



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°1041 Vienna, 29 March 2023

EU Statement at the closing session of the FSC Chairpersonship of Bosnia and Herzegovina

1. Mr Chair, the European Union and its Member States warmly welcome His Excellency **Mr Slaven Galić, Deputy Minister of Defence of Bosnia and Herzegovina, to the** Forum for Security Cooperation and thank him for his remarks.
2. Excellency, we live in **critical times for Europe, its people and the OSCE itself**. Still, whatever issue we face in this Forum, be it a weekly round of Kremlin propaganda, irresponsible nuclear rhetoric or blocking of FSC meetings, it pales in comparison to the suffering and destruction Russia brought upon Ukraine and the Ukrainian people.
3. We will never tire in **opposing and condemning in the strongest possible terms Russia's unprovoked, illegal, and unjustified full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine**, which tomorrow enters its 400th day. Russia has blatantly violated international law, including the UN Charter, and OSCE principles and commitments, and undermined European and global security and stability as well as a rules-based international order. Using force and coercion in an attempt to conquer territories and change borders has no place in the 21st century. We therefore **demand, once again, that Russia immediately and unconditionally ceases its aggression and withdraws all its troops** and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders. We condemn Russia's irresponsible nuclear rhetoric including its announcement regarding the deployment of Russian nuclear weapons to Belarus. This represents

another reckless provocation and adds to the already serious threat that Russia poses to European security. The Belarusian authorities must stop providing military or other support for Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine.

4. Russia's **war** and the crimes committed **will remain a shameful bloodstain** on the reputation and the conscience of those who decided to wage it, including its political and military leadership, those who ordered or conducted atrocities and all those who are futilely attempting to justify them, including certain people in this room. Russian authorities bear full responsibility for their illegal actions, including the loss of life, all the destruction they are causing and the crimes Russian forces commit.
5. Notwithstanding its propaganda efforts, the **true nature** of Russia's brutality in Ukraine **cannot be hidden**. The whole of Ukraine is a Russian crime scene. The recent report by the **UN Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine** concludes that Russian authorities have violated a wide range of international human rights and international humanitarian law in various regions of Ukraine. Many documented cases amount to war crimes, including deliberate attacks on critical infrastructure, wilful killings of civilians, unlawful confinement, torture, rape and other sexual and gender-based violence, and forced transfers and deportations of children. In addition, the Commission has found that the Russian armed forces' waves of attacks on Ukraine's energy-related infrastructure, starting 10 October 2022, and the use of torture by Russian authorities may amount to crimes against humanity. The decision by the **International Criminal Court** to issue arrest warrants against Russia's President Vladimir Putin and Commissioner for Children's Rights Maria Lvova-Belova, suspected of the war crime of unlawful deportation and unlawful transfer of children is a crucial step to ensure accountability and is a strong warning to all perpetrators. All those responsible must be held to account in accordance with international law.
6. We reiterate **our unwavering support for Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence** within its internationally recognised borders. Ukraine has an inherent right to defend itself against this invasion and aggression in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter and to choose its own future which

includes making its own foreign and security policy choices. We have been providing Ukraine with unprecedented comprehensive support and will continue doing so for as long as it takes.

7. Excellency, **Russia's actions and rhetoric are detrimental to our Organisation**, including the work of this Forum. They contradict and disrespect the FSC mandate, which should enable all participating States to cooperate towards peace in the OSCE region. The delegation of the Russian Federation has blocked unacceptably a formal session of the FSC, for the first time in its history because Russia could not decide on a matter which falls entirely within the discretion of the Chair. We appreciate the decision of the FSC Chair, supported by other Troika members, to keep the dialogue alive, while at the same time we stress the utmost importance of the FSC meetings as the platform for institutionalized dialogue.
8. The **OSCE acquis in the politico-military dimension is an important collective achievement of all OSCE Participating States**. We unequivocally stand by the rules and commitments enshrined in all pol-mil instruments. Russia speaks about the indivisibility of security while trampling the commitments it undertook to respect. Respect for the very foundation of security, such as territorial integrity and sovereignty of other States should be re-established. It is an indisputable requirement for peace and security in the OSCE area.
9. Excellency, your country, aware of the tragedy of war, its dire costs and the challenges of reconciliation and rebuilding trust, was in a unique position to steer the FSC in the past trimester. **While focused on Russia's war of aggression** against Ukraine, **we appreciated and actively participated in the discussions under your FSC Chairpersonship on mine action, SALW, Code of Conduct** and the implementation of **UNSCR 1325**. While having a regional focus, all these topics were also relevant in the wider security policy context.
10. In conclusion, the European Union and its Member States wish to take this opportunity to **thank Ambassador Bencun and his able team** for all the efforts in chairing the FSC in the past challenging trimester. We also bid farewell to our **Belgian colleagues** leaving the FSC Troika and welcome **Canada** as a new

Troika member. We look forward to **Bulgaria** taking over the helm of the FSC in the coming weeks.

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ALBANIA*, UKRAINE, REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA*, the Potential Candidate Country GEORGIA, the EFTA countries NORWAY, ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as ANDORRA 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.