



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International Organizations in Vienna

**Statement by the Delegation of Ukraine in response to the Chair of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe,
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland, H.E. Thórdís Kolbrún Reykfjörd
Gylfadóttir**

As delivered by Ambassador Yevhenii Tsymbaliuk, Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna, to the 1407th meeting of the Permanent Council, 19 January 2023

Mr Chairperson,

The Delegation of Ukraine warmly welcomes the Chair of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland, H.E. Thórdís Kolbrún Reykfjörd Gylfadóttir at the Permanent Council today.

I would like to thank Madam Chair for the comprehensive statement. We appreciate a strong position on protecting the core principles of democracy.

This is highly important that the Council of Europe has unambiguous position on russia's war against Ukraine. In other case the Organization, which is all about human rights, would not be able to be such a guardian anymore.

We know that the Council of Europe has not immediately become decisive. Mainly because, it was hard to believe that one state could so bluntly reject the achievements of humanity made after the II World War.

We remember the time when the Council of Europe was persistently trying to keep russia at the negotiating table, being mindful of all those russians, whose rights had been constantly violated by putin's regime. But it did not work. First of all, because russia doesn't have and has never had a fair attitude to the work of the international organizations, perceiving such fora only as a platform for achieving its geopolitical ambitions or delivering propaganda.

This lesson should be carefully studied by our Organization as well.

The recent putin's decision as of January 17 on russia's withdrawal from the Council of Europe agreements is only yet another proof that such documents as for example the Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and the European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism as well as other fundamental documents in the area of human rights have no value for the kremlin.

Dear colleagues,

In general, our both Organizations have reliable cooperation in 4 main areas, which is based on a mutual exchange of information, experience and best practices. However, now all these areas are heavily affected by russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

The last meeting of the Co-ordinating Group between the Council of Europe and the OSCE as of December 16, 2022, identified a strong impact of the ongoing russian war on the work of both Organizations, especially in the fields of the promotion of tolerance and non-discrimination and the action against trafficking in human beings.

Indeed, how can we effectively promote tolerance and non-discrimination, when the Russian TV is cultivating the war against Ukraine and promoting the idea that killing Ukrainians in this war is a noble thing?

At the same time, we are convinced that since February 2022 it should be much easier for the international community to take the necessary decisions, which will counter Russia's actions. And the Council of Europe is leading this process.

Madam Minister,

Ukraine strongly supports your country priorities during your presidency in the Council of Europe, including on environment, equality, children and youth.

We support your intention to concentrate on the linkage between human rights and the environment, which, as you rightly indicated, is an unanswered but important notion. Taking into account all the environmental damage caused by Russia in Ukraine since 2014, the issue of such basic right as a healthy environment demands our particular attention. Here at the OSCE, under different occasions, we brought attention of our partners to the facts how Russia undermined Crimea's ecosystem and biodiversity by turning this natural resort into a military base with further aftermaths for the entire region.

Now, after the full-scale invasion started, such threats are much bigger: forest fires in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone, the occupation of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant and the overall air, soil and water contamination due to the ongoing hostilities will impact the whole OSCE – Council of Europe area in many years to come.

Madam Minister,

In May Iceland will host the Summit of Heads of State and Governments of the Council of Europe. In this regard, we are looking forward to concrete practical decisions, in particular, on ensuring aggressor-state's responsibility for all its atrocities and crimes committed in Ukraine.

These decisions will demonstrate once again that the Council of Europe truly believes in its own fundamental principles and will also serve as a clear message to potential human rights perpetrators in the future.

In conclusion, the delegation of Ukraine expresses its appreciation for the mutual support and fruitful cooperation between our delegations in Vienna.

I wish you, Madam Minister, all the success in your capacity as the Chair and in your future endeavours.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.