cynical

approach that the evacuation of Ukrainian civilians should be to the Russian Federation, despite the fact that it is Russia that has launched the military attack. Moreover, humanitarian assistance in line with humanitarian principles must be respected at all times, relief items allowed to be delivered without delay and the protection and safe passage of civilians guaranteed, whether they wish to stay or evacuate. We commend the efforts undertaken by the government of Ukraine to facilitate humanitarian operations, ensuring the free movement of humanitarian workers and convoys as well as facilitating imports of relief items and offer our support to further improve the delivery of assistance.

5. The EU and its Member States are working at all levels, also together with Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, to ensure a safe arrival of those who flee Russia's aggression. The EU will also ensure that a prompt and concrete response to the needs of children and their families are provided for, with special attention to unaccompanied children.
6. We thank the OSCE Secretary General and her team for their tireless efforts, including with regard to evacuation and relocation of SMM staff. We call for the safe evacuation of all those inside the SMM premises in Mariupol, including the SMM local staff and the Greek Consul General. We stand ready to support all efforts of the Chairmanship and the OSCE executive structures and autonomous institutions in order to assist the people of Ukraine, including through the coordination and facilitation of humanitarian assistance, and the assessment of the human rights and humanitarian impacts of Russia's invasion.
7. We deeply regret that Russia's external aggression on a neighbouring State is accompanied by an internal repression of the Russian people. In this vein, we condemn the newly introduced blanket media censorship designed to curtail access to independent information sources about President Putin's war in Ukraine, as well as the Russian authorities' violent crackdown on peaceful anti-war protests.
8. Mr. Chair, this is a moment of truth for Europe. This is a clash between the rule of law and the rule of the gun, between democracies and autocracies, between a rules-based order and a world of naked aggression. The Ukrainian people have made the brave and free choice of liberty, democracy and the rule of law. Russia, with the

participation of the Lukashenka regime in Belarus as co-aggressor, bears full responsibility for the loss of life, injuries and destruction. The EU demands that Russia immediately cease its military actions, withdraw all its troops from the entire territory of Ukraine and fully respect Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders and territorial waters. Equally, Russia must stop its disinformation campaign and cyber-attacks. We also reiterate our call on Belarus to stop enabling the Russian aggression and to abide by its international obligations. The EU resolutely supports Ukraine's inherent right to self-defence, and the Ukrainian armed forces' efforts to defend Ukraine's territorial integrity and population in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter. We stand with Ukraine!

I kindly ask that this Statement be attached 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, and the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, 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.