



## EUROPEAN UNION

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

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Mr. Chair, we continue to face a brutal act of aggression by the Russian leadership against its sovereign, independent and peaceful neighbour. President Putin chose to **bring war back to Europe**. This is not only an **unprovoked, unwarranted cold-blooded invasion**, but **a most serious challenge to the stability in Europe** and **a massive threat to the international peace order** as a whole.

**Such use of force and coercion has no place in the 21<sup>st</sup> century**. Hence, in a united response, we, together with our partners, will continue to stand up to the Kremlin and do everything in our power to stop it pursuing its path of aggression. We were clear about it before the 24 February 2022 and remain determined to continue this course. Last week, the European Council, NATO Summit and G7 Summit sent an unequivocal message of our unwavering transatlantic unity. We also welcome the strong political response from the international community standing together with another clear vote at the UN General Assembly, unmistakably condemning the Russian actions. **Sitting on the fence is not an option for anyone in the face of such imperialistic aggression against a peaceful nation.**

**Ukraine**, as the victim of the Russian aggression, **has an inherent right to self-defence** in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter. The EU and its Member States will continue to provide coordinated political, financial, material and humanitarian support to Ukraine in this darkest hour. We pay tribute to the courage

of the Ukrainian people and to the Ukrainian Armed Forces' efforts to defend Ukraine's population and statehood against the military attacks from the East, South and the North.

This is a barbaric war of choice. **While waging this war President Putin must have known that his decision would inevitably bring immense human suffering.** Every day we are witnessing exactly this on the ground. **The situation in Mariupol is disastrous.** People cannot even bury the dead, not to mention pay their last respects to their loved ones in dignity. Russian troops have been shelling the city with artillery, rockets and missiles - damaging or destroying over 90% of the city. They bombed an art school in which 400 residents had taken shelter – a repetition of the hideous crime committed at the Mariupol Russian Drama Theatre last week. Russian troops are consciously creating a humanitarian catastrophe, which Moscow reprehensibly blamed on Ukraine for refusing to surrender.

Russia is directing attacks against the civilian population and is targeting civilian objects, including hospitals, medical facilities, schools and shelters. **These violations of IHL which could amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity must stop immediately.** Deliberate attacks directed against civilians and civilian objects, including the indiscriminate and disproportionate use of explosive weapons in populated areas, constitute unacceptable breaches of international humanitarian law. We are appalled by the reports indicating that Russian forces have been using cluster munitions against civilians. The use of thermobaric and white phosphorus bombs has also been reported.

We therefore call upon the **Russian Federation to urgently agree to a sustained ceasefire** in order to allow for safe passage for civilians who wish to leave and comply with its obligation to ensure the free and safe movement and access for those delivering humanitarian assistance. We condemn the reported cases of forcible transfer of Ukrainians to Russia. Forcible transfers of protected persons is a gross violation of international humanitarian law. We also recall that, as in all conflict situations or situations of displacement, women and children are particularly vulnerable to human rights abuses and their rights must be safeguarded and upheld at all times.

**Abidance by international law, including international humanitarian law is a must.** In its order of 16 March 2022, the International Court of Justice has ordered Russia to immediately suspend its military operations on the territory of Ukraine, stating that it was not in possession of evidence substantiating Russia's allegations of "genocide" on the territory of Ukraine. We demand that Russia comply with the provisional measures order of the Court, which is binding under international law. And, in the context of our Organisation, we call upon Russia to adhere to our *mil acquis*, notably paragraph 13 of the Code of Conduct, according to which "No participating State will attempt to impose military domination over any other participating State".

**To hold those responsible to account**, we support all efforts to gather evidence and document the atrocities of this war, including by the International Criminal Court's Prosecutor, the UN Human Rights Council and the OSCE, through the Moscow Mechanism. **The perpetrators** of serious human rights violations and possible war crimes, including any responsible government officials and military leaders, **will not go unpunished.**

Mr Chair, let us reiterate that the **Russian claims about biological labs and chemical weapons in Ukraine are another desperate attempt to construct an absurd casus belli.** Those allegations have been debunked by many around this table and they don't have any credence. **In the event of a biological or chemical incident, Russia would bear full responsibility.**

President Putin embarked on a path aiming to destroy Ukraine. **What he is doing** is in fact **destroying the future of his own country** and of its own people. Ukrainian soldiers do defend their homeland, their families who often fled their homes in search of safe shelter. They fight and make their highest sacrifice for the future of their country. But what are the Russian soldiers dying for? Many of them quite young, barely entering their adulthood.

If the Russian leadership were convinced about the choice they made, **they would not have resorted to unprecedented censorship** of the war that they do not admit to be a war. Roskomnadzor tried again to block the diffusion of the interview

of President Zelenskyy to Russian journalists last Sunday, but in vain. What were they afraid of? To listen to what is really going on in Ukraine, including about losses by Russian Armed Forces? The contrast to the Russian President would have been striking indeed.

Mr Chair, in conclusion let me reiterate that the **European Union and its Member States condemn President Putin's horrendous aggression against Ukraine in the strongest possible terms.** We demand that Russia immediately and unconditionally cease its military actions and withdraw all its troops. Equally, Russia must stop its state-run disinformation campaign and cyber-attacks. We reiterate our unwavering support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. We also reiterate our call on Belarus to stop facilitating Russian attacks and to abide by its obligations under international law.

I request 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.