



## EUROPEAN UNION

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### **EU Statement on Russia's ongoing military aggression against Ukraine**

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Mr. Chair, we strongly reject the claims we have repeatedly been hearing from Moscow, that Russia is a victim of some "Western conspiracy" and had no choice but to launch a so-called "special military operation". There was a choice. A choice to act as a responsible member of the international community engaging in a constructive dialogue, to abide by international law, the UN Charter, and the principles and commitments of our Organization that Russia had itself signed up to.

It is the responsibility of all of us to shed light on what Russia's objectives really are: an illegal, unjustified war of aggression that in the first phase aimed at subjugating a sovereign state, Ukraine, and now, in a blatant violation of fundamental principles of international law, at annexing parts of its territory.

Having amassed, under the pretext of military exercises, massive numbers of troops near Ukraine's borders as well as in the illegally annexed Crimean peninsula, President Putin consciously decided to launch on 24 February an unprovoked and unjustified full-scale military attack. There is nothing special or limited about the invasion, as Russia, with the complicity of Belarusian authorities, attacked numerous Ukrainian cities simultaneously, causing immense suffering across Ukraine.

Mr. Chair, the Kremlin announced, for the third time in Russia's history, after July 1914 and June 1941, a supposedly "partial" mobilisation which only highlights Russia's setbacks on the battlefield. Russia has now made the unacceptable choice to further extend the cost of its war, including for its own population. The addition of thousands of poorly trained and ill-equipped reservists only confirms that this war has been from

the very beginning a strategic mistake for Russia. It also enhances the absurdity of the Kremlin's claim about a "special military operation". Moreover, the mobilisation and conscription of persons in the territories which are temporarily under Russian military control, including the illegally-annexed Crimean peninsula, constitute another gross violation of international humanitarian law. It amounts, in particular, to a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention which precludes the occupying power from compelling protected persons from serving in its armed or auxiliary forces.

We condemn the sham referenda organised by Russia at gunpoint on Ukrainian territory for what they actually are: a farce and an illegal and blatant violation of the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine and of the fundamental tenets of international law. The world clearly sees through what Russia struggles to fabricate as a parallel reality. The EU and its Member States will never recognise these regions as anything but a part of Ukraine's territory and will continue to support Ukraine's efforts to restore its sovereignty and territorial integrity as long as necessary. We call upon all States to unequivocally reject these sham referenda as Russia's attempt to give false cover to its violations of international law.

Mr. Chair, we strongly deplore Russia's irresponsible nuclear rhetoric. The references to nuclear weapons do not shake our determination, resolve and unity to stand by Ukraine and our comprehensive support to Ukraine's ability to defend its territorial integrity and sovereignty as long as it takes. We urge Russia, in line with the IAEA Board of Governors Resolution of 15 September, to immediately cease all actions against, and at, the Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant and any other nuclear facility in order for the competent authorities of Ukraine to regain full control over all nuclear facilities within Ukraine's internationally recognized borders.

Abidance by international law, including international humanitarian law, is a fundamental obligation of all states. Relevant commitments are also reflected in our OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security, notably in Chapters 7 and 8 thereof. As a result of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, civilians have been killed tortured, harassed, sexually assaulted or kidnapped. According to the latest update of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Russian attacks have resulted in at least 14,532 civilian casualties – 5,916 deaths and 8,616 injured. The real numbers are certainly much higher and continue to grow by the day.

The liberation of further Ukrainian territories by its armed forces, as evidenced in Izyum, reveals new shocking discoveries of Russia's reprehensible actions, including torture chambers and mass graves, with many bodies showing sign of torture. We support all efforts to gather evidence and document the atrocities of this war, including by the International Criminal Court's Prosecutor, the UN Human Rights Council and the independent experts mandated by the OSCE under the Moscow Mechanism, in order to hold those responsible to account. Last Friday in Geneva, experts from the Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, mandated by the UN Human Rights Council presented their initial investigation focused on four regions. They stated that war crimes have been committed in Ukraine, based on the evidence gathered by the Commission. The Commission found out that some Russian soldiers had committed sexual and gender-based crimes, involving victims between ages of four to eighty-two years.

Mr Chair, after seven months, everyone can see that the aggression against Ukraine did not go according to the Kremlin's plan. Its army is suffering obvious setbacks on the battlefield. Russia continues to be increasingly isolated –politically and economically - vis-à-vis the international community determined to stand up in defence of the international rules-based order and in unprecedented solidarity with Ukraine. The Russian population does not seem either to understand the goals of this senseless, illegal and unjustified war.

In conclusion, we reiterate our condemnation of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine in the strongest possible terms. We demand that Russia immediately and unconditionally cease its military actions and withdraw all its troops and military equipment from Ukraine. We reiterate our unwavering support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

Thank you!

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\*, ALBANIA\*, UKRAINE and REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, the Potential Candidate Country GEORGIA the EFTA countries NORWAY, ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

\* Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.