



Provisional edition

Tuesday 15 March 2022, afternoon

Official report of debates

Opening of the sitting No. 4

Debate (continued): Consequences of the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Dear Colleagues,

The next item of business is the continuation of the debate on the report by Ms Ingjerd SCHOU, on behalf of the Political Affairs Committee, on the consequences of the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine.

I remind you that we must finish the debate, including the vote, at 8:30 p.m. We will therefore have to interrupt the list of speakers at about 7:45 p.m. in order to hear the reply from the Committee and take the necessary vote.

In the general debate, I now call Mr Antonio GUTIÉRREZ LIMONES of Spain.

You have the floor, Mr GUTIÉRREZ LIMONES.

Mr Antonio GUTIÉRREZ LIMONES (Spain, SOC): Good afternoon, Mister President.

First of all, I would like to thank you, the Secretary General, and the Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly for your leaderships during these difficult days.

Now I am going to speak in Spanish.

Mr Antonio GUTIÉRREZ LIMONES (Spain, SOC)*: Dear Colleagues,

Please let me first of all share with your thoughts about the times that we are living through and our commitment to them.

When we began the 21st century, we thought that all the great wars that all of our peoples had suffered in the previous century were things that belong to the past, and that our generation would not see any new wars.

In this report:

1. Speeches in English, French, German and Italian are reported in full in English.
2. Speeches in other languages are summarised from the interpretation and indicated by an asterisk (*).
3. Speeches in German and Italian are available in full on the Assembly's website.
4. The text of the amendments is available at the document centre and on the Assembly's website. Only oral amendments or oral sub-amendments are reproduced in the report of debates.
5. Corrections should be handed in at Room 1081 not later than 24 hours after the report has been published.

Conflicts went on existing in the world, but they all seemed far from our borders: in Africa, Palestine, Iraq, Yemen, Somalia. They were far from us. So far that we never talked about the millions of Syrian families that are still living in refugee camps, nor of the situation of women in Afghanistan with the Taliban.

Nor yet did we listen enough to our Ukrainian colleagues when Crimea was invaded and when they advised us that Russia would go on with that invasion.

We'd become indifferent to those who are suffering. Indifference etymologically means "no different". Elie Wiesel, who received the Nobel Peace Prize and was a survivor of the Holocaust, said that indifference was a strange and artificial status that was between light and darkness, dawn and dusk, crime and punishment, cruelty and compassion, good and harmful.

Because indifference, ladies and gentlemen, takes us far, it's much easier to see victims from afar. Commitment is something uncomfortable in our lives because it means getting involved in pain and suffering. The despair of other people breaks our daily life and interrupts our dreams.

However, indifference is not a beginning but an end. It's always a friend of our enemy. It always supports aggressors. That's why our Ukrainian brothers and sisters, their families who are fleeing, wounded people, prisoners, hungry children, refugees without homes should never think that we are not giving them some spark of hope, that we're not participating in their horrid flight and in their anguish, because simply, for the time being, we have exiled them from a human memory.

The last thing we can think is that suffering is far from us when it happens to people like us. When we deny other people's humanity, we deny ourselves. Despair, pain, suffering of the Ukrainian people has awakened our consciences. Let us shoulder our commitment and our responsibility to our Ukrainian brothers and sisters and to ourselves.

Many thanks.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, Antonio.

Next in the debate I call Mr Zsolt CSENGER-ZALÁN, from Hungary.

You have the floor.

Mr Zsolt CSENGER-ZALÁN (Hungary, EPP/CD): Thank you for the floor Mr President.

Dear colleagues,

Hungary condemns the military aggression of Russia against Ukraine and supports the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders. In this regard, on 10 March, the Hungarian National Assembly adopted a political declaration as well.

Hungary is gravely concerned about the security situation in our direct neighbourhood. As a neighbouring country of Ukraine, this war is obviously a high security risk for us, and therefore, we strongly support the EU and NATO unity on the issue, and our joint responses to the situation.

However, Hungary does not supply lethal military equipment to Ukraine. Our priority is preventing any kind of incidents that may threaten the security of the Hungarian people. Therefore, we cannot support any steps that could make Hungary or the Hungarian people a target.

In the meantime we are operating our border crossing points with full capacity. They have taken measures to be able to receive refugees who may need shelter and they have opened a humanitarian corridor for citizens of third countries, whom we allowed to enter without visa or any major restriction.

