



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°1029 Vienna, 16 November 2022

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

Mr. Chair, the European Union and its Member States reiterate **their strongest condemnation of Russia's** deliberate, unprovoked, unjustified and brutal **war of aggression** against Ukraine. This war is **illegal**. According to Article 2 of the UN Charter, UN members "shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations." The prohibition of the use of force is also a pillar of our Organisation, enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act. The principles of States' sovereignty and territorial integrity and of no use or the threat of use of force remain non-negotiable. **We must not allow them to be trampled on by those** who wish to drive the world backwards. That's why the European Union and its Member States will continue to **stand in solidarity with Ukraine, the victim of Russia's aggression, who is exercising its inherent right of self-defence**, and in support of the **international rules-based order**.

Mr. Chair, during the last nine months we have seen deliberate targeting and killing of civilians, brutal siege tactics resulting in razing whole towns to the ground, indiscriminate use of cluster munitions and white phosphorus bombs in populated areas, bombing of critical civilian infrastructure, mistreatment of prisoners of war, sexual and gender-based violence, filtration camps, deportations of protected persons to Russia, including forced adoptions. Reports of discoveries of mass burial sites in the newly liberated territories, including in Kherson in recent days, are equally appalling. We have witnessed countless examples of **violations** of international humanitarian law **by the Russian Armed Forces** which could amount to war crimes. We will do our utmost to ensure that there is no impunity for crimes committed during Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

Yesterday, Russia launched the most massive attack to date, targeting again critical civilian infrastructure across Ukraine. **We strongly condemn this despicable action by Russia.** The unjustifiable war and all actions like those are unacceptable. Yesterday **explosions occurred on the territory of EU Member State, Poland**, near the border with Ukraine, **causing the death of two Polish citizens.** We express heartfelt condolences to the families of victims both in Poland and Ukraine. While the exact circumstances of these explosions are being diligently investigated as we speak, EU solidarity remains unshakeable.

Reported cases of **mistreatment of prisoners of war** in temporarily Russian controlled areas are also of high concern. In the infamous colony **in Olenivika**, more than 50 Ukrainian prisoners of war were killed back in July. We **urge the Russian Federation to fully comply with international humanitarian law**, notably by treating all prisoners of war humanely, by providing them with appropriate medical treatment and basic necessities as well as protecting them from humiliating and degrading treatment. **The ICRC must be allowed access** to all prisoners of war in order to verify this. We also join other delegations in condemning the threats voiced by the Russian delegation in this very room that foreign nationals serving in the Ukrainian Armed Forces would be liquidated. Such acts would be further flagrant violations of international humanitarian law.

Mr Chair, **there is no justification** whatsoever for Russia's imperialistic war of aggression. Russia has not been threatened neither by Ukraine nor any other State. The shifting narratives by the Kremlin reveal only one thing. It is impossible for the Kremlin to explain its strategic mistake neither to the international community nor to its own people. The international community has seen through this from the very beginning. Now, against the undeniable setbacks of the Russian army on the steppes of Ukraine, not too many Russians seem too eager to put their life at risk in this senseless war of choice of President Putin.

As the survival of their country was at stake, the **Ukrainians have been fighting bravely and effectively.** We see it week after week with the Russian army being pushed back from large swathes of Ukrainian territory. It was the case around Kyiv in March, then the retreat from the Kharkiv Oblast in September and last week **Kherson was finally liberated.** Pictures speak louder than words. The pictures from Kherson, with thousands of its residents welcoming the liberating Ukrainian army with flowers, Ukrainian flags and tears of joy expose the absurdity of Russia's attempts to subjugate and annex this region. This is only a few weeks after the attempted annexation of

Kherson and claims by President Putin that Kherson was Russia's for ever. The liberation of Kherson is **important, politically and strategically, as a significant step towards Ukraine restoring its territorial integrity**. We will continue supporting Ukraine on this path.

Last week Russian top military officials explained the retreat from Kherson with the intention to save lives of Russian soldiers and civilians. If this is a genuine concern, we **urge Russia to immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraw all of its troops and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine** within its internationally recognised borders. This is the best way to save human lives and prevent further tragedies. We also reiterate our call on the **Belarusian authorities to refrain from any further involvement in and support for Russia's aggression** against Ukraine, and, in particular, to immediately **stop allowing the territory of Belarus to serve as a staging ground** for attacks against Ukraine, which is an act of aggression by itself.

Thank you.

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO, ALBANIA*, UKRAINE and REPUBLIC of MOLDOVA, the Potential Candidate Country GEORGIA, the EFTA countries NORWAY, ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.