

**Statement by the Ambassador of Ukraine to Ireland
H.E. Larysa Gerasko at a session of the Joint Committee
on Foreign Affairs and Defense of the Oireachtas
(Dublin, 21 February 2023)**

Dear Chair,

Dear members of the Oireachtas,

I am honoured to be here today and to brief the distinguished members of the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence on the threats that the Russian Federation poses to Ukraine and Europe in its entirety.

Before I turn to my remarks, let me, on behalf of the people of Ukraine, extend the words of appreciation for Ireland's support that we are receiving at this unprecedentedly challenging time for our country.

In 3 days, on 24th of February, Ukraine will mark one year since Russia's full-scale invasion of our country began. The only reason for this unprovoked aggression was the Russian state's and its top leadership's neo-imperial and expansionist ambitions.

Despite a number of devastating defeats and growing losses in killed (143680 as of 20th of February, 2023), Russia continues denying our legitimacy as a sovereign state and retains its maximalist goals to destroy Ukrainian statehood and nation.

Having already lost strategically, the Russian occupiers still have enough resources to conduct tactical offensives. More than 300,000 of them are currently fighting in Ukraine.

In revenge for its military losses on the ground, Russia continues terrorizing Ukrainian civilians: the past months were marked by its intensive missile and drone attacks against Ukrainian civilians, critical infrastructure and residential areas resulting in significant casualties and destruction. On 10 February, Russia launched another massive missile and drone attack: out of 74 missiles, 61 were shot down. Unfortunately, high-voltage infrastructure facilities were hit in the eastern, western and southern regions of Ukraine. Several Russian missiles flew over the airspace of Moldova.

The terrible rocket attack on a multi-story building in the city of Dnipro on 14th of January, 2023 became another demonstration of the face of Russia - the face of a bloody monster-terrorist. A total of 45 people died during the tragedy, including 6 children. 79 people, including 16 children were injured.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Russia's invasion triggered one of the largest human displacement crises in the world today, with some 14 million Ukrainians – or one-third of the population having been

displaced. Approximately 5.9 million people are currently displaced inside Ukraine, and a further 8 million people have been forced to seek safety abroad.

In this respect, we are grateful to Ireland for being one of the first to open its borders to the Ukrainians, providing temporary protection to tens of thousands of them.

Russian troops systematically violate the norms of international humanitarian law and human rights in Ukraine: deliberate and indiscriminate attacks on civilians; their use as hostages and human shield; execution and rapes; forceful conscription and kidnapping; attacks on medical personnel and facilities; use of banned weapons etc. 16,207 Ukrainian children were deported, including under the pretext of psychiatric and medical rehabilitation. Ukrainian law enforcement agencies registered damage or destruction of 80,080 civilian infrastructure facilities, including 61,209 residential buildings and houses, 2,295 educational and 452 medical institutions, 320 cultural and 94 religious buildings, and 3,992 water and electricity networks. These numbers do not include the temporarily occupied areas, in which the real level of destruction is much higher.

In the recently occupied areas, Russia reproduces the same patterns it has been using in Crimea and parts of Donbas since 2014: appoints occupation administration, imposes Russian passports and Russian legislation.

Thus, we are grateful to the Senate of Ireland for its decision to recognize the ongoing Russian aggression, as well as the Holodomor of 1932-1933 - both as crimes of genocide. Thank you! To call a spade a spade is very important for us.

Nearly 50% of Ukraine's energy system (most notably, thermal and hydroelectric power plants, as well as high-voltage network) has been damaged by Russia's attacks. These brutal and unjustified attacks, which do not pursue any military objective, are systematic and ongoing.

Our main priority is quick restoration of energy grid severely damaged by Russia's missile terror. This will include the following steps: repairing damaged power transmission and distribution lines wherever possible; restoring and decentralizing generation wherever possible; implementing energy efficiency programs; strengthening cross-border electricity trade.

Thus, we are grateful to Ireland for providing autotransformers, transformers, circuit breakers, generators and other energy equipment.

At the same time, we keep addressing our partners with a request to continue providing Ukraine with the energy equipment necessary to restore Ukraine's energy system.

Furthermore, Environmental damage in Ukraine caused by Russia's war is estimated at more than 46 bln USD. Almost 2,300 instances of environmental damage caused by the fighting were recorded.

Ukraine is one of the most mined countries in the world today. 35% of Ukraine's territory, including 5,8% of agricultural land, requires demining: this will require at least five years. Since the start of full-scale Russia's invasion, about 500,000 explosive objects were identified and neutralized.

The Russian invaders are draining the Kakhovka reservoir, thereby creating ecological disaster, depriving Ukrainian settlements downstream of water and endangering the safety of Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, the cooling systems of which depend on water in that reservoir.

Russia's ongoing military occupation of Ukraine's six-reactor of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant could cause large radioactive releases to the environment.

Russia is obviously a terrorist state and thus we call on the Oireachtas to recognise it in a corresponding motion.

Also, every Russian war criminal must be punished. The establishment of the Special Tribunal will enable Russia's political and military leadership to be prosecuted for the gravest crime, the crime of aggression. And we call on Ireland to support its establishment.

So, as we all see, Ladies and Gentlemen, Russian meaning of "peace" is completely opposite to a peace as the civilized world see it.

What we propose is the implementation of the 10-step Peace Formula presented by President Zelenskyy on 15 November 2022 at G20 Summit will bring a comprehensive, just and lasting peace to Ukraine and security to the whole world. Formula's main goal is to deprive Russia of its tools to commit the crime of aggression against Ukraine and to guarantee security and justice for the entire international community.

We call on countries across the globe to join the process of its implementation. In the Joint statement following the 24th Ukraine-EU summit, the EU expressed its support to the Peace Formula and commitment to actively work with Ukraine on this peace plan.