Our facilities in the three counties close to the border are available, and 265 high-capacity transport vehicles are on standby. Nine hospitals have been designated close to the Ukrainian border providing care for over 11 000 people. We are ready to receive all displaced persons, including non-Ukrainians who are legal residents from Ukraine, and provide them with adequate legal protection.

Hungary has launched one of its largest humanitarian relief operations yet, providing Ukrainians, including those who are fleeing the country as well as internally displaced persons, with medical supplies, food, water, hygienic products, child care products, fuel and other essential goods.

Dear colleagues, the senseless bloodshed must be stopped as soon as possible, and negotiation must continue for an immediate ceasefire.

The Hungarian delegation will support this report.

Thank you very much.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you Mr Zsolt CSENGER-ZALÁN.

Now I call in the debate Ms Iwona ARENT from Poland.

Iwona, you have to floor.

Ms Iwona ARENT (Poland, EC/DA): Thank you,

Mr President,

Dear colleagues,

Russian foreign policy has been inscribed with aggression and imperial ambitions for years, and dictator Putin does not take into account either his own nation or the right to self-determination by other nations.

He ruthlessly violates the principles of the rule of law, human rights and international law.

Dictator Putin, you can conjure up reality and you can engage in blunt propaganda. Dictator Putin, you can persuade Russian citizens and the whole world that this is not the aggression of Russian troops against an independent, democratic state that is Ukraine, but only a special operation.

I want to lead you out of your mistake. We will talk about your crimes, the murder of civilians, the military, the frantic rush to destroy the country's infrastructure. We will not forget the death of innocent children, pregnant women, the bombing of maternity hospitals, oncology hospitals, kindergartens, etc.

Madmen and murderers must be isolated because they threaten their surroundings and peace in Europe. The hand of justice will get you, Mr Putin.

Ms Iwona ARENT (Poland, EC/DA)*: Putin, the hand of justice will get you.

Just fuck off.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Iwona.

Now in the debate I call Mr Antón GÓMEZ-REINO from Spain.

He is not connected, so we go to the next speaker.

It's Ms Emilie Haya MOATTI from Israel.

Emilie, you have the floor.

Ms Emilie Haya MOATTI (Israel): Thank you, Mister President.

Dear friends and colleagues,

I would like to briefly touch upon three aspects of Israel's response to the tragic situation in Ukraine. Israel's official position is clearly against the Russian attack, and supports the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine. Accordingly, Israel voted in favour of the UN General Assembly Resolution.

Prime Minister Naftali Bennett is among the few leaders who have decided to try and create a channel of communication between Ukraine and Russia in an attempt to, first of all, reach a ceasefire and stop human suffering. He will continue this effort as long as there is even the smallest chance of success.

The third dimension, which as an Israeli I'm most proud of, is the human one. Both the Israeli government and civil society have massively mobilised to help Ukraine's citizens in distress. Several planes with hundreds of tons of humanitarian aid were sent to Ukraine with blankets, tents, medicine and more. Aid is also being sent to refugees in neighbouring countries. Just yesterday, the government has approved the establishment of a field hospital in Western Ukraine, including medical staff.

Last but not least, Israeli diplomats based in Ukraine and neighbouring countries have been working day and night at border crossings to facilitate the transfer of women, children, and men to safety.

Many volunteers have flown on their own to help.

I join other speakers in hoping that a peaceful solution will soon be found to end this terrible episode of human suffering.

Thank you very much.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Emilie.

Now I call in the debate Ms Lesia ZABURANNA from Ukraine.

You have the floor.

Ms Lesia ZABURANNA (Ukraine, ALDE): Dear colleagues,

I was born and brought up in Kyiv. This city always fascinated me with its beautiful views and kind people. I spent my best student years in Kyiv. The city has always fascinated me with crowded streets and lively cafes. I was selected to serve people in Kyiv, too. This city has also fascinated me with free spirit and unspeakable courage.

It changed almost 20 days ago. Early in the morning on 24 February, the war knocked on the door of my country with missiles, Russian bombs falling in all regions in Ukraine.

As I'm speaking to you, Ukraine is still bravely countering numerous attempts of the Russian army to destroy places and people that matter to more than 40 million of our citizens. Beautiful views became residential buildings damaged but missilised. Kind people became refugees forced to leave their homes to survive. Metro stations became shelters, and lively cafes became volunteering points to provide food to those who need it.

