



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE 32nd Annual Implementation Assessment Meeting Vienna, 1 March 2022

EU opening statement

Madam Chair,

Today, on the 6th day of the **full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation**, with the abject participation of Belarus, **the very idea of assessing the implementation of military transparency and risk reduction measures is simply a mockery**. A postponement of the Annual Implementation Assessment Meeting (AIAM) would have been our preferred choice. This would have required a unanimous decision by all participating States. Such decision was apparently not possible. It is clear that even if the meeting now takes place in accordance with the relevant decisions, **we will not proceed with business as usual**. Instead, we will use the opportunity to express our unequivocal condemnation of what is the biggest, unprovoked, unjustified and unjustifiable war of aggression since World War II.

Madam Chair, it is **difficult to find those “strongest possible terms” to condemn** what is a **full-speed drive backwards into the dark chapters of history** by the Russian leadership, with the complicity of Lukashenko regime. This is not a “special military operation”, the term that the Russian media watchdog **Roskomnadzor** tries to impose on the Russian media. It is a war, **a war of aggression**. A war that goes against everything that matters fundamentally to us: the adherence to international law, the principles of the rules-based international order, including the OSCE commitments and above all respect for human lives and human dignity.

In the face of this tragedy, caused by Russia, and regrettably actively supported by Belarus, immeasurable human suffering, civilian deaths, thousands of killed and wounded soldiers, hundreds of thousands of displaced people looking for a shelter in the neighbouring countries, deliberate destruction of civilian infrastructures, we wish to solemnly reiterate what we said last week in the FSC. **It is not the time to sit on the fence.** We should and we will all speak up and **stand with Ukraine.** This refers **both to the States and all decent people.** We note that also in Russia, as well as in Belarus, many brave people, including journalists, representatives of culture, sports, businesspeople, scientists, academics and others are not afraid to protest against this unjustifiable war, despite the fact that this might land them in prisons. This is a sign of hope that could provide an answer to the famous question “*хотят ли русские войны*” (do the Russians want the war?). **We are convinced that the people of Russia would say no.**

In this war, **there is no ambiguity. Ukraine is a victim and has the full right to self-defence,** in line with the UN Charter. In these dark hours, we stand with our Ukrainian friends, in full solidarity, and will support them to the best of our ability. Additional EU supported measures were announced last Sunday. We applaud the heroic resistance of Ukrainians in their fight for preserving their independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and democracy.

Over the past weeks we were absolutely clear in our position that **we and our partners would not tolerate such behaviour as we are confronted with these days and would impose severe costs on Russia** for such blatant violations of our commonly agreed norms. **We acted on our promise because Russia cannot get away with invading** a peaceful, sovereign and independent neighbour. To paraphrase a famous saying, this was both a mistake and a crime. There must be, there are and there will be severe consequences.

We recall the International Criminal Court prosecutor has announced that **he will launch an investigation into possible war crimes or crimes against humanity** in Ukraine. The Law of war prohibits indiscriminate attacks and those that target civilians and civilian property.

Madam Chair, Russia **must immediately cease all hostilities.** Russia must immediately and completely withdraw its troops from Ukrainian territory, including

Crimea and Donbas. Bloodshed and devastation must stop now. **Belarus must stop being Russia's accomplice.**

What is happening these days will have profound repercussions for Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, Europe and the whole world. And for our Organisation as well. **Today it is extremely difficult to even think of rebuilding the trust that was broken.**

In the past years, and especially in the last few weeks, we have witnessed Russia's total negation of the Vienna Document provisions by persistent non-implementation. Acts speak a different language than words. As to Belarus, it was pretending to follow the letter of the Risk Reduction Mechanism but it did not follow its spirit. It did not provide either any credible explanation on the presence of the Russian forces on its territory. Today we know why. **We also strongly condemn that Belarus allowed Russia to start its aggression against Kyiv**, the capital of its "brotherly nation", from its own territory. **Belarus and Ukraine, the "bloodlands" of Europe that suffered so much during World War II. The use of the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone for the attack against Kyiv, with all well-known risks and the memory of the Chernobyl tragedy 36 years ago, is highly reprehensible and utterly condemnable.**

Madam Chair, in light of the above, it is obvious that **we cannot and will not participate in the working sessions foreseen in the agenda of the AIAM.** Using this opportunity, we wish to thank Norway and Uzbekistan, the CPC and all others involved in the preparations of today's meeting.

And on the final note, just last week at the FSC the Head of the Russian Delegation **claimed that it was Russia on the right side of history. Today we, our partners across the globe, the flight schedule of the Moscow airport and even the rouble know that it is definitely not Russia on the right side of history.**

I kindly ask that this Statement be attached to the Journal of the Day.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, and ALBANIA*, the EFTA countries ICELAND and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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