



EUROPEAN UNION

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EU Statement on Russia's ongoing military aggression against Ukraine

Madam Chair, the European Union and its Member States once again **express their resolute condemnation of Russia's brutal, unprovoked, and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine**. This war constitutes a blatant violation of international law, including the UN Charter and the OSCE principles and commitments, which we steadfastly uphold. **Any attempt by the Russian Federation**, including its representatives here in the Hofburg, **to rationalise its unacceptable and illegal aggressive show of force, its archaic attempt** to subjugate its sovereign neighbour, and to seize as much territory as possible, **is completely failing**.

Despite the stark reality on the ground, **Russia persists in its imperialistic illusion**, including verbally in this Forum. Just last week, the Head of the Russian Delegation again demanded that partners stop providing military assistance to Ukraine, and that the latter cease resisting, abandon its wish to join NATO and the EU, and acknowledge Russia's territorial usurpation, which he referred to as "new territorial realities".

These **demands are completely unacceptable**. They directly contradict the principles and commitments that all of us, including the Russian Federation, have agreed upon. Under international law, States have the unequivocal right to provide Ukraine, as the victim of this aggression, with any necessary assistance for its self-defence. Our support for Ukraine is transparent, in accordance with the UN Charter, most notably its Article 51, and focused on enhancing Ukraine's ability to safeguard its people and sovereignty and to recover its territorial integrity.

Russia's **calls for Ukraine's partners to discontinue their military assistance are both hypocritical and unfounded**. Clearly, the aggressor would prefer a powerless victim. To quote **Olexandra Matviichuk**, who in her speech in Oslo last December, while receiving the Nobel Peace Prize on behalf of the Centre for Civil Liberties, said: "The people of Ukraine desire peace more than anyone else in the world. But **peace cannot be achieved by a country under attack laying down its arms**. This would not be peace, but occupation. After the liberation of Bucha, we found a lot of civilians murdered in the streets and courtyards of their homes. These people were unarmed."

Madam Chair, as reiterated numerous times in this Forum, let me "reassure" the Russian Delegation that **our comprehensive support for Ukraine – including sustained political, financial, humanitarian, legal, economic and military assistance – will continue for as long as necessary**. Ukraine, like all participating States around this table, has the sovereign right to determine its own future. **Russia does not have the right to dictate the European or transatlantic choices of Ukraine or any other nation**.

Moreover, the **brute force displayed by Russia cannot be allowed to create any "new territorial realities"**. Following the fundamental principles of international law, we do not and will not recognise any illegal annexation of the territory of a sovereign State. Russia's attempts to duplicate the "Crimea playbook" last September ended in another farce and embarrassment. We clearly reiterate that Crimea, Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia continue to be Ukraine.

Madam Chair, **Russia's forces invaded Ukraine last February**, with the shameful support of the Lukashenko regime, **in a misguided anticipation for a swift victory**. Faced with the extraordinary courage, resilience and determination of the Ukrainian people, they resorted to attacks on civilian objects and critical civilian infrastructure, inflicting immense suffering on the Ukrainian people as well as substantial damage on Ukraine's economy. A recent and horrifying testament to this unchecked brutality was Russia's missile strike the night before on a residential building in Kryvyi Rih, that resulted in 11 dead and 36 injured civilians.

Russia's illegal war of aggression has also caused massive environmental damage. A preliminary report published by the United Nations Environment Programme in February 2023 confirms that Ukraine "experienced considerable environmental destruction" and is now facing a "compounded, multi-dimensional environmental crisis". Last week, **the destruction of the dam at Kakhovka Hydroelectric Power Plant** further exacerbated the already dire ecological and humanitarian situation through massive flooding, water contamination, destruction of planted crops as well as altered water supplies with potential long-term repercussions on the proper functioning of the ZNPP.

Madam Chair, numerous Ukrainian cities, towns and villages lie in ruins as a result of Russia's ruthless military tactics. **Russia cannot evade its responsibilities.** 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. The International Registry of Damages Caused by Russian Aggression has already been established, in the framework of the Council of Europe, to meet the request from the UN General Assembly. We need to make sure that the principle of the "aggressor pays the damage" will be upheld.

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.

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.