



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1379 Vienna, 23 June 2022

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

1. Mr Chair, today is the 120th day since the morning when the Ukrainian people woke up to the deafening sound of air alarms and explosions. At four o'clock on 24 February the largest war of aggression in Europe since the Second World War started, bringing untold suffering to the people of Ukraine.
2. The world knows who the aggressor is. With its premeditated, unprovoked and unjustified attack, Russia chose to be the aggressor, which we strongly condemn. The world continues to stand in full solidarity with Ukraine and its people. The World Refugee Day last Monday reminded us of the enduring pain of millions of people who have fled their homes in Ukraine. The EU will continue to provide strong support for Ukraine's overall economic, military, social and financial resilience, including humanitarian aid. Our financial sanctions, aimed at reducing the military capabilities of the aggressor, are another crucial part of this equation. Wars of aggression did not pay off in the past and it is even more imperative that they do not pay off in today's world.
3. Russia's aggression is a tragedy for Ukraine. At the same time, it constitutes an acute challenge for the international community. Russian officials and representatives, including in this Organisation, question the term "international rules-based order". The basic principles of the international rules-based order is that the sovereignty, the independence and the territorial integrity of states must be respected and that borders cannot be changed by military force. The overwhelming majority of states continue to cherish and uphold these principles that are a cornerstone of international law and is enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act.

4. The recent statement by President Putin about the “return and strengthening of lands” exposed the imperialist nature of Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine and clearly demonstrated his violent and neo-imperialist attempt at sheer territorial conquest and rewriting history.
5. Following the strategic failure to achieve a full-scale invasion of its neighbour, the Kremlin turned to scorched earth tactics in Ukraine, razing whole cities to the ground with indiscriminate shelling and bombardments, also on civilian objects. There are widespread reports about forcible deportation of Ukrainian citizens, including children to Russia, also through so-called “filtration camps”. Last week, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet told the Human Rights Council that the extent of death and destruction in Mariupol suggested serious international law violations and that “the horrors inflicted on the civilian population would leave their indelible mark, including on generations to come”. A few weeks ago, the Russian Ambassador to the UK described this destruction as “a collateral damage”. This seems now to be cynically repeated in Sieverodonetsk and in other places in Ukraine. Avoiding such a damage is quite easy to achieve. President Putin simply needs to order a halt to this war and withdraw all Russian forces and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders.
6. Mr. Chair, last Sunday, we marked the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict. This is in commemoration of United Nations Security Council resolution 1820 (2008) to condemn sexual violence as a tactic of war. Russia’s ongoing war against Ukraine underlines the urgent need to redouble our efforts in this regard. Reports, including the one by the Moscow mechanism experts, outline widespread conflict-related violence, such as rape, sexual violence and sexual harassment, committed by Russian armed forces in Ukraine, including against children. This is appalling. Such barbaric acts must be investigated and full accountability must be ensured. The use of sexual violence in armed conflict is a war crime. The EU will support Ukrainian and international investigations aimed at holding accountable the perpetrators of these crimes and of all other atrocities.
7. With regard to the Ukrainian territories under Russian military control, the European Union recalls that the duties of any occupying power are clearly spelled out in

international humanitarian law. Russia cannot hide behind the puppet structures it installs regarding acts such as holding illegal referenda, the attempts to replace democratically elected Ukrainian administration, the simplified process for issuing Russian passports to Ukrainian citizens and the attempts to introduce the Russian rouble or Russian curricula in these Ukrainian territories. Hence, our condemnation and calls to reverse all unlawful acts are addressed to Russia. This also includes the urgent need to liberate the remaining national SMM staff members who are detained by Russia-backed armed formations in the non-government controlled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk, the need to stop the harassment, intimidation and media campaign against the SMM, as well as the fair treatment of prisoners of war, in particular the death sentences handed to three foreign POWs in Donetsk, in full compliance with the international humanitarian law. Russia will have to answer for these actions.

8. Mr. Chair, it was not incidental when on 1 April, Russia's former president and the current deputy Chairman of the National Security Council Medvedev claimed that grain export was a "silent, but powerful weapon, as food security in several countries depends on the Russian grain suppliers". In the weeks thereafter, we have all seen the weaponisation of food supplies, accompanied by a false one-sided narrative. Let us be clear: Russia's invasion of Ukraine, notably the blockade of the export of Ukraine's grain and targeting of grain terminals, is sending ripple effects throughout the world, increasing the risk of millions of people being deprived of food. There are no EU sanctions on Russian exports of food to global markets and EU sanctions allow for humanitarian assistance. The EU and its Member States, together with our partners, are supporting Ukraine in restoring its export capabilities, so that the grain can reach people worldwide.
9. The European Union continues to condemn Russia's premeditated, unprovoked, unjustified and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine in the strongest possible terms. We call on Russia to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders and to immediately and unconditionally cease its military actions and withdraw all its troops and equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine, including the illegally annexed Crimean peninsula. We will never recognise any illegal entities nor annexation of Ukraine's territory. We also reiterate our call on Belarus to stop enabling the Russian aggression and to abide by its international obligations.

10. As long as Russia's military aggression against Ukraine continues, the EU will remain committed to keeping up its pressure, including through restrictive measures, to limit Russia's ability to continue this senseless war. We will continue supporting Ukraine and its people towards their European future. We stand with Ukraine.

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