



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International
Organizations in Vienna

**Statement in response to the Address by the Chairperson-in-Office
of the OSCE, Minister for Foreign and
European Affairs and Trade of Malta Dr Ian Borg**

As delivered by the Ukrainian Delegation,
to the 1457th special meeting of the Permanent Council
25 January 2024

Madam Chairperson,

Ukraine warmly welcomes to the Permanent Council the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Minister for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade of Malta, H.E. Ian Borg.

Thank you, Excellency, for the comprehensive presentation of priorities in the OSCE for 2024.

We wish you every success in navigating the OSCE this year.

We are grateful to Malta for keeping the Russian war on the top of the OSCE agenda.

This matters for all participating States.

Especially, given the fact that Russia invaded Ukraine back in 2014 when our country was a neutral state by law.

And if one wants to live in a secure and prosperous world, there is no alternative to protecting human life, inviolability of borders and sovereign right of every participating State to freely choose its future.

Excellencies,

Killing civilians, random shelling of residential areas, deportation and forced adoption of children, military indoctrination of minors and youth, taking civilian hostages, and arbitrary execution of detainees and POWs – all this reminds us that Russia's war against Ukraine is an unprecedented assault on humanity in Europe's modern history.

OSCE's response to this should be the only credible measure of its efficiency.

That's why ending Russia's impunity, delivering justice to victims and bringing masterminds to account should be among OSCE activities.

The OSCE can contribute to this cause by continuing and intensifying documentation of Russia's crimes, especially in temporarily occupied territories.

We count on relevant political guidance and assistance to the OSCE institutions.

Likewise, the international community needs a special international tribunal on Russia to send a powerful message that aggression will never be tolerated.

Therefore, we welcome that ensuring accountability was highlighted by the CIO.

This especially matters for the OSCE, as three OSCE officials, Maksym Petrov, Vadym Golda and Dmytro Shabanov, have been illegally kept by the kremlin regime for almost two years.

One of the detainees is in a next to critical health condition.

By keeping them as hostages, russia attacks the idea of OSCE field presence.

So, forcing russia to free these people is a matter of priority, including by holding russia politically and legally accountable for this crime, first of all, in the OSCE.

Such terrorist practices must be ended, including missile terror.

Since the beginning of 2024, hundreds of missiles were already fired at Ukraine.

The intensification of aerial attacks is another stark reminder that the OSCE has to maintain attention to critical infrastructure protection and energy resilience.

The destruction of the Kakhovka dam, ZNPP occupation and targeting port infrastructure by russia speak volumes that the consequences of its war go far beyond Ukraine's borders.

Environment and food security should be our focus.

This also signals the need to improve the disaster risk reduction cycle in the context of man-made disasters.

Any climate actions would be insufficient, until russia stops to ruin the environment in the OSCE area.

Further discussions on demining, reconstruction and rehabilitation are important as well.

The economic dimension of the war should be also kept in the spotlight.

russia is persistently developing grey schemes to smuggle vital elements for its war – from semiconductors for missiles to cotton to make gunpowder for artillery.

Given this, cutting ties with the russian companies, tightening export control, introducing secondary sanctions, and bringing shell companies to account is a matter of priority for our common security.

At the same time, outlining digitalization in the CIO program is very timely.

While wider access to digital technologies provides great opportunities, however, it also creates a lot of challenges.

As moscow remains focused on undermining our societies, including through spreading disinformation, election meddling, cyberattacks, we encourage Malta to continue previous efforts in the cybersecurity area.

These efforts would also significantly contribute to media literacy initiatives.

Cultural property protection and countering trafficking of cultural objects is another challenge to be on the OSCE radars.

russia loots and destroys our cultural heritage as moscow aims to erase the Ukrainian identity.

Dear Chairperson,

russia has not changed its goals towards Ukraine. moscow wants to either Ukraine's subjugation or destruction.

And the kremlin still believes that it can outwait the Free World.

As an elected member of the UN Security Council and the OSCE Chair, Malta can observe how russian metastases spread from a regional to global level.

russia's friends already use referendums to annex neighboring countries.

That's why we cannot ignore russia's efforts to discredit democracy through conducting illegitimate elections in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine.

In the meantime, the creation of a new axis of evil, consisting of russia, Iran and North Korea, is happening before our eyes, thus, raising concerns about security implications for Europe and the world.

This places additional responsibility on the OSCE, where russia still is a participating State.

The transfer of weapons from Iran and North Korea to russia increases not only suffering of the Ukrainian people but also undermines the global non-proliferation regime.

The lesson is clear. We cannot allow ourselves to lose time.

Every reduction in pressure on the aggressor, including the temptation to give russia another chance in the OSCE, adds years to the war.

As President Zelenskyy recently said, "in any dire confrontation, there's always a point where a catastrophe can be stopped. Ukraine is that opportunity. And we all in the Free World must be unwavering in our pursuit of our actions, and goals, just as putin is frank about his doom-laden ambitions".

Being at the helm of the UN and OSCE, Malta can also see how both organizations are misused by russia for the justification and covering up its war.

This confirms once again the need to further isolate russia within the OSCE.

The OSCE future and its leadership could not depend on the aggressor's will but on our readiness to finally end the abuse of a consensus rule by the aggressor.

And as an elected member of the UN Security Council and the OSCE Chair, Malta has a unique opportunity to contribute to the restoration of respect for the UN Charter and Helsinki Final Act.

We count on the CIO support in the implementation of Ukraine's Peace Formula, as Valletta already did by hosting the 3rd meeting of the national advisors last October.

Concluding my statement, I wish the OSCE Chairpersonship of Malta every success in implementing its Program.

And as the 10th year of the occupation of Crimea and the second anniversary of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by russia approach us, the OSCE as never before needs strong leadership in defending its principles.

Malta can fully rely on Ukraine's support for such a principled leadership across all OSCE three dimensions.

Minister Borg, we look forward to welcoming you to Ukraine in your new capacity as the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office.

I thank you.