



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council No.1464
Vienna, 7 March 2024**

**EU Statement on the Russian Federation's ongoing
aggression against Ukraine**

1. Madame Chair, over the past days, Russia has continued its brutal attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure in Ukraine. In the early hours of 2nd March, Russia launched yet another drone attack on Ukraine's Black Sea port city of Odesa, hitting a multi-storey residential building, destroying 18 apartments and damaging seven others. At least twelve civilians, including five children, were killed, as confirmed by the Ukrainian authorities. Civilian casualties of Russia's aerial attacks were also reported in the Kherson and Donetsk regions of Ukraine, including in Dnipro, Myrnohrad and Pokrovsk. We strongly condemn these continuous heinous attacks by Russia and we express our deepest condolences to the families of the victims. As we have emphasised repeatedly, deliberately directing attacks against civilians and civilian objects constitutes a war crime, and all responsible must and will be held to account in line with international law. The persistent, indiscriminate nature of such attacks and the escalating casualties demonstrate the Kremlin's total lack of commitment to peace, its contempt for international law, and its utter disregard for human life.
2. As a direct consequence of Russia's unprovoked, unjustifiable and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, up to 14.6 million people in Ukraine are in need of humanitarian assistance according to UNHCR. Women and children are among those in most vulnerable situations, often deprived of their basic needs, facing barriers to accessing services, and being more exposed to human rights violations and protection risks, including sexual and gender-based violence. The EU underlines the importance of supporting and empowering women and girls as agents of peace and security, and we commend the resilience and leadership of the Ukrainian women as soldiers,

diplomats, journalists, civil society representatives, politicians and all those courageously serving their country in the face of Russia's war of aggression.

3. At last week's PC, the 27 Member States of the European Union together with 18 other participating states, invoked the Moscow Mechanism to address the arbitrary detention of Ukrainian civilians by the Russian Federation amidst human rights violations and humanitarian impacts of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. According to independent reports, Ukrainian civilians have become victims of arbitrary arrests and detentions, deportations and forcible transfers, kidnapping and other forms of arbitrary deprivation of liberty, including instances of enforced disappearances. Once again, we demand that Russia immediately release all individuals unlawfully deprived of their liberty, including the three arbitrarily detained OSCE staff members. We are particularly worried about recent reports concerning the severe deterioration of the health of one former SMM staff member who urgently needs medical treatment.
4. On 26th February, Russia started early voting in parts of Ukrainian territories it temporarily and illegally occupies for its presidential elections to be held later in March. The EU strongly condemns the illegal holding of these so-called "elections" and Russia's futile attempts to give a veneer of legitimacy to its forcible and illegal annexation or integration of Ukraine's sovereign territory. This is yet another blatant violation of international law, including the UN Charter, and Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We will never recognise the result of such unlawful actions that have no validity under international law and do not form the basis for any alteration of the status of Ukraine's regions. Crimea, Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk, Luhansk are Ukraine.
5. In this context, we recall Ukraine's side event of 5th March, with the participation of Refat Chubarov, head of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis, on the 10th anniversary of the illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula by the Russian Federation. Countless reported violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law were discussed, including

extrajudicial executions, torture, enforced disappearances, politically motivated persecutions, and the inhumane conditions in which political prisoners from Crimea are held, including Crimean Tatars. The Mejlis, the self-governing body of the Crimean Tatars, must be allowed to resume its activities, and the persecution of its leaders must end.

6. On 4th March, we marked the second year since the attempted illegal seizure of Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) by the Russian Armed Forces. In this context, we reiterate the importance of nuclear safety and security regarding peaceful nuclear facilities and materials in all circumstances. Russia is solely responsible for having put the safety and security of Ukraine's nuclear facilities at grave risk with its war of aggression, potentially endangering the population of Ukraine, neighbouring States and other countries. Russia must immediately cease all military operations against and in ZNPP, withdraw its troops and military equipment from ZNPP and hand it back to their rightful owner, Ukraine, in order for the competent Ukrainian authorities to preserve and promptly regain full control over all nuclear facilities within Ukraine's internationally recognised borders. Russia's irresponsible nuclear rhetoric and its posture of strategic intimidation are unacceptable.
7. In conclusion, we once again demand that Russia immediately stop its war of aggression against Ukraine, and completely and unconditionally withdraw all its forces and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders. We also condemn the continued military support for Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine provided by Belarus, as well as Iran, and the DPRK. We urge all countries not to provide material or other support for Russia's war of aggression, which is a blatant violation of international law, including the UN Charter, and the OSCE's core principles and commitments. We will continue to stand with Ukraine and its people for as long as it takes.

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ALBANIA*, UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA*, and GEORGIA, the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as ANDORRA, MONACO, 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.