



## EUROPEAN UNION

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

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Mr. Chair,

President Putin recently stated that **his war against Ukraine**, or, in his Orwellian formulation, "**the special military operation**", was proceeding "**according to plan**". Let us look more deeply into this revealing statement.

The EU and its Member State **are deeply concerned about what this "plan" is covering**. Does it aim at the following:

- Bombing the densely populated Kyiv at 4 o'clock in the morning on the first day of the invasion and continuing to do so in blatant disregard of civilian lives and the basic principles of International Humanitarian Law?
- Reducing Ukrainian cities like Kharkiv and Mariupol to rubble, reminiscent of long forgotten images in Europe?
- Misusing the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone for military purposes and attacking the largest nuclear power plant in Europe?
- Having hundreds of Ukrainian civilians killed and thousands wounded and traumatised, including children, while targeting and devastating, including with indiscriminate use of cluster munition and thermobaric bombs, civilian infrastructure and hospitals, and attacking people on the run as it was the case in Irpin or Mariupol?
- Causing the unnecessary death of or severe injuries to thousands of

soldiers and combatants?

- Forcing millions of people in Ukraine to desperately flee their homes in search of safe shelter?

Did the Russian leadership consider the **economic consequences** for its own population we had been incessantly warning of? The Russian rouble is nosediving and hundreds of international companies are leaving Russia not only because of sanctions, but mostly because they do not want to do business with this aggressor state killing innocent people.

Mr. Chair, our position is and remains unambiguous. The EU and its Member States **condemn in the strongest possible terms Russia's unprovoked and unjustified military aggression** against Ukraine, which grossly violates international law and the UN Charter, and undermines international security and stability. The Lukashenka regime allowed the use of Belarusian territory for the attack against Ukraine and thus became a co-aggressor under international law. We demand that Russia immediately cease its military operations, withdraw all its troops and fully respect Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence within its internationally recognised borders. **Sheer force cannot be allowed to trample over law, democratic values and choices and the basic sense of morality and reason.**

We stand in **full solidarity with Ukrainians** at this dramatic and tragic juncture. We resolutely support **Ukraine's inherent right to self-defence**, and the Ukrainian armed forces' efforts to defend Ukraine's territorial integrity and population in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter. We applaud their heroic resistance in the fight for preserving their independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, democracy and dignity.

We underscore that **abidance by international humanitarian law**, notably the Geneva conventions, is simply not optional – full stop. The establishment of humanitarian corridors providing protection and safe passage for civilians through local ceasefires is urgent. We strongly condemn Russia for impeding the opening of safe

corridors, as well as for targeting civilians who are fleeing the battlegrounds. Ukrainian and UN humanitarian agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross, medical personnel, and non-governmental assistance providers must be guaranteed safe, rapid and unimpeded access to people in need throughout the territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. We are particularly grateful for the ICRC's efforts in this context and recall that its emblems are protected under international humanitarian law and must not be misused.

Mr. Chair, originally we planned for this week to focus on the **implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda** in a joint session with the PC. As **“business as usual” is not an option presently**, we wish to **pay tribute to the courage and strength of Ukrainian women** standing up against the war and oppression brought to their country by those in the Kremlin obsessed with the ideas of gathering “historic lands”.

**Women and children are particularly vulnerable** in situations of conflict and displacement. Hence it is of utmost importance to protect them against sexual violence, trafficking and other forms of exploitation, in particular from the occupational forces, as required by International Humanitarian Law.

**We want to express our utmost respect to the women affected.** To the women forced to seek shelter in basements, bomb shelters and metro stations. The women struggling to protect their homes, livelihoods, and families under the harsh conditions of war. Women like OSCE staff member **Maryna Fenina**, who was killed while waiting for medicines for her disabled brother.

With over 15% of the armed forces being women, they take an active part in the defence of their country with unwavering determination. We pay tribute to their role in the heroic Ukrainian resistance to the ongoing Russian aggression. **Iryna Tsvila** was a member of the National Guard of Ukraine. She and her husband were killed on 25 February when stopping Russian armoured combat vehicles from entering Kyiv. Iryna

was a mother of 5 children. She said that she was fighting so that her children and grandchildren would live in a **free Ukraine**.

**In Russia, too, women of all ages stand against this unprovoked folly unleashed by President Putin. Lyudmila Vasilyeva, an 81-year-old** who lived through the Siege of Leningrad, protested against Russia's war in Ukraine. The Russian police took her into custody. **They also arrested children** between the ages of 7 and 11 for leaving flowers at the Ukrainian embassy in Moscow. We are aghast at the lawlessness that Russia employs in unconvincingly covering up the truth about its invasion of Ukraine. But this truth will come out in Russia as it has everywhere else. In fact, it is already coming out.

President Putin may speak for the official Russia, but certainly not for the Russian people. Despite all the darkness, there is a **glimmer of hope**. Every day since the start of the invasion we have been witnessing **people protesting against this war**, all around the world, but most importantly in Russia and Belarus where such protests carry serious personal risks for those involved. Only last Sunday about 5.000 people were detained during such protests. We stand in solidarity with the Russians saying **“нет войне” (no to war)** and condemn the violent crackdown on peaceful, anti-war protests and independent media as well as the widespread use of disinformation and propaganda by the Russian authorities and its affiliated media and proxies trying to justify an unjustifiable military aggression. **“Нет войне” (no to war) or “нет войны” (there is no war)** – two narratives in Russia, the latter of which is becoming increasingly absurd by the minute.

Mr. Chair, the EU and its Member States wish to stress the **importance of accountability** for what is happening in Ukraine. We welcome the measures taken by the European Court of Human Rights, the International Criminal Court and the Human Rights Council in this regard. Moreover, last week, 45 participating States, including all 27 EU Member States with the support of Ukraine, invoked the OSCE Moscow

Mechanism in light of our grave concerns regarding the human rights and humanitarian impacts of Russia's invasion and the possibility of war crimes and crimes against humanity. There is no doubt. **In today's digitalised world such crimes cannot be hidden. All those responsible will be held accountable** for what they did, including the involved military commanders.

In conclusion, we reiterate our demand **to immediately stop this senseless war of aggression. The whole world is watching** and demanding the same. The vote at the UN General Assembly last week with the result **141 to 5** speaks volumes.

Thank you!

*I kindly ask that this Statement be attached to the Journal of the Day.*

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\*, and ALBANIA\*, the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, GEORGIA, 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.