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Permanent Council of the OSCE

**Remarks by Marija Pejčinović Burić,
Secretary General of the Council of Europe**

Vienna, 9 June 2022

Mesdames et Messieurs les Ambassadeurs,

Chers collègues,

Lorsque je me suis adressée à votre Conseil il y a douze mois, la préoccupation majeure de l'Europe et du monde entier était l'impact et l'incertitude causés par la pandémie de la covid-19.

Aujourd'hui, alors que ce défi persiste, d'autres sujets de préoccupation sont apparus de manière violente.

The Russian Federation's ongoing aggression against Ukraine is shocking to witness.

It has ruptured the security in which Europe's citizens should live.

Their physical security –

Their economic security –

And their democratic security too.

This is of course felt first and foremost in Ukraine, whose people are suffering in ways that we had hoped never to see again in Europe.

I was in Kyiv last month, on Europe Day.

My conversations with President Zelensky and others were humbling –

And the impact of what I saw and heard in Borodyanka and Irpin will be forever with me.

The accounts from those towns and elsewhere are chilling.

Rape, torture, the killing of women and men – girls and boys.

All of this results from one country's violent pivot away from the values on which peace is founded –

Human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

Values that underpin the Council of Europe and that are central also to the OSCE.

It is up to each of us to respond to this situation in line with our mandates and in light of the specific constraints that we face.

I have no doubt that my Organisation's member states responded in the right way –

Firstly by suspending the Russian Federation and then by excluding it altogether.

I am mindful that the people of that country will soon lose the protection of the European Convention on Human Rights –

And their ultimate right of individual appeal to the European Court of Human Rights.

But I am equally clear that this loss is the responsibility of their national authorities –

And that to retain Russia within the Council of Europe – after its flagrant violation of our Statute – would have been untenable.

Right now, supporting Ukraine is an absolute priority for us.

We are advising the Prosecutor General's office as it carries out investigations into gross human rights violations –

Our Turin Ministerial Session adopted a revised Action Plan for the country, agreed with the Ukrainian authorities, and in light of the realities on the ground –

And we will be ready, with a package of additional tailor-made measures, whenever the violence ends.

I am pleased also that we have been able to agree the reopening of our office in Kyiv.

Ukraine is part of our European family, and it is right that we are there to support it.

It is also right that we support our member states in upholding the human rights of the millions of refugees who have fled Ukraine, seeking safety.

Our Development Bank is providing financial support for this.

And my Special Representative on Migration and Refugees is coordinating a range of additional measures too.

Ultimately, lasting and sustainable peace within Ukraine must be achieved through a negotiated solution to the current conflict:

One that is rooted in the terms of the UN Charter –

The Helsinki Final Act –

And the European Convention on Human Rights.

It should also fully respect Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Again, I call on an immediate end to the Russian aggression: there is no room for this violence in 21st century Europe.

In the meantime, our work will continue –

And so must the OSCE's activities within the country.

These are important, admired and appreciated.

Of course, it is also right that the broader work of our organisations progresses.

After all, the violence inflicted on Ukraine shows what happens when there is a failure to abide by multilateralism.

This should not shake our faith in international organisations.

But should instead remind us of how crucial it is that they succeed –

And that governments provide the political will required to make that happen.

Despite the bad news that surrounds us, there are still plenty of areas in which this approach bears fruit.

Let me give you three examples from the Council of Europe perspective – All of which were achieved just last month.

First, our Second Additional Protocol to the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime was opened for signature.

This updates the provisions of the original treaty –

Extends the rule of law further into cyberspace –

And was immediately signed by 22 states.

Second, at our Turin Ministerial Session, member states endorsed our work on new instruments addressing human rights and artificial intelligence and human rights and the environment.

And third, confidence-building measures for Armenia and Azerbaijan began with the first full-scale meeting between civil society representatives.

On these issues – and many others – both of our organisations have shared interests, goals and perspectives.

And I was clear from the beginning of my mandate about the importance that I attach to our relationship and the value of reinforcing it.

I am pleased by the way that this continues to develop:

In my personal interactions, including with the heads of OSCE institutions;

With the close and productive links that exist between our Secretariats;

And through the meetings of the Council of Europe / OSCE Co-ordination Group –

Whose most recent event focused on the fights against terrorism and trafficking in human beings.

I hope that the next meeting will soon be scheduled and trust that it too will be productive.

Looking further ahead, there can be no doubt that the Russian Federation's actions will have long-term implications for the future of our continent and beyond:

Implications for our security, prosperity and rights.

Ensuring the right multilateral response will be crucial for Europe and its people.

Both our Organisations must continue looking to the future.

For my part, I have called for a Council of Europe Summit of Heads of State and Government –

An occasion on which to take stock of the new realities, co-ordinate our approach, and ensure support for Europe's democracies –

Including, crucially, those countries that are exposed to Russian aggression –

That are committed to European standards and integration –

And that are often seeking to make progress from outside European Union membership.

We must hope that there comes a day when all of Europe is again united in peace.

But for now, we must all do what we can to stop the violence and support Ukraine.

I look forward to your thoughts and questions.