



## EUROPEAN UNION

### **OSCE Permanent Council No.1444 Vienna, 28 September 2023**

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

1. Mr. Chair, it has already been 582 days since Russia started waging an illegal, unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine. This war is inflicting an increasingly heavy toll on the Ukrainian population, with Russia continuing its indiscriminate attacks against Ukrainian cities. Last week, we witnessed yet another attack that damaged energy infrastructure in central and western Ukraine. Russia's attack was part of a barrage of 43 missiles fired at different locations throughout Ukraine, leaving dozens of innocent civilians killed or injured.
2. In parallel with these heinous attacks, since unilaterally withdrawing from the Black Sea Grain Initiative, Russia has been deliberately targeting Ukraine's grain storage facilities and port infrastructure, not only in the Black Sea, but also on the Danube close to the border of EU Member States. Russia's aim has been to disrupt Ukraine's ability to export food, damage its economy, in order to weaken the international support for Ukraine and increase Moscow's export profits.
3. Ukraine is a top global producer and exporter of agri-food products. It is the fifth largest exporter of wheat worldwide, and the fourth for maize. Consequently, Russia's blockade of Ukrainian Black Sea ports, through which 90% of Ukraine's agricultural products were exported prior to the war, combined with Russia's deliberate attacks on Ukraine's Black Sea and Danube ports and agricultural infrastructure, have led to a drastic drop in Ukrainian exports, affecting countries most vulnerable to food shortages.

Deliberate attacks on civilians and civilian objects are reprehensible and unacceptable. They amount to war crimes. Russia must immediately cease its deplorable attempts to terrorise the Ukrainian population and to weaponise food. The EU and its Member States remain committed to addressing the global food security and the needs of countries vulnerable to food insecurity, including through the EU's Solidarity Lanes. Last week, European Commission's President von der Leyen announced plans for the expansion of the Solidarity Lanes "...to bring Ukraine's grain out to the world, despite Russia's blockade of the Black Sea".

4. Last week, during the opening of the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly, world leaders convened in New York to discuss solutions to advance international peace, security, and sustainable development. As evidenced by the statements of the leaders of the EU, its Member States and its international partners, the EU and the wider international community remain firmly committed to Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. As enshrined in the UN Charter, Ukraine has the inherent right to liberate all its territories illegally annexed and temporarily occupied by Russia.
5. In assisting Ukraine in its rightful self-defence, the EU and its partners are upholding the principles of a rules-based international order. On the other hand, Russia shows total disregard for international law and aims at promoting its terms for a settlement that would cement its attempted illegal annexation of Ukrainian territory. Russia's "might is right" attempts and neo-imperial ambitions will never be allowed to succeed.
6. The EU will continue striving for and support a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine in line with President Zelenskyy's Peace Formula, which is premised on full respect for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity within the country's internationally recognised borders. The EU will continue to cooperate with Ukraine and other countries to ensure the widest possible international support for the key principles and objectives of Ukraine's peace initiative.

7. There is one fundamental principle crucial to achieving a just and sustainable peace: the restoration of justice. A just peace that respects international law, including the UN Charter and its core principles, such as the territorial integrity of each sovereign nation. A just peace that will only last if no crimes go unpunished. The EU remains firmly committed to ensuring full accountability for all war crimes, crimes against humanity and other crimes committed by Russia in connection with its war of aggression against Ukraine, including for the crime of aggression.
8. As Ukraine marks the Day of Ukraine's Defenders on 1st October, the EU stands united in its solidarity with Ukraine and its brave women and men, who have been courageously defending their homeland since 2014 and continue to stand strong in the face of Russia's ongoing brutal war of aggression. We reaffirm the EU's absolute determination to continue providing strong political, financial, economic, humanitarian, legal and military support to Ukraine and its people for as long as it takes. As European Council President Charles Michel stated in his remarks at last week's UN Security Council debate on Ukraine: "As long as the innocent are attacked, we will help them to defend themselves".
9. The first step to restore peace in Ukraine is clear: Russia must immediately stop its war of aggression, and completely and unconditionally withdraw all of its forces and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders. We also reiterate our strong call on the Belarusian authorities to stop enabling Russia's war of aggression and providing support to Russia, and to abide by their international obligations.

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.