At this very moment Russia is trying to seize my home town, Kyiv, cut it off from the supplies and make millions of innocent people suffer from hunger and dehydration. The same has already happened to other Ukrainian cities, such as Mariupol', Kharkiv, Bucha, Irpin.

Disregarding every single principle of international law, the barbarians started military actions in areas of nuclear power plants, they disabled the only power supply line, and blocked out of the Chernobyl power plant, not allowing our workers to fix it. More than that, Russian occupants caused a fire on now mined the territory near Zaporizhzhia power plant.

Europe, please, wake up!

The action of the Russian Federation action pose a threat not only to the future of Ukraine but of Europe, too. Yes, in this war, Ukrainian cities are fighting like heroes, in the war of values Ukrainian soldiers perform unbelievable work to protect our land, while Ukrainian citizens secure as efforts.

Dear colleagues, your support and your words of solidarity are crucial for us. We know that you stand in this war with us, but, please, I urge you to come immediately and ask your government as soon as possible and plead to them to impose a no-fly zone over Ukraine.

Civilians are dying in the centre of Europe right now. Only united we have to change the wind.

Thank you.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Ms Lesia ZABURANNA.

Now I call to the debate Ms Sena Nur ÇELİK from Turkey.

Ms Sena Nur ÇELİK, you have the floor.

Ms Sena Nur ÇELİK (Turkey, NR): Dear President,

Dear colleagues,

I would like to start by expressing my solidarity with the Ukrainian people and my support for Ukraine's territorial integrity.

I condemn Russia's military aggression against Ukraine which gravely violates the fundamental principles of international law and jeopardises the security and stability of our region and the world.

Since the attacks continue, and the lost of civilian lives are increasing, the priority should be to facilitate a ceasefire and establish humanitarian corridors. There is also the issue of increasing need for urgent humanitarian assistance because of the displacement of civilian population throughout the country and to neighbouring countries, and severe destruction and damage to civilian infrastructure and residential housing.

The UN estimates that 12 million people inside Ukraine will need relief and protection, while more than 4 million Ukrainian refugees may need protection in neighbouring countries in the coming months.

Russia's military aggression is not just an issue for Ukraine, it is a crisis with devastating consequences and it requires an urgent global response. We must not forget that Ukraine would not be suffering today if the international community would have taken concrete measures to stop Russia's aggression when it was bombing hospitals and schools in Syria, murdering tens of thousand of civilians, when it was unlawfully annexing Crimea.

In this context, I believe it is of great importance that we send a unified and firm response from this Assembly today. The international community must take all necessary measures to stop Russia's aggression and defend the lives and dignity of the Ukrainian people.

I would like to thank the rapporteur and reiterate my support for the report, which I believe will contribute to the realisation of what I have just mentioned.

Finally, I would like to emphasise two issues. Although the European countries have been much more receptive of the Ukrainian refugee influx compared to the Syrian refugee influx, we have seen reports of racist violence and discrimination against African, Asian and Middle Eastern people fleeing Ukraine. All Council of Europe member states must welcome and ensure equal protection of all refugees arriving from Ukraine regardless of race, religion, or origin, provide urgent humanitarian aid to Ukraine, and provide necessary support to frontline countries.

Finally, while reacting to illegal occupation undertaken by a Council of Europe member state, we need to also speak out with respect to the illegal occupation of Palestinian territories and persistent violations of international law by Israel. Turning a blind eye to the collective punishment and suffering of Palestinian people demonstrates the hypocrisy of the international community in upholding human rights, which hopefully will change in the future.

Thank you very much.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you Ms Sena Nur ÇELİK.

Next on the list is Mr Sergio GUTIÉRREZ PRIETO, but he is not connected as I'm informed, so we proceed.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): The next speaker is Mr Alain MILON from France.

Mr MILON, you have the floor.

Mr Alain MILON (France, EPP/CD): Mister Chairman,

Dear Colleagues,

First of all, I would like to express my solidarity with Ukraine and to pay special tribute to our colleagues. They sounded the alarm during the previous part-session. Unfortunately, we were unable to perceive the urgency of their words.

I call on Russia to cease its military actions and withdraw its forces from the entire territory of Ukraine immediately and unconditionally and to fully respect the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders.

The *raison d'être* of the Council of Europe is the defense of democracy, the rule of law, and human rights. For several years now, unfortunately, despite the hands we have held out to it, the Russian Federation led by Vladimir Putin has been moving away from these values, from our values.

I am thinking of the annexation of Crimea, the occupation of certain territories, the Navalny affair, the dissolution of the NGO Memorial, the growing challenge to important judgments of the European Court of Human Rights.

The invasion of Ukraine, the full-scale war launched on 24 February, marks a major break. As the Russian Foreign Ministry has said the course of events has become irreversible, but it is by the sole will of the Russian Federation. It is the Russian Federation that started this war in a premeditated way, pretending to want to negotiate. It is the Russian Federation which today violates elementary human rights by attacking civilians, by cynically using the humanitarian corridors, by bombing the pediatric hospital of Mariupol. It is his troops who today do not hesitate to arrest Ukrainian mayors, thus attacking the foundations of Ukrainian democratic society.

As Mr Della Vedova pointed out yesterday, we must react with calm and firmness. This calm and firmness must lead us to demand the withdrawal of the Russian Federation from the Council of Europe. It is the credibility of our Organisation that is at stake, even if I am aware of the consequences that this withdrawal will have for the Russian people, whom I have not forgotten.

This calm and firmness must also lead us to use all the elements at the Organisation's disposal to support the violations of fundamental rights that we are seeing today in Ukraine.

Finally, this calm and firmness must lead us to draw long-term consequences on the functioning of the Council of Europe, to enable it to be fully capable of promoting democratic security in Europe.

Thank you, Mister President.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Alain.

Now in the debate I call Mr Marcin GWÓŹDŹ from Poland.

Marcin, you have the floor.

Mr Marcin GWÓŹDŹ (Poland, EC/DA): Mister President,

Dear colleagues,

The armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine caused a tragedy for the Ukrainian nation. Every day, innocent victims die during the attacks. Putin and his soldiers destroy villages and cities, leaving the scorched earth behind. Russia does not reckon with sanctions by continuing the work of destruction.

The reaction of the other countries must be strong and decisive. Ukraine should know that it is not alone, we stand shoulder to shoulder with Ukraine, and we strongly believe that Ukraine will win. Let us show what real solidarity is all about. Solidarity is not about selling weapons and technology to an aggressor who murders women and children. Countries that sell weapons despite the restrictions imposed are co-responsible for bloodshed and human tragedies.

There is a war going on, and in addition to gas, the blood of killed women and children flows through gas pipelines. Strong and effective sanctions must stop Putin and help Ukraine, because Ukraine is fighting not only for its country but for the whole of Europe.

Europe, wake up!

Thank you.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mr Marcin GWÓŹDŹ.

Now I call to the debate Mr Josip JURATOVIC, from Germany.

You have the floor.

Mr Josip JURATOVIC (Germany, SOC): Dear Mr President, ladies and gentlemen,

As a German MP with Croatian roots, I am currently experiencing *déjà vu* of the Balkan wars.

Putin is waging a war against his brother nation, and what is actually going on with this man? The whole world is wondering.

Surely, after the disastrous Yeltsin era, he got Russia out of anarchy and gave Russia back its dignity. True, it was done by incorrect means, but that was still bearable. His method was directed against democracy - first in his own country and now against his neighbouring country. It is a breach of international law and a crime at the same time. Not only against Ukrainians but also against his own people.

We, democrats of Europe, have emerged stronger and more determined than ever to defend democracy. Mr Putin is now in a downward spiral and the only way out of this situation is to end the war immediately. Since Mr Putin obviously can't do anything with democracy, he could at least behave like a Russian patriot by ending the war immediately so that we can put an end - in peace - to the suffering in the lives of the Ukrainians, and also in the suffering of his own people.

Because it is also his people - it is his people who are suffering at the moment and it is also his people who will have to put everything right again afterwards, in a peaceful way. Above all, these funds that we are now forced to put into armaments would be good to invest in the future - in the goals that lie ahead of us in the future. First of all, in the area of climate protection and all these things that we have to solve together - and without war, but in peace and in agreement, in dialogue and in compromise.

So I ask Mr Putin to clear this path for us - first and foremost as a patriot of the Russian people.

Thank you.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you Mr Josip JURATOVIC.

As Ms JUHÁSZ Hajnalka is not connected, as I'm informed, I now call to the debate Ms Krista BAUMANE, from Latvia.

