

IMMEDIATE RESPONSE TO THE ONGOING RUSSIAN INVASION AND AGGRESSION IN UKRAINE

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On 24 February 2022, with the Russian unprovoked and unjustified war and aggression, which is an international crime on Ukraine, the geopolitical reality in Europe was dramatically altered. Ukraine has so far shown an incredible level of resistance and resilience, denying Russia the ability to fulfil its initial objectives of the war. The European Union reacted swiftly and decisively, introducing unprecedented sanctions hitting Russia and its accomplice, Belarus. All analyses points to the fact that this war will be a long endeavour. Therefore, the pain that the international community is already inflicting on the Russian regime needs to be further increased in order to help end the war as early as possible.

Main policy lines for action:

1. Delivery of weapons by the EU and Member States and helping Ukraine to defend itself. The EU should further use the European Peace Facility and all other possible means to help with weapons supply;
 2. Safe humanitarian corridors must be provided for civilians fleeing the attacks and to boost EU humanitarian aid networks in Ukraine (fuel, food, medicines, energy generators and mobile campuses). Similarly, green land corridors must be opened to bring in to Ukraine anything needed to increase agricultural production (e.g. pesticides, fertilisers) and to bring out of Ukraine all agricultural products that can still be exported.
 3. The time for further sanctions is now:
 - > Immediate embargo on Russian oil, coal and nuclear fuel. Gas embargo - as soon as possible. In addition, immediately reduce consumption and replace with other oil, gas and coal resources. The EU must not be complicit in financing the war;
 4. Ukraine's candidate status: Following the official EU Membership application by Ukraine, submitted on 28 Feb-
- > Russian banks involved in the oil and coal trade should also be unplugged from the SWIFT system;
 - > Member States should refuse access to all EU ports for ships whose last or next port call is in Russia. Our infrastructure cannot be used to fuel a war machine;
 - > Member States should expel Russian ambassadors stationed in their countries in order to minimise Russian diplomatic presence to the least possible;
 - > Sanctions on Belarus need to mirror those introduced against Russia in order to close any loopholes for Putin to use the aid of Lukashenka to circumvent sanctions (for example, on banks and on oil product exports);
 - > Introduction of secondary sanctions on all those entities that will aid the Russian and Belarussian regimes to circumvent sanctions;
 - > The positions taken by some countries to support or abstain to condemn the regime of Putin and the aggression must have consequences;
 - > Sanctions shall only be lifted when the last soldier of the occupying forces leaves Ukrainian territory according to an agreement concluded with the constitutional Ukrainian Government.

ruary 2022, and the conclusion of the European Council of 10 and 11 March, which found that Ukraine belongs to our European family, the European institutions should work towards realising the promise of granting Ukraine candidate status without any delay, in order to also avoid the legitimate aspirations of Ukraine and its citizens being victims of the hostile demands that they are currently confronted with; furthermore, they should work towards its accelerated integration into the EU Single Market, according to the formula “everything but institutions” and along the lines of the Association Agreement;

5. A Marshall-like Plan fund to rebuild Ukraine after the war. This message will give hope to Ukrainians. The fund should be generous and financed by the EU, Member States, donors' contributions and Russia's compensation for war damages, including those Russian assets confiscated/seized as a result of sanctions in accordance with international law;
6. Name Putin and Lukashenko as “war criminals”. We call for legal proceedings within the framework of international law to investigate and prosecute any acts, which legally qualify as a war crime;
7. Russia after Putin - we must work with the Russian people. We must demonstrate that the EU is ready to help a future democratic Russia. The Russian opposition faces difficulties now to continue its work - not only because of Putin's repressions, but also because of the effects of Western sanctions. It needs to feel that we are ready to again invite a democratic and responsible Russia to the community of nations.