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United States Mission to the OSCE
U.S. Statement for the
Forum for Security Cooperation:
General Statements –
Russia’s War of Aggression Against Ukraine

As delivered by Arms Control Counselor Daniel Wartko
February 28, 2024

Thank you, Mr. Chair,

We have now entered into the third year of Russia’s three-day war.

Two years after Russia’s full-scale invasion and ten years after Russia’s invasion of Crimea and the Donbass, the United States continues to stand with Ukraine in defense of its sovereignty and independence, and in support of the restoration of its territorial integrity.

For two years, the United States has been a leading member in a coalition of more than 50 partners to help the people of Ukraine remain unflinching against an adversary with an economy ten times larger, a population three times bigger, and a military once thought to be the second best in the world.

The United States has provided more than \$79 billion in U.S. assistance to Ukraine since 2014. We have supported the Ukrainian people through security, economic, and governance assistance, and through humanitarian aid for those in need.

The United States and its partners are also taking action against Russia. Together with international partners, we have enacted measures to ensure Russia pays for its brutal aggression against a sovereign neighbor. The United States has imposed sanctions on more than 3,300 Russians and associated individuals and entities and has severely restricted Russia’s access to certain technologies that could be used in support of its war effort.

A coalition of States supporting the rule of law strengthened the global isolation of Russia brought about by Putin’s actions. While the Russian delegation tries to frame this effort as the work of “a small bloc,” the plain truth is very easy to see.

Since Putin launched his full-scale invasion of Ukraine, at least 140 countries in the UN General Assembly have voted four times to condemn Russia's actions by an overwhelming majority and US and partners have held Russia accountable for its violations of international norms and war of aggression against Ukraine. This includes elections, as Russia has lost dozens of leadership positions in the UN and other international bodies.

And as we have seen in this Forum, Russia is totally alone in its blustering attempts to block our useful work and its flailing attempt to change the subject to anything else besides its brutal invasion of a peaceful, sovereign neighbor.

Mr. Chair,

Isolating Russia for its brutal behavior is a necessary step, but it is not the only one. We must speak plainly in this forum and to the public about three simple truths of this war in order to counter and dismantle Russia's lying propaganda.

First, **the sides are not the same: Russia is waging war for conquest and Ukraine is defending its freedom.** Russia is violating the UN Charter and contravening the Helsinki Final Act and violating other agreements and principles of international law. Ukraine is defending its own people, defending its own territory, and defending its own sovereignty – all of which are expressly protected by those very same agreements that Russia spits on as “the fools-based order.”

The second truth: **Russia is the sole aggressor in this war and the sole obstacle to peace.** Russia started this war and could end it at any time by withdrawing its forces from Ukraine's internationally recognized borders and territorial waters.

The opposite is clearly not true. Ask yourself: If Ukraine were to stop fighting, does anyone here think that Russia's threat to all of us would vanish? If Ukraine were to stop fighting, would Ukrainian civilians be safe to live their lives in peace and security? If Ukraine were to stop fighting, would the rule of law be restored?

And the third truth: **This war, started by Russia and abetted by Belarus, has been disastrous for Ukrainian, European, and global security.** Ukraine's civilians have been bombed, tortured, killed, and had their children taken by Russian forces. Russia has stolen grain and rendered farmland useless with mines and

unexploded ordnance, and it has attacked shipping facilities and shipping lanes. Russia threatens all of us with an even greater disaster, as it has seized Europe's largest nuclear powerplant and left it in a precarious position.

This trail of death and destruction brought by Russia and aided by Belarus has brought misery to hundreds of thousands, raised prices of food and energy for billions, and threatened the entire international order. And for what? This war has gained for Russia nothing but infamy and for Belarus nothing but disgrace.

Mr. Chair,

The United States fully supports President Zelenskyy's efforts toward a principled peace. Such a comprehensive, just, and lasting peace will be driven by Ukraine, rooted in international law and will ensure accountability for Russia's actions.

With the support of participating states represented in this room, and countries around the world, Ukraine has successfully retaken over 50 percent of its territory that was illegally seized by Russia since February 2022 and severely degraded Russia's Black Sea Fleet. The leadership of Ukraine, the armed forces of Ukraine, and the people of Ukraine are united in the mission to liberate their country from invading forces.

Ukraine will regain its territory, regain its children, and preserve its independence and sovereignty. As Deputy Secretary Campbell said last week, "We will continue to stand with Ukraine until it achieves the just and lasting peace its people deserve."

Thank you, Mr. Chair.