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**STATEMENT BY  
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EUROPEAN AFFAIRS AND FOREIGN TRADE AND THE FEDERAL CULTURAL  
INSTITUTIONS OF THE KINGDOM OF BELGIUM, AT THE  
1412th (REINFORCED) MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

24 February 2023

Mr. Chairperson,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

On 24 February 2022, Russia broke with the principles of the Helsinki Final Act by launching, with the help of Belarus, a war of aggression against Ukraine. Since then, the Ukrainian people have been suffering as they defend their country. Thousands of Ukrainian families, women and children have fled their country while men, husbands, fathers and brothers have taken up arms. That date, 24 February 2022, will be sadly recorded in the annals of history as the day on which war resurfaced on the European continent, the day on which the elementary principles of international law, the treaties and documents based on values that we hold dear were shattered.

Belgium will continue unconditionally supporting the Ukrainian people and the territorial integrity and sovereignty of their country.

This war not only constitutes an existential threat to Ukraine – it threatens the entire European security architecture.

Beyond the conflict, Russia is blocking the OSCE in its work, in particular by opposing the adoption of the budget. Russia is calling into question the very concept of comprehensive security by attacking the OSCE commitments related to human rights and fundamental freedoms.

In 2022, Russia attempted in vain to put an end to the OSCE's presence in Ukraine. All this demonstrates the extent to which Russia is undermining the function and key objectives of our Organization. Nevertheless, the OSCE remains indispensable – more so than ever! Quite apart from its current usefulness, it must be preserved in the hope of better days to come.

The OSCE has tools that will prove valuable once the active phase of the conflict in Ukraine has ended. Our regional security organization must remain the central platform for preventing or containing regional conflicts, in particular through its function of enabling pan-European dialogue. However, such dialogue with Russia cannot be resumed until Russia as the aggressor has terminated the conflict and accepted the basic principles of a lasting settlement.

As we wait for that to happen, we must do everything we can to allow the OSCE to go about its essential tasks in Ukraine, by means of extrabudgetary activities if necessary. One of these is the Support Programme for Ukraine, to which Belgium is a major donor.

In closing, I should like to draw attention to the fate of Ukrainian children. The impact of conflicts on children is complex, devastating and long-lasting. In this war, children are being manipulated and forcibly displaced by the Russian authorities, which are thus flagrantly violating the rules of international law and the very values of the OSCE. The impact of this conflict on children warrants greater attention, greater monitoring by the international community, and specific and durable solutions. Indeed, through the new OSCE Group of Friends on Children and Armed Conflict, Belgium intends to work towards that goal.

Thank you.