



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International
Organizations in Vienna

Statement on russia's war of aggression against Ukraine

As for delivery by Ambassador Yevhenii Tsymbaliuk, Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1455th meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council
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Mr. Chairperson, dear colleagues,

At the outset, I want to thank the Chairpersonship, especially Ambassador Djundev and his team, for warm hospitality and organization of the Ministerial meeting in Skopje.

We are especially grateful for efforts provided by North Macedonia, both as OSCE CIO and bilaterally, throughout the year for countering the russian war against Ukraine.

And we appreciate all delegations for their unwavering support for Ukraine and solidarity with my country expressed during the Skopje Ministerial.

Unfortunately, it has become a bad tradition for the russian minister to misuse the OSCE Ministerial to threaten OSCE participating States.

In Stockholm it was Ukraine and this time in Skopje – Moldova, which Lavrov warned as "the next victim". Who will be the next? Such a behavior is absolutely unacceptable.

As we learnt after Stockholm, the OSCE should mobilize all its preventive efforts.

Because messages delivered in Skopje speak volumes that next year russia will continue to focus on waging war against Ukraine and undermining the OSCE through the abuse of the rule of consensus.

Thus, we should focus our common efforts on how to save Europe from russia and isolate it within the OSCE.

And as Moscow tries to trap us in endless talks, consultations and discussions, we have to remember **about people** who have no access to basic services under the russian occupation, such as health care, if they do not have a russian passport.

About children in the occupation who are military indoctrinated by russia. Because russia does not care about children, it cares only about the future reinforcement of its occupying army.

And about figures allocated by Moscow for military expenditures. Already in 2024, the Kremlin plans to spend about 40% of the russian budget to finance the war.

It is clear, Putin is not interested in peace. He believes that he has enough resources to rebuild his army for a new offensive, to split our unity, and to undermine Ukraine's internal stability.

We have to plan our counteractions respectively to end this war with a just peace based on Ukraine's peace formula.

Dear colleagues,

russia's obsession with the war has become the only *raison d'être* for the Kremlin.

Intense battles continue to take place along the entire frontline.

The hotspots are Kupyansk, Lyman, Maryinka, Avdiivka, Bakhmut areas, as well as Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions.

Huge losses of the Russian army near Avdiivka prove that the Russian president needs some gains, regardless of the price, before the announcement of his presidential campaign.

Russia also continues its terror campaign against the civilians.

Since November 29, Russia attacked Ukraine with 21, 20, 25, 11, 12, 23, 17, 48 and 18 Shahed drones respectively. Night by night.

This night Russia again attacked port infrastructure in Izmail. Food security remains Russia's target.

In the course of the week there were also S-300 and Kh-59 missiles, as well as attacks with artillery.

Let me mention Kherson. Again. The city remains under constant fire.

On December 3, Russians hit residential building, 2 people killed and 7 injured. Two hospitals were also attacked.

The next day a kindergarten was damaged, 1 person was killed, 4 people injured.

On International Volunteer Day, December 5, Russia killed Ukrainian volunteer, Ruslan Anisenko, when the center of Kherson was shelled.

Neither the situation is better in the Donetsk region.

Just three days ago, the body of 8-year-old girl was found under the rubble of a residential building in Novogrodivka, Donetsk region. Remains of another body were identified as her father. It was not possible to identify her mother yet.

The building was hit by a Russian rocket on November 30.

Furthermore, Russia continues to create enormous risks of nuclear incidents for the whole region.

On November 29, the IAEA team reported hearing several explosions near the Khmelnytska NPP. This power plant is far from the frontline.

However, critical energy infrastructure has always been a target for the Russian invaders, especially during the winter season.

A day before, the IAEA reported about several rockets that appeared to have been fired from area close to the ZNPP.

The use of the nuclear power plant as a shield for Russia's military activities is more than a war crime. It is a crime against humanity.

But can we expect humanity from those who continue to kidnap Ukrainian children?

In this regard, we are especially concerned about reports that head of a Russian party, Sergey Mironov, adopted 10-month-old Margaryta taken from then occupied Kherson.

Allegedly, her identity, name and citizenship, was changed.

A guardian of Margaryta's sister already appealed to the Ombudsman of Ukraine.

The woman asked for assistance in establishing Margaryta's whereabouts and formalizing her guardianship.

Let me remind - the forced transfer of children from one ethnic group to another one falls under the definition of the crime of genocide. This must be stopped.

On its part, Belarus is also paying its price for enabling russia's crimes against Ukrainian children. As it was announced on December 1, the Belarus Red Cross Society is suspended from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

The suspension is based on an investigation into the allegations against the Belarus Red Cross Secretary General for his statements, including on nuclear weapons and on the movement of children to Belarus, and his visit to Luhansk and Donetsk.

Once a respectable organization, today the Belarussian Red Cross has become an accomplice to russian crimes, no matter how many times Belarussian diplomats try to whitewash it here.

Furthermore, russia continues to grossly violate the basic rules of warfare. Earlier this week we were shocked with the brutal execution of two Ukrainian soldiers after they had surrendered.

On the other hand, since summer russia artificially has been blocking the exchange of POWs in violation of the IHL.

For russia this issue is just another element for its disinformation campaigns against the Ukrainian society, especially for pressure on the families of POWs. It is a kind of torture against them. Also, so far, russia has not granted unimpeded access for the ICRC to the POWs.

Another acute issue is holding Ukrainian medical personnel in captivity. Reportedly, there are about 500 medical workers.

However, medical personnel enjoy a special status under the Geneva Conventions.

They can only be detained to provide medical care to Ukrainian POWs and must be liberated as soon as their assistance is no longer needed.

At the same time, russia continues to recruit mercenaries for its war of aggression.

Apart from Cuba, also Nepal is urging russia to stop recruiting their citizens into the russian army. It is a shame that the OSCE participating state is spreading practices of human trafficking and organized crimes. The OSCE and its executive structures have to focus on this.

Colleagues,

I want to conclude my statement with a quote from President Zelenskyy on the occasion of the Day of the Armed Forces of Ukraine we marked yesterday.

"I am heading to the Wall of Remembrance [...] To see the faces of our heroes. To look into their eyes [...] To recall what we could have lost and what we have preserved [...] And now I am walking through the capital of our beautiful country, not someone's province. I'm walking from the Office of the President of Ukraine, not someone else's gauleiter. Ahead of us is the European Square, where our blue and yellow flags fly, not tricolors. Ahead is St. Volodymyr's Hill. In honor of our great prince, not their petty czar [...] Nine years and 651 days of war are behind us. Victory is ahead [...] Is there any alternative? We all know there is not". End of quote.

And I want also to repeat our words of gratitude to those participating States who help our brave women and men in frozen trenches to defend our freedom and fundamental right to life.

As they protect us and principles of the rules-based order, it is critically important to protect them with the supply of ammunition and weapons, and the adoption of sanctions.

By continuing such support, you are simply stopping russia from committing massive crimes, as we saw in Bucha, Mariupol and many other places across Ukraine.

I thank you, Mr. Chair.