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Permanent Mission  
of the Republic of Poland  
to the Organization for Security  
and Co-operation in Europe  
in Vienna



## **Speech of the President of the Republic of Poland H.E. Andrzej Duda at the OSCE Ministerial Council**

Łódź, 1 December 2022

**Distinguished Madam President,**

**Distinguished Minister, Chairman of our today`s meeting,**

**Distinguished Ministers, Representatives of the OSCE  
Participating States,**

Thank you very much for your invitation and thank you very much to Minister Zbigniew Rau for his commitment during the one-year-long Polish Chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, which is now coming to an end. I know very well how difficult and demanding that time was and still is. May I also express, via you, Minister, my thanks to all the other persons involved in the implementation of this very important task.

I regret that, the strenuous efforts made to prevent Russian aggression against Ukraine, have not produced the expected results. But in retrospect we know that the decision to invade Ukraine – a free, sovereign, independent state - was made in Moscow, in the Kremlin, and there was nothing in our hands, at our disposal as an OSCE community, as an international community, that could have changed it.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Russia`s brutal aggression against Ukraine has dominated the Polish chairmanship of the OSCE, putting aside all other goals we set ourselves at the start. Unfortunately, for the first time since the end of the Second World War, have we witnessed such a blatant military violation of the principles to which we had all voluntarily subscribed in order to prevent another war in Europe.

Conferences on Security and Co-operation in Europe, convened since the 1970s, were intended to enable us, Europeans, and our partners in the region to engage in dialogue on security, peace and human rights.

In the 1990s, we made a common decision, based on the jointly developed principles of the CSCE, to institutionalise that platform for dialogue and to create the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, which would replace it.

I wish to emphasize that it was a joint decision, taken back then, by the states participating in the Conferences. We developed together the principles governing the sovereign equality of

states, the refraining from the use of force, cooperation between states and the peaceful settlement of all disputes. Peace, equality and cooperation are the ideas by which we were supposed to conduct dialogue and act in our region! Today, we can clearly see that unfortunately one of the Member States, Russia, has brutally violated all these principles. And there is no doubt that today it is a criminal state whose policy cannot - and I stress, cannot - be agreed with, and whose words cannot be believed.

Although 10 months have passed since the start of the Russian aggression, I still cannot overcome the feeling of shock and anger looking at these principles now and juxtaposing them with the events that are unfolding in Ukraine as we speak. What I`m alluding to is the planned and consistent destruction of critical civilian infrastructure by the Russian army aimed at causing a humanitarian disaster.

I know that after the Russian crimes committed in Irpin and Bucha, after the initial shock caused by the information about these horrendous events, the world and all of us are unfortunately beginning to get used to similar news. Ladies and Gentlemen, we must not allow this to happen, either with respect to ourselves or to anyone else. We must not get used to it. We cannot move past the planned murder of civilians or the abduction of Ukrainian children, who are subsequently deported deep into Russia. We cannot allow any state in the world to conduct its demographic policy in such a way. For, as a matter of fact, children are abducted in order to improve the

demographic situation in Russia, to save Russia from a future demographic disaster. In order to russify these children – turn them into Russians in the future. We know this also from our history. Unfortunately, this is the way Russia treated other nations for decades or perhaps even for centuries.

I fear that when we start treating Russian bestialities as something normal, it will be equivalent to the victory of the idea of the 'Russkiy mir', meaning brutality, aggression, war, poverty and death. In other words, the victory of anti-values against which we have agreed to cooperate in order to build a Europe and a world where individual freedom and human life are respected, where everything is done to ensure that people live in the best possible, decent conditions, where all problems are resolved through negotiation, without recourse to violence.

**Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Distinguished Delegates,**

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe has taken a number of initiatives since 2014 to stop the advancing Russian aggression against Ukraine! Such efforts were undertaken by the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine, who started their activities in the 1990s, and the Special Monitoring Mission established in 2014.

For eight years - civilian, international, unarmed observers have been monitoring the situation on the ground and providing us with relatively objective and reliable information about the

situation *inter alia* in Donbass, where the Russian occupation has continued since 2014.

During my mission as President, since 2015, I have had an opportunity to meet in person the envoys, the OSCE observers sent to Ukraine. Unfortunately, these people, the observers working there, were helpless in the face of Russian actions restricting the ability of OSCE personnel to carry out their tasks. I heard it from them during our meeting and I saw that helplessness in their eyes.

What is more, just moments before the full-scale invasion started, the Russian Federation decided to challenge the consensus reached on extending the mission's mandate which resulted in its closure. Today we can see, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that Russian intentions on that count were not sincere right from the start. They served merely as a smokescreen for preparing an armed assault, which we are seeing now.

Unfortunately, Ukraine is not the only area where Russia is pursuing a policy contradictory to the rudimentary principles of the OSCE.