The steps of the Peace Formula are: 1) radiation and nuclear safety; 2) food security; 3) energy security; 4) release of prisoners and deported persons; 5) implementation of the UN Charter and restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity and the world order; 6) withdrawal of Russian troops and cessation of hostilities; 7) restoration of justice; 8) ecological safety; 9) preventing escalation of war and repetition of aggression; 10) confirmation of the end of the war.

These steps could be implemented one by one, or simultaneously. And we call on Ireland to take leadership/co-leadership in one or several of them. We will be glad to welcome the Ireland's active involvement in this initiative.

At the same time, as long as Russian boots remain on the Ukrainian ground, we still need means to deal with it.

We hope for further Ireland's dynamic support under the European Peace Facility and effective results of cooperation within the framework of EU Military Assistance Mission for Ukraine.

The sooner and the more security assistance Ukraine gets now, the sooner the war will end with a lasting and just peace. Ukraine's victory is critical to European and global security.

The aspiration to belong to the European Union has for many years been an important priority for Ukraine, its governments and citizens.

We'd like to thank Ireland for its persistent support of the Ukraine's path to the full membership in the EU.

Ukraine completes implementation of 7 recommendations of the European Commission. We rely on positive update of the European Commission on this issue in March.

Ukraine aims at completion of all requirements for the earliest possible start of accession negotiations.

Ireland knows from experience that the path to EU membership can be difficult, with many obstacles. Today Ireland boasts a robust economy with a GDP per capita way above average in the EU. It provides opportunities to trade, travel, study, and work and ensures social justice, respect for the rule of law, fundamental values and rights to dignity and safety.

Ukraine would be grateful if Ireland shares its experience for us to implement the necessary reforms to gain full EU membership.

Dear members of the Committee,

Our common fight against Russia should not only be on the battlefield. We have to cripple Russia's military economy. Sanctions is one of the most effective ways to do it.

That's why we call on Ireland as well as other EU member states to maintain consistency in increasing sanctions pressure. We are expecting the adoption of the 10th package of sanctions as soon as possible.

Among our key priorities is the termination of air attacks on our cities and energy infrastructure.

Therefore, in addition to the already existing "arms embargo", we call for global bans on the supply to the Russian federation of components and products for dual or

civilian purposes that can be used for the production of offensive means, including missiles and drones.

Urgent need for sanctions in the nuclear power industry. Designation of persons involved in attempts to seize the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant and blackmail by nuclear incidents at the plant. Ban on cooperating with Russia on nuclear energy by broadening the definition of energy sector. On 12 February, President Zelenskyy put into effect the decision of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine to impose sanctions against 200 employees of the Russian nuclear industry.

Among the priorities - the strengthening of the energy embargo - as the main source of financing the war.

It is important to introduce restrictions on the import of iron ore and critical raw materials, including titanium, aluminium, copper, nickel, palladium, rhodium, and diamonds.

We welcome an intention of our partners in the EU to synchronise sanctions against Russia and Belarus in the next package of sanctions. Lukashenko's regime in Belarus remains Kremlin's proxy in its war against Ukraine: the territory of Belarus is used for training and logistic purposes.

We are also grateful to the EU for the unanimous decision of the EU Council from November 28 to include the violation of restrictive measures (sanctions) to the list of "EU crimes" included in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

This is an important step to put pressure on Russia, which expands the list of crimes, commitment of which provides legal grounds for the confiscation of assets and their sale.

We all know that like all wars this war will end. Unfortunately, the damage dealt to Ukraine by Russian attacks already accounts for hundreds of billions of euros.

With this in mind Fast Recovery Plan was created. Its weight is at least 17 bln euros for immediate critical reconstruction. These are hospitals, schools, vital transport and energy infrastructure. In addition, we have a huge need for housing reconstruction, which Russian tanks and artillery methodically destroy.

One of the sources to fill this Fund should be Russian assets - those that have already been frozen and those that still need to be frozen, are significant. A significant part of these assets is in the jurisdictions of European countries. 1.8 bln Euro – in Ireland. We need a real, fast, legal mechanism for directing Russian assets to compensate for the losses caused by the Russian war.

The scale of the destruction to the Ukrainian economy is difficult to overestimate as this is the biggest blow since World War II. As a result, there is a radical change in the system of intersectoral relations and the economy's structure as a whole.

The economy of Ukraine has experienced a large negative shock, with GDP contracting by at least 30%. It has lost 30% to 50% of its productive capacity, with losses concentrated in Eastern Ukraine.

But even in the conditions of full-scale war launched by Russia, with a shattered economy, Ukraine retains its place among the world's top 5 agricultural exporters, being one of the guarantors of the world's food security. Since the start of war, Ukraine exported more than 50 mln tons of grains, oilseeds and processed products to provide food for hundreds of millions of people across the globe.

Destructive Russia's policy of delaying the inspection of vessels resulted in a systematic decrease of the freight turnover within the Black Sea Grain Initiative: in the past three months, the world received less than 10 mln tons of Ukrainian food. The situation is deteriorating further: the query of more than 140 vessels was formed in Bosphorus, the vast majority of which have been waiting there for more than a month. We expect reaction by the UN and Turkey. This Initiative should be expanded to Ukrainian ports in the Mykolaiv region.

The "Grain from Ukraine" humanitarian program returned vital food stability to the world. More than 30 countries and the EU joined. The amount of accumulated funds provided by international partners for this program is about 200 mln USD. We hope that Ireland will become one of the financial donors of this initiative.

This war is not only about Ukraine. Russia's brutal attack destroyed global security and endangered all nations. This war must end with the triumph of international law and the UN Charter. Justice must be restored for Ukraine, Europe, and the whole world.

Thank you!