



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Special Permanent Council No. 1371 Vienna, 28 April 2022

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

1. For over two months, Russia has been attacking a sovereign, democratic and peaceful neighbouring State, Ukraine. Russia's aggression has triggered the greatest wave of people fleeing from brutal aggression in Europe since the Second World War. At least 4,000 civilians have been killed, including many children. Entire cities like Mariupol have been levelled to ashes by the Russian Armed Forces, while Russia has obstructed any attempts to reach an agreement to ensure safe passage for civilians and there are reports about several mass graves on the outskirts of the city. Russia did not even heed the UN Secretary General's appeal for a four-day humanitarian ceasefire during the Orthodox Easter Holy Week. Massacres have been committed in Bucha, Borodianka, Irpin, Hostomel and other places and every day there are reports of civilians and civilian infrastructure apparently being deliberately targeted by Russia's indiscriminate attacks, lately in Odesa . Russian attempts to destroy Ukraine's railway infrastructure, for example in Lviv, Zhytomyr, Rivne, Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk and Vinnytsia regions, are also causing civilian casualties and hindering movement to safe locations. We are horrified by the manifold personal testimonies and reports from areas under Russian occupation of forced deportations to Russia, also to so-called "filtration camps", and the systematic use of violence, including sexual violence, rape, and torture perpetrated by the Russian Armed Forces against the civilian population, many of which would constitute war crimes. Those responsible will be held to account.
2. More than 5.2 million people have fled abroad in order to escape Russia's war of aggression while millions are internally displaced. This displacement entails many safety risks, including a heightened risk, particularly for women and girls, of exposure

to sexual violence and human trafficking. The situation of persons belonging to vulnerable groups, including unaccompanied and separated children, persons in institutional care, the elderly and persons with disabilities, requires particular attention. The European Union and its Member States will continue to support Ukraine and the Ukrainian people in every way possible. We are therefore providing shelter as well as humanitarian, medical and financial aid to those fleeing Russia's violence, as well as granting them access to education and labour market. The EUMS, in cooperation with UNHCR, UNICEF and other relevant bodies, will also ensure that a prompt and concrete response to the needs of children and their families is provided for, with special attention to unaccompanied children.

3. Moreover, the EU strongly condemns the detention of national SMM Mission members by Russia-backed armed formations in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine. This is completely unacceptable and we join the Polish Chairman-in-Office, Foreign Minister Rau, and OSCE Secretary General Schmid in calling for their immediate release. SMM national Mission members remain under functional legal protection despite the fact that the SMM mandate has not been extended. We also condemn the deplorable acts of intimidation, harassment, and hostile public rhetoric against the SMM and the Mission staff. This has to stop immediately. The SMM has been carrying out invaluable work in gathering objective information and reporting impartially as well as facilitating dialogue between the sides and negotiating local ceasefires.
4. We also reiterate our strong condemnation of Russia's attempts to set up illegitimate alternative administrative structures in Kherson, Mariupol and in other towns in Ukraine. Any attempts by Russia to conduct so-called "referenda" at the barrel of a gun in order to proclaim new "people's republics" are illegal, and futile and we will not recognize them. We call on Russia to immediately release all democratically elected Ukrainian officials who remain in Russian detention.
5. Amid the appalling human tragedy, President Putin's war also aims to undermine Ukraine's identity, distinct history and culture, posing a threat to its cultural heritage. UNESCO has confirmed that at least 53 historical sites, religious buildings, and museums have so far been damaged during Russia's military aggression. Historic town centres, including in Chernihiv and Kharkiv, have been hit by Russian air strikes, the

Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial in Kyiv and the Holocaust Memorial centre in Drobitsky have been attacked, as has the Historical and Local History Museum of Ivankiv, destroying precious works by the 20th-century folk artist Maria Prymachenko. Russia's aggression is also endangering UNESCO cultural heritage sites and we are particularly worried about the risk of looting and illicit trafficking of Ukrainian cultural property as well as about the potential loss of archives and libraries. We recall 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. Furthermore, the EU categorically denounces Russia's disinformation campaign, including the unsubstantiated claims and false allegations that Ukraine has been preparing to use chemical weapons or that it has been developing biological weapons. Ukraine is in full compliance with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. Russia, in contrast, has repeatedly used chemical weapons in recent years in violation of its obligation under the Chemical Weapons Convention. The EU reminds Russia of the utmost importance of respecting its obligations under the relevant international Treaties.
7. Respect for human life and dignity forms the basis of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. We call on Russia to grant these rights and freedoms to its own citizens. The European Union deplores the decision of the Russian Ministry of Justice to revoke the registration of 15 widely recognised organisations, among them a large number of prominent non-governmental organisations and foundations as well as international advocacy groups. This cynical move to silence public scrutiny and any opposing views further reinforces Russia's isolation. In addition, we deplore the detention of Vladimir Kara-Murza, a human rights activist, journalist, and politician, who is now facing a trial based purely on politically motivated charges. We also condemn the sentencing of the Crimean Tatar leader Mustafa Dzhemilev, who has been convicted on the illegally annexed Crimean peninsula on dubious charges.
8. The European Union condemns Russia's premeditated, unprovoked, unjustified and brutal war of aggression against Ukraine in the strongest possible terms. We demand that Russia 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. Russia must also urgently provide safe pathways, both for civilians to evacuate to other parts of Ukraine, as well as for those delivering humanitarian assistance. We also reiterate our call on Belarus to stop enabling the Russian aggression and to abide by its international obligations. The EU will continue to firmly support Ukraine and will advance, as a matter of urgency, work on further sanctions against Russia and Belarus. We will continue to stand in full solidarity with and actively support Ukraine and the Ukrainian people until they prevail.

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

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and 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.