



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International
Organizations in Vienna

Statement on russia's war of aggression against Ukraine

As for delivery by Viktoriia Kuvshynnykova, Chargée D'affaires a.i.
Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1466th meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council
21 March 2024

Madam Chairperson,

By imitating “pseudo-elections” in the occupied territories of Ukraine russia demonstrated once again the true nature of its intentions towards Ukraine and the international community as a whole.

That's why we are grateful to every participating State, every leader, and all international organizations that have called and will continue to call a spade a spade.

As it happened multiple times in the past, russia continues its attempts to normalize the aggression under the guise of so-called “referenda” and “elections”.

While a fake referendum was considered in Crimea in March 2014 as something unbelievable, it has become a routine instrument of the russian aggression nowadays. Not only against Ukraine.

It is clear, moscow will continue to challenge the existing order which has secured decades of peace and prosperity.

It is obvious that this electoral farce exposed a deepening russian crisis and a degrading russian state.

And it is more than urgently that we have to cope with this crisis.

While these imitated elections were as predictable as possible, at the same time, most recent public appearances of vladimir putin provide important takeaways.

First, democracy and human rights remain the main threat to putin's regime. This is an existential challenge for him. putin will keep undermining our societies.

Second, the war remains the only mobilizing force for the russian regime. And the war remains the only tool in putin's hand to keep control over the situation in russia and its regions. There is no turning back for putin's regime.

And third, so-called elections clearly revealed that vladimir putin is ready to tighten the screw to save his regime. All these would lead to new repressions in russia and more aggression against neighbors. He doesn't care how many more people he has to imprison in russia and how many more he has to sacrifice to continue to kill Ukrainians.

Dear colleagues,

If one may still guess about possible policies of the russian regime, a new report issued by the UN Inquiry Commission on the 15th of March provides a shocking picture what to expect.

In this report we see a pattern of policy repeated by russia systematically.

While the report provides important documentation of relentless shelling and aerial bombardments of the city of Mariupol at the very beginning of the invasion, however, russia's tactics remains unchanged since then.

The Sumy region adjacent to russia's border is the latest example.

From the beginning of March, the russian aviation dropped almost 200 guided bombs on the communities of the Sumy region alone.

Each such bomb weighs from 500 kg to 1.5 tons.

russia systematically reduces to rubble villages and civilian infrastructure.

Just in the past day, russia attacked the region 136 times from different types of weapons.

russia continues to take revenge on people for being pushed out from the Sumy region two years ago. The same fate is witnessed by our people in the Kherson region.

As moscow doesn't accept the reality that no one wants to see russia in Ukraine, it continues to kill and destroy. To destroy and kill.

Every day and every night, russia increases the number of killed and wounded.

Only a strike on Odesa last Friday claimed lives of 21 people and left more than 70 wounded. It was a double-tap strike aimed to kill emergency response workers who arrived on the site to help the wounded.

Yesterday's attack on Kharkiv, the city which is daily attacked by russia from the very first day of the invasion, left five killed and five injured.

And even just a few hours ago, Kyiv was attacked with 31 missiles, including ballistic and cruise. Luckily, all missiles were shot down. However, reportedly, 13 people have been injured, and four of them have been hospitalized. A number of residential buildings, a church and a kindergarten were damaged.

At the same time, as one may learn from the UN Inquiry Commission's report, people in the occupation are also exposed to traumatizing experience, which is deadly as the physical impact.

Sexual and gender-based violence stand alone in this regard.

As reported by the Commission, "consistent with patterns identified previously, members of russian authorities committed rapes and other sexual violence during house searches and in detention".

The Commission concludes that "these incidents have also been highly traumatizing for family members. Some of them remained with a deep sentiment of guilt for not having been able to protect their loved ones. Such violent events have also ruptured family relations".

These crimes leave victims with serious physical and mental health challenges, long-lasting trauma, stigmatization and feeling of shame.

The prisoners of war are yet another vulnerable group.

The Commission found similar methods of torture applied to the Ukrainian prisoners of war across different detention facilities.

They will have to cope with the consequence of torture throughout their life.

These consequences include, as corroborated by the Commission, "difficulties breathing, sleeping, walking; broken bones and teeth; bleeding, swelling, infected, or gangrened body parts; poor eyesight, and trauma to body organs. Victims developed post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and some attempted suicide".

We heard the same testimonies from survivors and witnesses a number of times.

This new horrifying account of russia's crimes testifies to what the Latvian Ambassador rightly said at the last PC meeting. And I would like to recall her words – "One of the things that does not work is hope. Hope that russia will ever change and hope that the russian unlawful practices will ever stop".

Esteemed colleagues,

How often did we hear from the russian delegation threats about alleged escalation because of supporting Ukraine? Of prolonged people's suffering because of providing aid to Ukraine? Of the world being on the brink of a catastrophe because of helping Ukraine to exercise its right to self-defence?

However, as we have seen on numerous occasions during the two years of this brutal russian war, people are killed and the escalation occurs only when there are no enough means to deter and stop russia.

That's why we are grateful to all countries who have continued to help us this week, including by providing new defensive packages and adopting new decisions to strengthen Ukraine's resilience.

The 20th Ramstein meeting which took place two days ago illustrated our common determination to protect our common values and principles.

As President Zelenskyy stated yesterday, I quote, "without the rules limiting the force, the force goes mad and it is what happened with russia. The world needs a balance between force and rules. This is what Ukraine proposes. This is the essential core of Ukraine's Peace Formula [...] as we are preparing the inaugural Global Peace Summit in Switzerland [...] Together we have to make the force that has gone mad come back to the rules and make the rules work again to shield the world order of fragility. It is vital for Europe, the Middle East, Africa, the Indo-Pacific region and all other regions of the world".

I thank you, Madam Chairperson.