



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Permanent Council No. 1508 Vienna, 13 February 2025

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

1. Mr Chair, as Russia's unprovoked, unjustifiable and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine approaches the start of its fourth year, it continues to have a devastating impact on Ukraine's children.
2. The EU remains strongly concerned of the rise of violations of children's rights related to Russia's aggression against Ukraine and remains deeply concerned about the fate of all Ukrainian children forcibly transferred by Russia within the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine or unlawfully deported to Russia and Belarus. In this context, we recall the arrest warrants issued by the International Criminal Court for the war crimes of unlawful deportation and unlawful transfer of Ukrainian children.
3. We condemn the military re-education and indoctrination, as well as the violation by Russia of these children's rights to their Ukrainian nationality, identity, name and family relations, as documented by the May 2023 Moscow Mechanism report and other international monitoring mechanisms. The EU reiterates its urgent call on Russia and Belarus to ensure their immediate and safe return to Ukraine.
4. At the same time, we are relieved that Ukraine has successfully brought back twelve children who had been forcibly taken to territories temporarily and illegally occupied by Russia, as announced by the Ukrainian authorities. Last week, another eight Ukrainian children were rescued from the temporarily occupied Crimean peninsula.
5. Since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 millions of children have been forced to flee Russia's war of aggression. As fighting intensified along the Donetsk and Kharkiv frontlines over 1,600 people, including children, fled their homes with mandatory evacuations ordered for families in high-risk areas in the first two weeks of January alone. Many children have been killed, injured and deeply

traumatised. The latest Russian attacks on Poltava and Sumy caused several casualties, including children. We remind Russia that attacks directed against civilians and civilian objects, as well as indiscriminate attacks, are clear violations of international humanitarian law and constitute war crimes. In this regard, we support the Montreal Pledge, adopted during the ministerial conference in Ottawa on 31 October 2024, which aims to facilitate the return of prisoners of war and unlawfully deported children.

6. Moreover, children in Ukraine face specific risks from disrupted health services and limited access to education. Russian attacks on education facilities in Ukraine more than doubled in 2024, forcing thousands of children to online-learning and underground classrooms or to remain out of school entirely, with long term consequences for their well-being and development.
7. We express our appreciation of the Support Programme for Ukraine and its projects, which also address some of the immediate repercussions on children's rights due to Russia's war of aggression. We thank all donors for their contributions to the SPU and encourage all other OSCE participating states to do likewise.
8. We welcome the recent release of 150 Ukrainian service members from Russian detention—some of whom had been held for over two years—in the latest prisoner exchange between Kyiv and Moscow. However, we note with concern the recent surge in reports of Russian executions of Ukrainian prisoners of war, with six unarmed PoWs reportedly executed in January alone. We recall that under the Third Geneva Convention Russia must ensure the dignified and humane treatment of all POW, providing them with necessary medical attention and food.
9. There can be no impunity for war crimes, crimes against humanity and other crimes committed in the context of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, including the crime of aggression. The victims of human rights violations and abuses deserve justice and reparation. All those responsible must and will be held accountable. The EU will continue to cooperate with the CoE in establishing a Special Tribunal for the crime of aggression against Ukraine. The OSCE Moscow Mechanism and ODIHR reports remain crucial tools in our efforts to ensure accountability and we will continue to make full use of them.

10. The EU strongly condemns Russia's intensified and deliberate campaign against Ukraine's energy and other civilian infrastructure which aims to weaponise winter, as seen in its latest coordinated aerial attacks overnight on 11 and 12 February on Poltava and Kyiv respectively, which reportedly resulted in civilian casualties.
11. Russia also continues to endanger environmental and maritime safety and pose threats to critical undersea infrastructure. It has amassed a vast shadow fleet, often in poor shape and manned by unprofessional crews, to circumvent sanctions. On 16 December 2024, the EU adopted its 15th sanctions package, including measures against the shadow fleet.
12. We reiterate our unwavering support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders, as well as for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace based on international law, including the UN Charter, and in line with the key principles and objectives of Ukraine's Peace Formula. We underline the principle that no initiative regarding Ukraine be taken without Ukraine.
13. We reaffirm our determination to continue to provide multi-faceted support to Ukraine and its people, including financial, economic, humanitarian, military and diplomatic support, for as long as it takes and as intensely as needed to help Ukraine exercise its inherent right to self-defence.
14. The EU strongly condemns support by third countries, and actors and entities therein, which enable Russia to sustain its illegal, unjustifiable and unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine. The arms transfers and deepening military cooperation between Russia and the DPRK and Iran, as well as the deployment of the DPRK's military forces to Russia and their use on the battlefield against Ukraine represent an international escalation of Russia's war, with serious consequences for international peace and security. The EU urges all countries to immediately cease any direct or indirect assistance to Russia in its war of aggression against Ukraine.
15. We urge the aggressor, Russia, to immediately stop its illegal war of aggression, and to completely and unconditionally withdraw all its forces and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders.

*Albania, Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine align themselves with this statement.*