



EUROPEAN UNION

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

Mr. Chair, almost seven months ago Russia launched its full-scale aggression against Ukraine. Every week in this Forum, we reiterate **our strongest condemnation of Russia's unjustified, brutal and senseless war of aggression against its neighbour**. President Putin, supported by the Lukashenka regime in Belarus, instead of diplomacy and dialogue, deliberately **chose the path of military force**, in a blatant violation of international law and with a complete disregard of the principles and commitments of our Organisation. **The consequences of the Kremlin's strategic mistake are reverberating** across the whole OSCE region and beyond. They are also increasingly felt in Russia itself.

We will continue our consistent and unwavering **support to Ukraine and its people** in their **inherent right to self-defence**, in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter, and its remarkable fight for the restoration and preservation of its territorial integrity and sovereignty. The fundamental principles of international law, including the prohibition in international relations of the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity, sovereignty or political independence of any state are indisputable.

Mr. Chair, the **high motivation** displayed by the Ukrainian soldiers every day on the battlefield is impressive and inspiring. **They are fighting for their families and defending their homeland** against an aggressor who denies Ukraine the right to exist as a nation. The recent weeks have shown again that the **Ukrainian Armed Forces**, once adequately equipped, **can successfully push back the invader** and regain previously occupied territories. On the other side, it speaks volumes about the state of

Russian forces when there is a need to resort to the recruitment of inmates for the so-called “special operation”.

Mr. Chair, the forced retreat of the Russian troops from the Kharkiv region once again brought to light horrific discoveries. The **revelations of mass graves and torture chambers** in the newly liberated territories **are equally shocking and despicable**. According to local officials, most of the bodies exhumed in Izyum show signs of violent death and even torture. The Head of Ukraine’s National Police stated that Ukrainian officials had found 10 Russian torture chambers in Vovchansk, Kupyansk, Balakliya, and Izyum. One torture chamber was reportedly located in the Balakliya police department, where “Russians wore masks and tortured civilians with bare electric wires,” according to the Head of the National Police Main Directorate in the Kyiv region.

Mr. Chair, it is evident that these **atrocities are not isolated cases but part of the Russian script for Ukraine**. It is disturbing to imagine what else will come to light when other cities like for example Mariupol will be liberated. We **call for a thorough documentation, investigation and prosecution** of these and all other potential war crimes or crimes against humanity. **We will support efforts to this end**.

Mr. Chair, Russia’s aggression has caused **immense human suffering**. Arbitrary killings, attacks on medical facilities, roads, schools, energy infrastructure, including nuclear power plants, last week’s attack on the Karatchoun dam near Kriviy Rih, forced deportations and mistreatment of POWs are all totally unacceptable and show **Russia’s blatant disregard for international humanitarian law**. We will continue to expose such violations. It is abhorrent that, in the wake of military setbacks on the battlefield Russia is resorting to attacks against Ukrainian civilian infrastructure. It is deplorable that propagandists in Russia support such attacks. It is even more deplorable and concerning to hear similar threats from the highest political level in Russia. We reiterate that all **those responsible** for these atrocities **must and will be held to account**. There is no lasting peace without justice.

Mr. Chair, we strongly condemn the so-called “legal” proceedings against **the three OSCE SMM national staff** detained since spring this year and the recent sentencing of two of them to 13 years of imprisonment at a show trial in Luhansk. This is unacceptable. We recall that they still enjoy their functional protection as OSCE staff.

We reiterate our call on Russia to **immediately and unconditionally release** all three SMM staff members.

Mr. Chair, there is **no justification at all for the Russian aggression** against Ukraine. This war remains illegal and morally repulsive. Russia must cease the hostilities, withdraw its troops and military equipment from Ukraine, and **respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, and indeed all its neighbours**, within the internationally recognised borders.

On a final note, let me reiterate our unequivocal position on yesterday's rushed announcements of the so-called "referenda" in the east of Ukraine. It is another sign of Russia's weakness and desperation following its setbacks on the battlefield. These sham "referenda" will never be accepted. We will never recognise any illegal entities nor annexation of Ukraine's territory.

Thank you.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ALBANIA*, UKRAINE and REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, the EFTA countries NORWAY, ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well 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.