



United States Mission to the OSCE

The Russian Federation's Ongoing Aggression Against Ukraine

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Katherine Brucker
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
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Thirty-four years ago in November, our Heads of State and Government gathered to meet a historic moment when they signed the Charter of Paris for a New Europe. They agreed that “the era of confrontation and division of Europe [had] ended. Europe [was] liberating itself from the legacy of the past.”

They declared that “henceforth our relations will be founded on respect and co-operation” and that “ours is a time for fulfilling the hopes and expectations our peoples have cherished for decades: steadfast commitment to democracy based on human rights and fundamental freedoms; prosperity through economic liberty and social justice; and equal security for all our countries.”

Stating that the ten Helsinki Final Act principles would guide us towards an ambitious future, the Charter “was meant to deliver liberty, peace, and prosperity to all of our people.” Yet thirty-four years later, we’re bearing witness to the countless individual human tragedies that result when a participating State turns its back on core principles and the rule of law.

Consider the lives of Yuliya and Anna Aksenchenko, twin 14-year-old sisters who had recently graduated from the eighth grade. Like many teenagers, even those living through a war, they wanted to be out in the world living life. This brought them to a popular pizzeria in the center of Kramatorsk, Ukraine on a Sunday night in the summer of 2023. Neither Yuliya nor Anna returned home from their outing. A Russian Iskander missile struck the restaurant and killed both girls.

Or consider the Bazylevych family. Just before dawn on September 4th, a warplane in central Russia fired a hypersonic missile at Ukraine. Nearly 1,000 kilometers away in Lviv, air-raid sirens woke Yaroslav and his family, prompting them to seek shelter. Minutes later, Russia’s missile slammed into their apartment building. Yaroslav’s wife of 23 years, Yevheniya, and their three daughters were all killed in the attack. Rescuers found his seven-year-old daughter’s lifeless body curled up in the fetal position against a wall, buried in the wreckage of the building.

Madam Chair, next week as we gather at the Ministerial Council Meeting in Valletta, we will not forget the lives lost to Russia’s senseless war. We will be acutely aware of the millions in Ukraine living every day under deadly threat from Russia’s relentless attacks. And we will remember that democratic Ukraine’s just war of self-defense is also a defense of the

foundational principles of the Helsinki Final Act and the aspirations expressed in the Charter of Paris.

We all agreed in 1990 to build better lives for our people. Remaining true to the Final Act and the Charter means holding Russia accountable for the immense suffering it is inflicting on the people of Ukraine and for undermining security in the OSCE region and beyond.

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