

JOINT STATEMENT BY THE EAP CSF STEERING COMMITTEE AND NATIONAL PLATFORMS ON THE SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF RUSSIA'S FULL-SCALE INVASION OF UKRAINE

Brussels, 23 February 2024 - The Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum strongly condemns the continuation of the Russian Federation's military aggression against Ukraine and its people.

24 February 2024 marks the second year of full-scale invasion, the darkest times on the European continent since World War II, that has caused immense suffering, substantial casualties among Ukrainians, and unprecedented destruction of energy facilities, infrastructure, and environmental damage. According to Ukrainian authorities, as of 15 February 2024, Russia has injured at least 19,300 civilians, killed 10,200, committed 125,389 war crimes in Ukraine.¹

We stand united for supporting of the Ukrainian people in their heroic resistance and fight for freedom and a democratic European future, and in honouring the victims of the Russian invasion.

The Russian Federation must be held accountable for its actions. We call on the International Criminal Court, the European Union and the Member States, the Eastern Partnership countries, where applicable, to investigate and prosecute, and assist in investigations of the Russian war crimes, international crimes committed on the territory of Ukraine against its people.

We strongly urge the European Union and its Member States to:

- **Continue to provide necessary assistance** to Ukraine in its defence operations by supplying military aid, encompassing arms, ammunition, equipment, intelligence, and cybersecurity support. Additionally, extend support in the form of humanitarian aid and financial assistance. This includes the steady and increased provision of humanitarian and financial aid to the Ukrainian people, but also active efforts to ensure accountability for the crimes committed by Russian authorities and military forces in Ukraine.
- **Strengthen support for independent media and civil society** in Ukraine. Make their voices heard across the EU and at the highest levels of debate. Implement substantive measures that ensure the safety of leaders and activists of civil society organisations in Ukraine who are courageously tending to the needs of affected civilians.

¹ For updated official information regarding "Russia's aggression against Ukraine", please check <https://war.ukraine.ua/>, accessed on 15/02/2024.

Actual numbers might be considerably higher, as information from many locations with intense hostilities is not yet available or confirmed.

- **Elaborate a legal framework and adopt necessary decisions that will allow the use the frozen Russian assets** for current humanitarian needs of Ukraine, and the green reconstruction of Ukraine.
- **Considerably enhance the sanctions regime against Russia** and put in place credible measures to prevent its efforts to evade these sanctions and to ensure that sanctions can yield their full potential, and we call to **expand restrictive measures and adopt 13th package of sanctions** from the European Commission and the European External Action Service.
- **Strengthen political, technical, and financial support to assess** widespread and **severe damage to the environment** and associated immediate and longer-term consequences on the human health and ecosystems and **prepare sound legal framework for the compensation.**
- **Provide gender-sensitive support for the over 4 million Ukrainian refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs)** and civil society representatives fleeing from the Russian war, as well as **provide necessary support for the Ukrainians** who would like to return home.

While **we welcome the decision to grant the EU candidate status to Ukraine**, we **urge** the European Commission to start the screening process for Ukraine, to identify the negotiating framework and move to the practical implementation of membership negotiations.

We welcome the adoption of the Ukraine Facility, and we call on for its steady implementation for safer Europe, including the Eastern Partnership Region.

“Two years have passed since Russia’s full-scale invasion of our country, which in reality started ten years ago, with the occupation and illegal annexation of Crimea. Russia must be stopped with all possible means. We, the Ukrainian nation, are currently paying the highest price possible for our future as an independent, democratic, and European state, trying to stop the Russian beast that wants to destroy order (peace) in the whole of Europe. We call on the European institutions, EU member states and the international community to step up and be bold in their support to the Ukrainian society, including civil society organisations, in the context of the fight against Russian aggression, and provide all necessary support on the way to the EU membership.” said **Ruslan Havryliuk**, EaP CSF National Facilitator, Ukraine

Members of the Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum

Members of the Armenian, Azerbaijani, Belarusian, Georgian, Moldovan and Ukrainian National Platforms of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum