



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Special Permanent Council No. 1361 Vienna, 7 March 2022

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

1. Mr Chair, we applaud your decision to convene this Special PC in order to discuss a particularly grave case of non-compliance with OSCE commitments, in line with existing rules and procedures. We are in day 12 of the biggest war of aggression in Europe since World War II, launched by President Putin against Ukraine. The EU condemns in the strongest terms Russia's premeditated, unprovoked, unjustified and brutal invasion of an independent and sovereign State and we are appalled by its devastating consequences, which continue to unfold.
2. We express our steadfast solidarity with the Ukrainian people and our heart-felt sympathy for the victims of this senseless war and their families. The need for the establishment of humanitarian corridors, as well as protection and the safe passage for civilians through local ceasefires, is urgent. We strongly condemn that Russia, as the aggressor, is not only impeding the opening of such corridors but, deplorably, also violating agreements reached by continuing to shell Mariupol, Volnovakha, Kharkiv, Chernihiv, Sumy and other Ukrainian cities and towns. Ukrainian and UN humanitarian agencies, the International 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 immediately. Women and children are particularly vulnerable in conflict situations and during situations of displacement. In this context, we underline the importance to ensure protection against sexual violence as well as trafficking and other forms of exploitation, as required by international humanitarian law.

3. Russia's continued shelling of civilian targets is shameful, reprehensible and totally unacceptable, and the humanitarian disaster it is causing is devastating. We condemn the Russian attacks on Ukrainian civilians and civilian infrastructure, including schools, residential housing, hospitals as well as foreign diplomatic representations. We call on Russia to uphold its obligations under international humanitarian law, notably the Geneva conventions, and international human rights law.

4. The EU calls on Russia to implement the ECHR's interim measures to refrain from military attacks against civilians and civilian objects, including emergency vehicles and other specially protected civilian objects, such as schools and hospitals, and ensure the safety of medical facilities. Despite the fact that the Russian Federation has had its Council of Europe membership suspended, it remains fully bound by the European Convention for Human Rights, and all Russian citizens are still under the protection of the Court. We welcome the International Criminal Court prosecutor's decision to launch an investigation into possible war crimes or crimes against humanity in Ukraine. Last week, 45 participating States, including all 27 EU Member States, and 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. All those responsible will be held accountable.

5. President Putin's full-scale war against Ukraine is a flagrant violation of international law and the UN Charter, and undermines European and global security and stability. Last week's historic UNGA resolution showed that the international community stands united against Russia's war of aggression. Russia, with the participation of the Lukashenka regime in Belarus as co-aggressor, bears full responsibility for the loss of life, injuries and destruction. The EU demands that Russia immediately cease its military actions, withdraw all its troops from the entire territory of Ukraine and fully respect Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence within its internationally recognised borders and territorial waters. Equally, Russia must stop its disinformation campaign and cyber-attacks. We also reiterate our call on Belarus

not to enable the Russian aggression and to abide by its international obligations. The EU resolutely supports 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.

6. Russia's war in Ukraine has so far resulted in over 1.5 million people fleeing, with the majority going to EU Member States and also to the Republic of Moldova. On 4 March, the EU adopted a decision introducing temporary protection for those fleeing Russia's war in Ukraine. These rights include residence, access to the labour market and housing, medical assistance, and access to education for children. We would also like to convey our gratitude to the Republic of Moldova for all its efforts and solidarity in welcoming the Ukrainian people and underscore our readiness to provide continued support in this regard.

7. We strongly condemn Russia's extremely reckless and irresponsible attack on the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, the largest in Europe. This attack is not isolated: on 24 February, Russian forces entered the Chernobyl zone and held back and requisitioned the plant's operating team. Then, on 27 February, a loud explosion was recorded near a waste storage facility in Kyiv. We deplore Russia's deliberate targeting and forceful seizure of nuclear facilities in Ukraine, significantly raising the risk of a nuclear accident or incident. We are extremely concerned about the nuclear threats and the nuclear safety, security and safeguards risks on the ground that the Russian invasion is causing and the potential damage to any nuclear facility. Any armed attack on and threat against nuclear facilities devoted to peaceful purposes constitutes a violation of the principles of international law. Russia must immediately cease its unlawful and dangerous activities.

8. President Putin's deliberate war against Ukraine has distinct dire consequences also for the Russian people. We stand in solidarity with the Russian people protesting against President Putin's war at a high personal risk and condemn the violent crackdown on peaceful, anti-war protests as well as the widespread use of misinformation and disinformation by the Russian authorities and its affiliated media and proxies to justify its military aggression against Ukraine. The steady stream of

fabricated claims aiming at creating a fake alternative reality makes it almost impossible for Russian citizens to hold their government to account.

9. Echoing the RFoM, we are extremely alarmed at the continuing denigration, stigmatization, intimidation and threats towards the media and journalists by the Russian public authorities. Access to several independent news outlets, including Meduza, Radio Liberty, Echo Moskvy, Deutsche Welle and BBC in Russian, has been restricted. We condemn Russia's newly-adopted law sanctioning those who express opinions deviating from the official government line on the war with high fines and up to 15 years imprisonment. Despite legislative steps to stifle any dissenting opinions on the Russian official version of the war, anti-war protests continue to be held in many cities across Russia, while the number of dissenting voices from a wide spectrum of Russian society continues to grow. We call on Russia to uphold its international obligations and OSCE commitments, including on freedom of the media, freedom of expression and the right of peaceful assembly, and to immediately and unconditionally release all those who have been arbitrarily arrested or convicted by politically motivated court decisions.

10. We join the three Chairperson-in-Office Personal Representatives on combating intolerance and discrimination in condemning the missile attack on the Babyn Yar Memorial, erected in the memory of 34.000 Jews murdered by the Nazis. This horrific act, committed under the pretext of "denazification", is a distortion and misuse of the history of the Holocaust, and an offense to the memory of all those who perished in the Second World War.

11. Mr. Chair, the European Union will continue to stand by the people of Ukraine and its democratically elected institutions. We will continue to stand in solidarity with all those who have the courage to oppose this war, despite the threats and brutal repression by Putin's and Lukashenka's regimes. In coordination with our international partners and allies, we will continue to support the Ukrainian government and Ukrainian society, as well as the Russian and Belarusian independent media and NGOs in defence of democracy, rule of law and human rights and fundamental freedoms.

12. Finally, we would like to reiterate our thanks to the OSCE Secretary General and her team for their tireless efforts, especially with regard to the evacuation and relocation of SMM personnel. In addition, we reiterate our strong support to all efforts of the Chairmanship and the OSCE autonomous institutions and executive structures in urgently undertaking concrete actions with regard to Russia's war against Ukraine in the context of the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security, including through the application of the OSCE Vilnius MC Decision 3/11 on elements of the Conflict Cycle to the largest possible extent. We urge Russia to abide by its OSCE commitments and to respect the OSCE institutions. Resorting to bullying and intimidation is undignified and totally unacceptable.

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, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, 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.