



Security Council debate on the Maintenance of Peace and Security of Ukraine, 24 February 2023

Malta Statement delivered by the Hon Ian Borg
Minister for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade of Malta

[I will now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Malta.]

I begin by thanking Secretary-General Guterres for his briefing.

Excellencies,

We have convened to mark one year since the Russian Federation launched its unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine. This brutal war, which is a blatant violation of the UN Charter and international law, has brought immense suffering, destruction and misery on Ukraine and its population. This war is also a stain on the very principles that we here are bound to uphold.

At the outset, I reiterate that every state has the sovereign right to self-determination, including the choice of its own destiny in order to ensure its safety and security.

Over the past twelve months, Ukrainians have shown incredible courage and resilience by defending not solely their right to exist in the face of a brutal military aggression, but also the values and principles underpinning the international rules-based order. Over the past year, various UN and international mechanisms have provided evidence of indiscriminate killings



of civilians, attacks on civilian infrastructure, torture and other forms of cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment, sexual and gender-based violence, abductions and forceable deportation of children.

Such actions constitute serious violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, and are a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention. These children must be returned to their families or legal guardians without delay. The tragic impact of these transfers and deportations on Ukraine's children will be felt for generations to come.

We must redouble our efforts to ensure accountability for violations of the UN Charter and international law, including international humanitarian law and human rights law. This must include justice for victims of atrocity crimes and sexual violence. Perpetrators must be brought to justice and held to account without delay. We therefore welcome the important work being carried out by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine

We also reaffirm our support for the mechanisms that are working in this fight against impunity. We stand with the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court in his investigations and continue to consider ways to ensure accountability for the crime of aggression. We also call on the Russian Federation to respect the ruling of the International Court of Justice ordering an immediate suspension of military operations.



On this occasion, I must also express our deep concern with regard to nuclear safety in Ukraine. Shelling in and around nuclear power plants in Ukraine, including the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, constitutes a grave environmental and health threat and a serious risk to international peace and security. Such actions can lead to a grave humanitarian and environmental catastrophe with long-term repercussions.

In the context of a deteriorating global non-proliferation architecture, any declarations by Russia suggesting that the possible use of nuclear weapons is in any way justified are unacceptable. Such rhetoric only leads to uncertainty, further undermines trust between parties, and only serves as a means to escalate the conflict and heighten tensions.

This aggression also had serious repercussions on the rules-based international order that we have all agreed to. As members of the international community, our collective security depends on these common principles underpinned by the notion that might is not right. No State or power has the right to redraw borders in accordance with its geopolitical interests. Malta reaffirms its full support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity.



As committed multilateralists, it is our duty to defend and promote these principles, and to counter contempt for them.

In closing, as a member of the Security Council, Malta will continue to support all efforts to address the consequences of Russia's aggression. We also reiterate that the only step towards a lasting peace would be for Russia to immediately cease all hostilities, and unconditionally, completely withdraw all of its forces and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders.

I thank you.

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