



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Special Permanent Council No.1435 Vienna, 25 July 2023

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

1. Mr. Chair, let me start by thanking the North Macedonia OSCE Chairpersonship for convening this special meeting of the Permanent Council.
2. Since the very beginning of Russia's full scale invasion of Ukraine, we have sadly witnessed Russia's persistent and deliberate targeting of Ukrainian cities and civilians.
3. In the early hours of 23rd of July, Russia once again launched a cowardly barrage of missiles, including ballistic ones, on the Ukrainian seaport of Odesa, killing at least one person and injuring more than 20 civilians, including children. Russia targeted the historic centre of Odesa, which is inscribed into UNESCO World Heritage List, and in the process, destroyed at least 29 cultural sites and six residential buildings. Even the historic Transfiguration Cathedral, the first and foremost Orthodox church in Odesa founded in 1794, was among Russia's targets and it now lies heavily damaged.
4. This heinous attack against cultural and religious sites in Odesa is another
5. r illustration that the Russian declarations regarding their so-called 'genuine' interest in "protecting" these sites, as well as cultural rights and the freedom

of religion and belief of the people living in Ukraine, are merely lies. In reality, Russia is barbarically attempting to destroy Ukraine's cultural and religious heritage, as a means to subjugate Ukraine and erase its distinctive identity. Since 24 February 2022, UNESCO has verified damage to 270 cultural sites in Ukraine, including 116 religious sites. We point out that Russia is bound by the 1954 Hague Convention to protect cultural property during armed conflict and intentionally directing attacks against a protected cultural heritage site is a war crime. We demand that Russia immediately stops its attacks on cultural heritage sites.

6. There is no doubt that Russia bears full responsibility for its acts of military aggression and the destruction and loss of life it has caused. Russia's political and military leadership, and all those responsible for war crimes and other most serious crimes committed in connection with Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine will be brought to justice and held accountable. Ukraine and its people must receive justice and adequate reparations from Russia.

7. Mr. Chair, since withdrawing from the Black Sea Grain Initiative on 17 July, Russia has bombed port infrastructure in a number of Ukraine's seaports, including in Odesa, Chornomorsk and Mykolaiv, causing civilian casualties, including children. According to reports more than 60.000 tonnes of grain destined for export were destroyed on 19 July. Russia has also threatened to attack grain shipments passing through the Black Sea. This is unacceptable. Since Russia's withdrawal, wheat and corn prices have soared. The simple truth is that Russia has made a cynical calculation: without regard to the global food insecurity crisis it has created through its war, by blocking exports from Ukraine it hopes to increase its own export profits in order to finance its war of aggression against Ukraine. The EU and its Member States remain committed to address the needs of countries vulnerable to food insecurity, including through the EU's Solidarity Lanes.

Yesterday, the Food Systems Summit +2 in Rome called for accelerated action in this regard.

8. The EU reiterates its unwavering support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. We demand that Russia ceases its illegal war of aggression against Ukraine and withdraws all its military forces, proxies, and equipment, unconditionally and entirely, from the whole territory of Ukraine. Russia must also immediately cease actions endangering the safety and security of civilian nuclear facilities in Ukraine.

9. We reiterate that we will continue to stand with Ukraine and its people for as long as it takes to help Ukraine rightfully defend itself, restore its sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders and preserve its distinctive culture and identity. Ukraine will prevail!

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ALBANIA*, UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, and BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA*, the Potential Candidate Country GEORGIA, and 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.