



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°1053 Vienna, 26 July 2023

EU Statement

Madam Chair, at the outset of our statement let us say very clearly: it is neither the FSC Chair, nor the OSCE Chair who are **responsible for the current deplorable state of play in our Organisation**. It is **the Russian Federation's consistent disregard** for international law and OSCE principles and commitments **over the years, that have led us to this situation**. It is also deplorable that the Russian delegation systematically avoids real debate in the FSC - either by leaving the room every week or by not showing up, as they did today.

Russia's unconscionable decision to launch a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the largest conventional war in Europe since World War II, surpasses all boundaries. **Nothing can justify this** illegal, unprovoked and brutal **aggression**. Targeting and killing thousands of people, attempting to redraw borders by force and to subjugate the will of a free people is not and will never become acceptable. We condemn in the strongest possible terms these acts and Russia's utter contempt for the international rules-based order. Yesterday's Special PC was another occasion to highlight and condemn Russia's barbaric and senseless attacks on cultural and religious heritage sites and the vital seaport infrastructure in the Odesa region.

We will continue to **hold Russia to account** and to **stand firmly by Ukraine** in its self-defence to preserve its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. We will be doing so **for as long as it takes**.

Madam Chair, exactly three months ago at the opening session of the Bulgarian FSC Chairpersonship on 26 April, we emphasised the necessity for this Forum, **to remain focused on Russia's war of aggression** against Ukraine and its devastating consequences. And the Forum has stayed on track under your leadership.

Throughout the past trimester, our **discussions have been particularly relevant**. We have covered Black Sea security, demining, the Women Peace and Security Agenda,

the Code of Conduct including the role of private military security companies, and security and the environment at the joint FSC-PC meeting. These discussions have allowed us to highlight the tragic and far-reaching consequences of Russia's actions on the Black Sea region and beyond, the use of hunger, environmental degradation, and sexual and gender-based violence as weapons of war. Because of Russia, Ukraine has become one of the most mine-contaminated countries in the world, and the process of demining will require decades, if not longer. Moreover, it became apparent that Russia's so-called private military security companies such as the Wagner Group are instruments of the aggressor, and pose serious risks to security in the region, and beyond.

We **thank you Ambassador Kraleva and your able team for this excellent work** and the stewardship of the Forum under these more than difficult circumstances.

The **common task of the FSC** is to facilitate cooperation among participating States for peace in our region by **reducing military risks and enhancing predictability through increased military transparency**. However, **Russia's actions and rhetoric are detrimentally affecting the work of this Forum**. Russia's blockage of the Annual Security Review Conference is only one example of this. Moscow's withdrawal from the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe poses a further challenge to the European Security Architecture. Russia needs to return to full compliance with international law and the OSCE principles and commitments. The **OSCE acquis in the politico-military dimension remains unique and must be preserved**, as it will be crucial for future endeavours. There will be many tasks ahead, including practical areas such as SALW and mine action with a particular focus on Ukraine.

We look forward to the upcoming **Canadian FSC Chairpersonship** and working with Ambassador Kinnear and her able team and assure them of our full support and engagement. At this point, we also bid farewell to Bosnia and Herzegovina from the FSC Troika and welcome Cyprus as a new Troika member.

Madam Chair, our call since 24 February 2022 remains the same: Russia has to stop the war. We, therefore, reiterate our demand **that Russia immediately and unconditionally cease its military actions** and withdraw all its troops and equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. We urge all countries, in particular the Belarusian authorities, not to provide material or other support for Russia's war of aggression.

Thank you.

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