



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International
Organizations in Vienna

Statement on the Russian Federation's ongoing aggression against Ukraine

As for delivery by Ambassador Yevhenii Tsymbaliuk, Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna, to the 1376th meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council

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Mr. Chairperson,

Let me start with a quotation.

"Auntie Ira, I'm in russia, I have been taken here by the russian military. I'm writing to you stealthily, I managed to get the phone for a few minutes. My mother is not alive anymore, she was killed by a shell. They say I'm an orphan. And I'm not an orphan, I have you, I have grandpa and grandma. There are so many children like me here. I heard that they wanted to leave us in russia. And I do not want to be in russia! Auntie Ira, get me out of here. I want to go home to Ukraine".

Yesterday, on the occasion of International Children's Day, the charitable organization "Voice of children" launched a campaign aimed to collect children's testimony about their experience of this devastating war.

Voices of the smallest sound the loudest. And unfortunately, there are many such children's stories.

Since the beginning of the full-out war, about 7 million Ukrainian children have been forced to become adults.

Instead of lullaby songs, they are listening to air alerts. They distinguish the flight of artillery shells, mortar rounds and cruise missiles. A sound they should have never heard.

Their playing grounds are peppered with unexploded ordnances. They are not running with a ball but running away from incoming shells.

They have to learn how the booby traps look like and how to live under constant mine risk.

But not all of them have to do that. As of today, 243 children were killed by the russian army. Only since February 2022. But there are more since February 2014.

Many more experienced violence and lost their parents. 446 were injured or mutilated. Thousands have endured psychological trauma. And thousands are still facing a looming threat as russia continues attacking Ukraine.

This is an ugly face of the war of choice launched by the russian president long ago, back in 2014.

However, some are still in danger even after the fighting is over. At least 230 000 Ukrainian children have been deported to russia.

And how cynical it might be to sign just on the eve of the International Children's Day a decree simplifying the admission to the russian citizenship of Ukrainian orphans or those who were left without parental care.

Actually, the russian president has legalized the abduction of Ukrainian children.

This grossly violates both – 1949 Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

And russian diplomats who twist so skilfully with a genocide crime are well aware that forcible transfer of children of the group to another group is strictly forbidden under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

But it is what russia's state policy is about. First, they come to kill parents and then they take children.

At the same time in the course of the week, we heard another piece of lies that the russian military are not targeting civilians and infrastructure in Ukraine.

But facts speak for themselves.

Even an approximate figure of civilians killed in Mariupol is thrilling. Many bodies remain under the rubble, in morgues, and other places around the city.

russia is also trying to disrupt the evacuation from the combat zone. Earlier this week russia's military shelled a car heading to evacuate people. As a result, a journalist who was covering the evacuation operation was killed. This is how a double crime against civilians looks like.

A few days ago, a border village in Sumy region was attacked with artillery shells filled with flechette. The use of steel rods clearly displays the intention to kill civilians.

Same rods were found in bodies killed in Bucha and Irpin.

As a result of constant shelling, the entire critical infrastructure of Severodonetsk has already been destroyed. 90% of houses are damaged.

In Kharkiv the russian army damaged about 2300 high-rise buildings, of which 225 were completely destroyed.

There are also more specific cases. Two days ago, a missile attack on Slovyansk, in the Donetsk region, left at least three people killed and six injured. russian military also damaged a school where Lidiia Marchenko, a member of the Second World War partisan unit, was working in this school. She was tortured to death in 1943.

Should we expect that the russian delegation would raise this case and condemn the actions of its own military under the agenda item they suggested for the afternoon discussion?

Unfortunately, I strongly doubt that. russian diplomats are instructed to create here a smoking screen, while their military are destroying historical and cultural heritage in Ukraine. Likewise, they were instructed to cover up the preparation for the war in the course of the last year.

Esteemed colleagues,

Over the last years it was almost an axiom to say that "without russia there will be no peace in Europe".

It was a false mantra. The grim reality has displayed that the European security is not possible with such an aggressive russia. And there is only one solution to this dilemma – the restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity as well as of other countries neighboring russia.

And as we are approaching 100 days of the war, we can already make some conclusions.

As President Zelenskyy said during his visit to Kharkiv earlier this week: "russia has already lost not only the battle for Kharkiv, not only the battle for Kyiv and the north of our country. It lost its own future and any cultural ties to the free world. They all burned down". Actually, the launch of the all-out war against Ukraine has displayed russia's weakness.

kremlin understands this very well, that's why this regime is doing its best to cling onto power.

russia plays hunger games with the world by blocking Ukrainian food exports with one hand and trying to shift the blame on Ukraine with the other.

By demanding to lift sanctions in exchange for them unblocking Ukraine's food exports, this proves once again that the sole reason for shortages, rising prices, and threat of hunger is the Russian military.

Russia is blackmailing the world by demanding to stop strengthening Ukraine's defence capabilities.

However, does Moscow really believe that the world would stand aside and observe silently how Russia implements its extermination policy in Ukraine? Especially, after Bucha, Irpin, Mariupol?

Russian officials openly discuss plans about destroying Ukraine's identity, cultural erasure, the extermination of the most active and re-education of the rest. Just yesterday, well known Mr Slutskiy announced Moscow's plans to annex Donetsk, Luhansk and Kherson regions, at the latest, in July. However, on the other side, Moscow is trying to convince the world that forcing Ukraine to concessions would satisfy Russia's appetite.

The truth is that the whole line about Ukraine which has to make concessions to stop the war failed between 2014-2022. It has never worked and brought us to the biggest war in Europe since WWII.

After all, Russia is demanding respect in this Organization, however, on the other hand, it has been preparing a series of provocations against the OSCE itself in the temporarily occupied areas of Ukraine, including by trying to compromise OSCE local staff there. So, the sole reason that shakes the foundations of the OSCE and European security is Russia.

Dear colleagues,

Ukrainians will keep fighting for their freedom, identity, and right to exist. Russia has left us no other choice.

We are grateful to our friends and partners for all efforts aimed to end this senseless war. And it is important that this support is rendered not only by states but also by ordinary people. Just recently people of Lithuania managed to crowdfund the sum of money necessary for the purchase of a high precision modern weapon. This is an exemplary gesture of support from people who clearly understand the existing threat to peace, freedom and human rights.

This week's decisions have set the right direction for our further actions. And we have to keep a momentum. We have to block and limit Russia's offensive capacities and not allow Moscow to dig in Ukraine and regroup in order to attack again in a few months.

Providing Ukraine with all possible support, including sanctions and all necessary weaponry, would be a strong deterrent not only for Russia.

Over the last week Belarus made a number of steps to display both loyalty and practical support for the aggressor. Among other things, Minsk has established operations command and scheduled new military drills for June 22. Unfortunately, last time the exercises turned out to be a pretext for a very real war. So, both, Moscow and Minsk, have to be reassured that there will be no victory for them in this war. This would save many lives.

Russia has to withdraw its troops, restore Ukraine's territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, including Crimea and, of course, assume the responsibility for all crimes committed against the Ukrainian people as well as to provide assurance of non-repetition of the aggression and reparation to the victims and return to the tenets of international law.

To conclude, I want to refer to the children of Ukraine once again. They are waiting for an answer from us about when Russia will run out of its missiles. And we have to do our utmost and even more to give them their childhood back by defending freedom and values we believe in. And we have to do our best so, children can return to their homes, to hug their friends and kiss their fathers.

I thank you, Mr Chairperson.