



## EUROPEAN UNION

### **OSCE Permanent Council No.1459 Vienna, 1 February 2024**

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

1. Madame Chair, as we convened last Friday at the Special PC meeting in response to the intensifying aerial attacks by Russia in its illegal, unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine, Russia continued to strike civilian infrastructure in Ukraine, including in Myrnohrad, Novohrodivka and Slovyansk in Donetsk Oblast and Antonivka in Kherson Oblast. As we have emphasised repeatedly, deliberately directing attacks against civilians and civilian objects constitutes a war crime and all responsible must and will be held to account. The persistent nature of such attacks, their intensification, and the escalating casualties are clear indications of the Kremlin's total lack of commitment to peace and its disregard for international law, which underpins the rules-based order.
2. Additionally, the situation in the Ukrainian territories, temporarily and illegally occupied by Russia, continues to worsen as we approach the second-year mark since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. ODIHR's fourth interim report on reported violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in Ukraine covering the period from 1<sup>st</sup> June to 30<sup>th</sup> November 2023 and the 37<sup>th</sup> report by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on the human rights situation in Ukraine, covering the period from 1<sup>st</sup> August to 30<sup>th</sup> November 2023, provide further evidence of previously documented patterns of widespread human rights violations in these territories. By holding so-called local elections, appointing Russian de facto judges, applying, even

retroactively, Russian law, and forcefully conscripting Ukrainian men to serve against their own country, Russia blatantly violates its obligations under international humanitarian law. Additional cases of wilful killings, summary executions, arbitrary detentions by Russian forces, as well as instances of torture, ill-treatment and sexual violence in detention have also been documented. As a result, at least 100 civilians are reported to have died after being taken into detention by Russian authorities since 24<sup>th</sup> February 2022.

3. The situation in the Ukrainian territories, illegally and temporarily occupied by Russia, tragically mirrors the domestic situation in Russia itself, where the Russian legal system continues to be instrumentalised to serve the Kremlin's narrow interests. The arbitrary arrest and politically-motivated sentencing of opposition politician Alexey Navalny, marking its third year on 17<sup>th</sup> January, testify to this. His persistent ill-treatment by Russian authorities and recent transfer to one of the most remote penal colonies in Russia strongly indicate how much Russian authorities are afraid of him, also in the context of Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine and the Russian Presidential elections in March. The EU is also concerned by reports that opposition politician and democracy activist, Vladimir Kara-Murza, who was last year sentenced to twenty-five years in prison on politically-motivated charges, has been moved without notice to a different penal colony with stricter detention protocols. The EU reiterates its call for the immediate and unconditional release of Mr. Navalny, Mr. Kara-Murza and all political prisoners in Russia, including Yuri Dmitriev, Ilya Yashin, Alexei Gorinov, Lilia Chanyшева, Ksenia Fadeeva and Ivan Safronov.
4. We reiterate our call on Russia to immediately cease its systematic mistreatment of Ukrainian prisoners of war and civilian hostages in the temporarily and illegally occupied territories of Ukraine and in Russia. We demand the immediate release of all individuals, unlawfully deprived of their liberty, including the three arbitrarily detained OSCE staff members. We are

particularly worried about recent reports concerning the brutal deterioration of the health of one former SMM staff member who urgently needs medical treatment. Russia must ensure that all Ukrainians in Russian captivity are treated in full compliance with international law, including international human rights law and international humanitarian law (IHL).

5. Madame Chair, the beginning of 2024 saw legislative developments in Russia, which reignite our fears for the fate of nearly 20,000 Ukrainian children, deported from their homes. President Putin's decree of 4<sup>th</sup> January, which makes it possible to confer Russian citizenship on orphans and children without parental care, points to Russia's intention to legalise their deportation or forced transfer - actions prohibited by IHL and the Rome Statute, in further violation of international law. We reiterate our urgent calls on Russia and Belarus to immediately ensure the safe return to Ukraine of all unlawfully deported and transferred Ukrainian children and other civilians.
6. We will continue to stand with Ukraine and its brave and resilient people for as long as it takes, for Ukraine to rightfully defend itself against Russia's brutal war of aggression and to win the just and lasting peace it deserves. To this end, we will continue to provide Ukraine with strong political, financial, economic, humanitarian, military and diplomatic support.
7. We reaffirm our unwavering support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. The EU and its Member States will continue their intensive global outreach efforts and cooperation with Ukraine and partners from all regions of the world to ensure the widest possible international support for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace and the key principles and objectives of Ukraine's Peace Formula, based on the UN Charter, with a view to a future Global Peace Summit.
8. In conclusion, we once again demand that Russia immediately stop its illegal, unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine, and completely and unconditionally withdraw all its forces and military

equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders. We also condemn the continued military support for Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine provided by Belarus, as well as Iran and the DPRK. We urge all countries not to provide material or other support for Russia's war of aggression, which is a blatant violation of international law, including the UN Charter, and the OSCE's core principles and commitments.

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\*, ALBANIA\*, UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, and BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA\*, 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.