



Statement by Ambassador Kristín A. Árnadóttir, Permanent Representative of Iceland, at the 1375th Permanent Council Meeting, Vienna, 26 May 2022

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Iceland fully aligns herself with the statement delivered by the European Union. In addition, allow me to add the following remarks in my national capacity.

Over three months have passed since the Russian Federation initiated its brutal military aggression against Ukraine. With every day that passes, more suffering, devastation and destruction is caused by this war. Nothing can justify Russia's military aggression on an independent, sovereign state and Russia must stop this horrific war.

Mr. Chair,

As Russia's wages war on Ukraine innocent people by the hundreds of thousands are killed and injured, and homes, cultural and historical sites and civilian infrastructure are destroyed and left in ruins. The war has left millions in urgent need of humanitarian assistance and protection and humanitarian needs, including for health care, food and water, are ever growing. We strongly condemn the deliberate targeting of civilian infrastructure, in violation of international humanitarian law, and damage inflicted on facilities and systems necessary to sustain the civilian population.

Since the beginning of the unjustified and unlawful war against Ukraine, one-third of Ukrainians have been forced to flee their homes. Over 6 million people have sought refuge and safety in other countries, while 8 million are internally

displaced. What's more, women and children who are the vast majority of those fleeing the war, face a heightened risk of trafficking and gender-based and sexual violence, abuse and exploitation.

The humanitarian crisis continually unfolding due to the war highlights the importance of securing continued OSCE presence in Ukraine, while guaranteeing the safety of OSCE international and national staff and colleagues. In this respect, the ongoing presence and work of the PCU, and their resilience and flexibility, deserves our recognition and continued support. Their efforts on psychosocial rehabilitation, anti-trafficking measures and providing legal aid to IDPs and refugees is commendable.

While maintaining our focus on the humanitarian and refugee crisis which demands our urgent attention, the 2nd Preparatory Meeting of the 30th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum, held in Lodz earlier this week, reminded us of the devastating short- and long-term consequences of the war on Ukraine's economy and environment, as well as for our region and the world.

The impact of the war will continue to undermine global food security, driving up the cost of energy, fertilizers and staple foods in countless nations around the world, the most vulnerable being hit the hardest. Russia's military aggression has caused air, water and soil pollution, and it has also set in motion an increase in greenhouse gas emissions.

This is all happening against the backdrop of the ever-growing existential threat of climate change, and the fact that Russia's war forced a redirection of our efforts and resources which could be mobilized to strengthen cooperation to reduce carbon emissions and increase climate resilience in our region. There has never been a more important time for Europe to strengthen our energy security and prioritizing green solutions to Europe's dependence on imported oil and gas from Russia.

This war runs counter to the principles and purpose on which our organization was founded, including the principles enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act. It undermines the foundations of the European Security Architecture that participating States have built together over the last decades and undermines our efforts to maintain a strong international system based on the principles of international law, including international human rights law and humanitarian law. There must be justice and accountability for all violations of international law, and the crimes committed in Ukraine by Russian forces. There can be no impunity.

We call on Russia to immediately cease its military aggression and hostilities against Ukraine, abide by its international law obligations and OSCE commitments. We also call on Russia to stop its disinformation campaign and the spreading of State-sponsored war propaganda.

I would like to reiterate Iceland's unwavering support for the the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine.