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**STATEMENT BY
AMBASSADOR DIDIER NAGANT DE DEUXCHAISNES, PERMANENT
REPRESENTATIVE OF BELGIUM TO THE OSCE, AT THE 1037th MEETING OF
THE OSCE FORUM FOR SECURITY CO-OPERATION**

22 February 2023

While subscribing fully to the statement by the European Union, I should like, if I may, to add a few remarks in a national capacity.

In two days' time we shall be marking an anniversary that no one could have conceived of witnessing: one year of open warfare on the European continent, one year of indiscriminate bombarding of civilian targets, one year of horrors and terror for the Ukrainian population. Russia alone is responsible for this. In waging an illegal, unprovoked and unjustified war against its neighbour, Russia has violated its OSCE commitments and each one of the ten fundamental principles enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act. Accordingly, the Russian aggression not only constitutes an existential threat to Ukraine – it threatens the entire European security architecture.

Chance decreed that Belgium should chair the Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC) from September to December last year. While the war continued to rage and to lay waste to Ukraine, we attempted to relaunch the work carried out at the FSC, to enable useful and relevant discussions there and to keep the conditions for dialogue alive. Unfortunately, one participating State, Russia, refused to join in our efforts, preferring to use our Forum not for the purposes of dialogue but for the purposes of disinformation.

To this day, that same participating State persists in diverting this platform for dialogue to serve the ends of disinformation and propaganda, which we strongly lament. We are nevertheless convinced that the OSCE remains an indispensable dialogue venue, today more than ever. Once the hostilities have ceased, our Organization, including this Forum, must redouble its efforts to help Ukraine to recover from the devastating wounds that it has suffered.

The women and men of Ukraine, whose courage amazes us more and more every day, are defending not only their territory and their population, which are indisputably recognized by the international community – they are also defending our shared European and universal values. Belgium will continue supporting Ukraine to the very end in the defence of its population, its territory and its sovereignty.

We call upon Russia to choose the only options that it has: to lay down its arms, to vacate Ukrainian territory, to respect the internationally recognized borders of Ukraine and to bring to justice all those responsible for the heinous crimes committed in Ukraine.

Thank you.