It is with deep concern that we are following the actions that Russia is taking, threatening the internal stability and security of Moldova, in response to that country's sovereign choice of a path towards integration with the European Union. It is incompatible with the objectives and values of the OSCE to keep up, with the participation and protection of Russian troops, the frozen conflict

in Transnistria, where for more than 30 years a zone of lawlessness, corruption and criminality has existed, in the form of the so-called Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic – an artificial entity created in fact by Russia.

Russia plays a similarly destructive role in the Balkans, where it is attempting to rebuild its former sphere of influence. Moscow-backed separatist ambitions in the Republika Srpska in Bosnia and Herzegovina could lead to a renewed conflict in the region, which has only recently begun to overcome the aftermath of a bloody years-long war, thanks, among other things, to the efforts of the OSCE. In this context, one must also recall the case of Montenegro, where, in order to prevent the country from joining the North Atlantic Alliance, Russia went so far as to attempt to organise a coup d'état. We can all vividly remember those experiences.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The experience of recent years shows that our activities carried out within the framework of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe are beneficial only if the parties involved are willing to improve the situation on the basis of unquestionable principles of sovereignty and a peaceful dialogue. In such cases, the OSCE's involvement facilitated reforms across many sectors in various countries: from security to the judiciary, especially in the post-Soviet region and the Balkans.

The war against Ukraine, in turn, has proved that the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe is not able to guarantee peace if its actions are sabotaged from within by an aggressor who does not respect the accepted principles which we abide by.

Over the last year of the Polish Chairmanship, we have tried to find a solution to the Moscow-induced security crisis using all possible OSCE mechanisms. Unfortunately, the organization's capabilities in the political and military sphere are in fact insufficient. We have to be clear about that. The OSCE's capabilities are based on the goodwill and cooperation of the warring parties.

When the conflict is triggered by the aggressive action of a participating state - the organization is apparently unable to reach a peaceful agreement.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The Russian invasion of Ukraine is a challenge for every OSCE participating state. Together, we must show that the values and principles we developed together decades ago are still valid and shared by us! It is absolutely necessary! We will not accept a criminal aggression in the 21st century. We will not accept violations of humanitarian law, deliberate attacks on civilian infrastructure and the environment. There is no acceptance and there cannot be acceptance of that, either now or in the future.

I want to make it clear, speaking in this forum, that there can be no consent on our part either to any agreement that would legitimize forcible shifting of the borders. All peace talks must take place with the voluntary consent of the Ukrainian authorities. Only Ukrainians themselves have the right to decide about the future of their country.

I have no doubt that a possible agreement which would in any way grant or tolerate Russia`s wartime territorial gains, would in fact be a ticking bomb planted under the European security system that would sooner or later explode. The force of the explosion will be devastating to all of us, to our countries and societies, to peace and international order. We must be aware of this when considering possible scenarios for ending the war started by Russia against Ukraine.

Recognition of Russian gains at the expense of Ukraine is simply a road to a new, great conflict, including a world war. I am not saying this to frighten anyone. However, taking Europe's security seriously requires considering all options. We must learn lessons from the events of 24 February 2022. I vividly recall that even shortly before the Russian aggression was launched, a full-scale conflict seemed quite impossible to many capitals. But for 281 days now, it has been a daily reality for millions of Ukrainians. Therefore, we must now take all scenarios into account, including those which seem improbable in our rational European way of thinking. Today it is really impossible to tell what is improbable, after all that happened and is still happening in Ukraine now.



In the current situation, for the sake of protecting the existing security order, we must ensure that international law is respected and that those guilty of violating it are punished. We must not spare efforts to enforce the fundamental principles enshrined in the UN Charter, the founding acts of the OSCE, the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris for a New Europe.

We must step up efforts to ensure respect for international humanitarian law and human rights, and support the investigation and prosecution of those responsible for the most serious of crimes. In turn, those guilty of crimes of aggression, war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide must bear full criminal liability. Only in this way can we restore peace in Europe and prevent acts of aggression in the future.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I assure our Macedonian friends, who will take over the chairmanship of the OSCE next year, of our support for the successful implementation of the Organization`s mission. They can count on our support in their efforts to ensure respect for international law, including the fundamental principles of the UN Charter, such as respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states, non-interference in the internal affairs of other states and the peaceful resolution of international disputes.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I hope that the OSCE Ministerial Council, which is about to begin, will be able to develop a common position on the causes of the

current crisis in the international environment. This would lay a strong foundation for a constructive discussion on how to deal with the current challenges as well as similar ones in the future.

Today it is a great challenge for the Organization. I am convinced that thanks to your wisdom and determination you succeed in working out such solutions. I wish you fruitful deliberations.

Thank you for your attention.