



## EUROPEAN UNION

### **OSCE Special Permanent Council No. 1437 Vienna, 24 August 2023**

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

1. Today, Ukraine celebrates the 32<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of its independence from the Soviet Union. It is a day dedicated to celebrating Ukraine's unique history, culture, and language. It also serves as a reminder to Russia that Ukraine, as a sovereign, free, and independent state, has the inherent right to make its own decisions regarding its foreign policy and security arrangements in accordance with international law and the Helsinki Final Act. We admire the Ukrainian people for their heroic resistance against Russia's unprovoked, unjustified and illegal war of aggression. The European Union remains steadfast in its support for Ukraine and its people in their rightful self-defence against the Russian aggressor.
2. Today also marks eighteen months since the beginning of Russia's unprecedented full-scale invasion of Ukraine, an assault on our shared values and security in blatant disregard of international law, including the UN Charter, and OSCE principles and commitments. Eighteen months on, Russia is persisting with its brutal shelling of civilians and civilian infrastructure on a daily basis in a number of Ukrainian regions, such as Kyiv, Donetsk, Kharkiv, Kherson, Odesa and Zaporizhzhia. Seven civilians, including a 6-year-old girl, were reported killed, and at least 156, including 15 children, reported injured, after a Russian missile hit the Drama Theatre in the historic centre of Chernihiv on 19th August. We strongly condemn this repeated pattern of Russian strikes on populated areas and civilian targets, causing deaths, human suffering, massive destruction, and soaring humanitarian needs.
3. Likewise, we strongly condemn Russia's continued targeted attacks against Ukraine's grain storage facilities and port infrastructure, in a blatant attempt to disrupt Ukraine's ability to export food. These shameful attacks and Russia's deliberate decision to

terminate the Black Sea Grain Initiative threaten to undermine global food security and security of navigation, and cause price increases for foodstuffs globally. Hundreds of millions of people in already vulnerable situations, particularly in Africa, are put at risk because of Russia's irresponsible decision, and its continuing attacks. We call on Russia to stop weaponising food, which has profound global implications. The EU and its Member States will continue to overcome food insecurity, including through the EU Solidarity Lanes.

4. Intentionally directing attacks on civilians and civilian objects is a war crime. Russia's political and military leadership, along with those directly responsible for carrying out such attacks, will not escape accountability for any war crimes and other international crimes committed, including for the crime of aggression. Due to legal obligations under international law, Russia will also have to compensate for all the damage inflicted on Ukraine in the context of its war of aggression. We will spare no effort until justice prevails.
5. We continue to receive further deeply worrying reports from the Ukrainian territories temporarily and illegally occupied by Russia. Even Russian soldiers have testified to the rampant lawlessness and disregard for human decency that they have witnessed within their own ranks. We also condemn the reported continued deportation of Ukrainians, including children, from temporarily and illegally occupied Ukrainian territories to Russia by Russian forces, as well as the illegal practice of forcibly issuing Russian passports to Ukrainian citizens.
6. More than nine years have passed since Russia started its aggression against Ukraine by covertly deploying soldiers without insignia to the Crimean peninsula and organising an illegal referendum. Yesterday, this was discussed at the third summit of the International Crimea Platform hosted by Ukrainian President Zelenskyy. The EU continues to condemn and not recognise the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol of Ukraine by the Russian Federation. Equally, we condemn Russia's militarisation of the Crimean peninsula, turning the peninsula into a springboard for further military aggression. Since the illegal annexation, the residents of the Crimean peninsula, in particular indigenous Crimean Tatars, face

systematic restrictions of their human rights and fundamental freedoms, such as freedom of expression, religion or belief and association and the right to peaceful assembly. Journalists, human rights defenders and lawyers face interference and intimidation in their work.

7. Russia is now preparing for illegal and orchestrated so-called “elections” in Ukrainian territories that Russia temporarily and illegally occupies. This is a further futile attempt by Russia to pretend to legitimise its attempted illegal annexation of Ukraine’s Crimea, Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions. The EU condemns in the strongest possible terms any attempts by Russia to forcibly and illegally integrate or annex parts of Ukraine’s territory. Such attempts by the Kremlin and its proxies represent a blatant violation of international law, including the UN Charter, the Ukrainian constitution and Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity, and will never be recognised by the international community. Apart from being illegitimate, these attempts are particularly cynical and deplorable, not least considering the recent arrest of the Co-Chairman of the ‘Golos’ movement, Russia’s only independent election-monitoring campaign group.
8. We reiterate our call on Russia to unconditionally release all arbitrarily detained OSCE staff members, without further delay. We fully support all OSCE efforts in this regard and thank the Secretary General for keeping us abreast of the situation. The OSCE has been supporting Ukraine and its reform efforts for many years despite Russia’s obstructionism and it should continue doing so for as long as necessary. We express our support for the donor-funded Support Programme for Ukraine, its projects, and the recently appointed Special Representative of the Chairman-in-Office – Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine.
9. The EU supports a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine in full respect of Ukraine’s independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders, based on the UN Charter and OSCE principles and commitments. We reiterate our support for President Zelenskyy’s initiative for a just peace. We will continue working with Ukraine on its 10-point peace plan, including on ensuring the widest possible international support for its key principles and objectives. To help Ukraine achieve a just and lasting peace, we will continue providing comprehensive political,

financial, legal, humanitarian and military support, and we will continue doing so for as long as it takes.

10. The EU reiterates its unwavering support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. The EU condemns the continued military support for Russia's war of aggression provided by Belarusian authorities. We call on Russia to stop its illegal war of aggression against Ukraine and immediately withdraw all its military forces, proxies, and equipment, unconditionally and entirely, from the whole territory of Ukraine. Russia must also immediately cease actions endangering the safety and security of civilian nuclear facilities in Ukraine.

11. Mr. Chair, Russia's intent was to subdue Ukraine's independence and break the Ukrainian people's resolve for a brighter future. However, the outcome has been quite the opposite. Today, despite the immense challenges faced, Ukraine not only celebrates its 32<sup>nd</sup> year of independence, but it is also a candidate for European Union membership. Our bonds have never been stronger and our dedication to a Ukraine that is free and democratic has never been more resolute. Ukraine and its people will prevail!

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\*, ALBANIA\*, UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, and BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA\*, the Potential Candidate Country GEORGIA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as ANDORRA, MONACO and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

\* North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.