



Security Council High-Level Open Debate on Maintenance of International Peace and Security ‘Upholding the purposes and principles of the UN Charter through effective multilateralism: maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine’

20 September 2023

Malta Statement by the Hon. Robert Abela, Prime Minister of Malta

Thank you, Mr. President, Mr. Secretary General, dear colleagues, excellencies, and dear friends.

First of all, I would to kick off by thanking the Albanian Presidency for having organised this high-level open debate of the Security Council. I also thank the Secretary-General for sharing his thoughts with us earlier today.

Twelve years ago, soon after the outbreak of the Arab Spring, Malta had launched its bid to serve on the Security Council. That was a time of turmoil and instability in our immediate neighbourhood but also a time of hope and aspirations.

The decision to embark on this journey stemmed from our commitment to the principles enshrined in the UN Charter. They are timeless and also universal, and an integral part of our foreign policy. Our unwavering belief is that multilateralism holds the answer to contemporary challenges, and that all countries should engage proactively to this end, served as our point of departure way back. Today, as elected members, these convictions continue to serve as our guiding light.



President

More than ever, the world today needs an effective multilateral system with the United Nations at its core. We must redouble our efforts to uphold and also defend the fundamental principles that unite us. We must promote our common values at a time when they are being aggressively undermined and threatened. We must protect them and adequately respond to any contempt for these values.

At the same time, we must not lose sight of the fact that we are living in a world where conflicts are on the rise. The nuclear threat still looms. The climate crisis is unfortunately spiralling out of control. Democracy and human rights are under systematic attack. Global inequalities are deepening. Disinformation and misinformation campaigns are feeding as well as amplifying tensions.

No country by itself can tackle these complex and existential challenges. They require our full and collective attention. Effective multilateralism is the only avenue to address these challenges in a decisive and holistic manner.

President

If we are to reach these ambitious goals, we cannot resign ourselves to living in a world where 'might is right'. Last year, the Russian Federation began its



aggression against Ukraine, violating its sovereignty and also its territorial integrity. These acts constitute a blatant violation of the UN Charter and also a violation of international law. They were overwhelmingly deplored and rejected by the General Assembly, who had called for Russia's immediate withdrawal of its military forces and a cessation of hostilities.

This war profoundly undermines the multilateral system. It weakens and also destabilises this very Council. The immediate and long-term consequences of such actions by a Permanent Member of this Council cannot be emphasised enough.

On the occasion of this debate, I reiterate Malta's full support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. I equally underline Ukraine's inherent right to self-defence, as enshrined in Article 51 of the UN Charter.

The Ukrainian people have paid the heaviest price as a result of this unjustified and unprovoked war of aggression. It has led to another human-made catastrophe as the world was still struggling to find the path to normality following a crippling Covid pandemic.

All wars are devastating, and this is of course no exception. Lost lives are gone forever and will never be recovered. The scars of those wounded, injured, and traumatised by conflict never fully heal. Once the fighting is over, the road to recovery will still be a long and arduous one.



Through its actions, Russia did not only bring war back to Europe. It also generated a global food crisis that has seriously impacted mostly developing countries around the world. While the Black Sea Grain Initiative allowed almost thirty-three million tonnes of grain to be shipped, Russia's unilateral decision to pull out of the deal has seen grain prices unfortunately soar once again. I once again state Malta's uncompromising position that using hunger and food supplies as weapons of war is completely unacceptable.

In closing, President, I stress, once again, that there can be no peace in our future if the strong can trample on the weak. There can be no peace if international law can be brushed aside if geopolitical interests so demand. There can be no peace if the rights of states and individuals can be suspended or revoked at any time.

Malta's commitment to peace, dialogue, and multilateralism remains as strong as ever. We remain firm in our resolve to stay at the forefront of the defence of the United Nations Charter. No matter how difficult or disheartening circumstances may seem, we must never give up on peace. We must never give up on dialogue. We simply cannot afford to do so.

In this time of upheaval, our collective reply is to redouble our efforts and continue to invest in our multilateral system. In doing so, we must also reform this Council to make sure it is truly fit for purpose in today's world. A Council that it is more transparent, more effective, more representative, more accountable, and more democratic.



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Meanwhile, we remain convinced that the only step towards a lasting peace in Ukraine is for Russia to immediately cease all hostilities. It must unconditionally withdraw all its forces and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders.

I thank you.