Ms Krista BAUMANE, you have the floor.

Ms Krista BAUMANE (Latvia, ALDE): Dear President, Dear Colleagues,

At the end of January, in this chamber, we ratified the credentials of the Russian delegation. One month later, Russia started the war with Ukraine. I can't help but say: we told you so.

We have been warning you about Russia's aggression for years. Thank you for finally listening to us. The Baltic countries and others who know very well from personal experience what it means to be occupied in our lifetime.

We are gathered here today to decide whether or not Russia belongs in this organisation. I'm happy to notice that differently from the mood in the January session, there seems to be an overwhelming support to the motion that Russia should be expelled in the fastest and most direct manner. Thank you for that.

I'm sorry it had to come to this and cost so many lives and suffering.

Dear colleagues, as you know from first-hand accounts, Ukrainians are killed as we speak. All Ukrainian colleagues are checking their telephones all the time to see if their loved ones are still alive. Ukrainian people are fighting to protect not only their own country, but freedom and democracy in Europe.

We therefore must, in addition to expelling Russia from the Council of Europe, pledge Ukraine all the necessary assistance it needs—humanitarian, medical, military, and other—in this international organisation, in others, and bilaterally. The no-fly zone over humanitarian corridors and nuclear facilities may not be within the mandate of the Council of Europe, but it is the first thing Ukrainians are asking for at every opportunity. We, as politicians, should listen.

Ukrainians are not afraid to die in defence of their and Europe's freedom. We should not be afraid to express our support in clear and strong terms and act on it. We owe it to Ukraine and Europe, and the credibility of this organisation.

Thank you.

Slava Ukraini!

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Ms Krista BAUMANE.

Now I call to the debate Mr Kimmo KILJUNEN from Finland.

Mr Kimmo KILJUNEN, the floor is yours.

Mr Kimmo KILJUNEN (Finland, SOC): Mister President, 24 February 2020 changed the world.

After the Cold-War-created security structure in Europe was in ruin, the security structure was based on a few basic principles. One of those is obviously sovereignty of all the states, territorial integrity, and obviously everyone's right to choose their own way of organising their security.

Of course also the key basic principal point was common security. Common security means that you don't build up your security at the cost of others. If one of us is unsecured, we all are unsecured.

What is clear is that the Russian aggression now against Ukraine broke the whole system. Altogether, common security changed to common insecurity. Actually, we all are threatened, because if you can break the rules in one case, you can break the rules in other cases too.

Is Ukrainian Europeanisation and democracy development actually a threat to Russia?

My answer is very clear. It is a threat to Russia, not to Russia itself, not to the Russian people, but to the authoritarian system in Russia, the elites and power structures in Russia. Yes, democracy development is a threat in that way. That's why Ukrainians are not only fighting for their self-existence as a nation state, but also, as a matter of fact, for the Russian people's right to democracy.

What will it happen? My prognosis is very clear. The time of Mr Putin is soon or even sooner away. It's gone. It's absolutely gone. That's my prognosis.

What will exist after that? Only one word: apologies. Apologies for the Ukrainian people, apologies for the world, and apologies also for Russian people.

Thank you.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Kimmo.

Now I call in the debate Mr Aleksandar NIKOLOSKI from Northern Macedonia.

Aleksandar, the floor is yours.

Mr Aleksandar NIKOLOSKI (North Macedonia, EPP/CD): Mister President, thank you very much.

Dear friends,

Since the aggression and annexation of Crimea in 2014, I'm always supporting the Ukrainians in their fight for freedom, self-declaration, and democracy. In the 21st century, when the world talks about new technologies, green agenda, and space development, the least one can imagine is a war. War in Europe is the most horrifying thing that could happen. That is why I strongly support Ukraine, and that is why tonight we should adopt the report for the consequences of the Russian aggression against Ukraine.

These two days we've heard from our Ukrainian colleagues of the suffering they face. Listening to these shocking testimonies, I can only draw a parallel with the fate and the denial of the Macedonian people, centuries-old disputed by their neighbours who are both bigger and more powerful. For centuries, our neighbours disputed Macedonians as a separate nation, culture, and separate Macedonian language. We were victims and persecuted during the Balkan wars, during the Greek Civil War, and finally disputed in the 21st century.

The denial of the Ukrainian language and the thesis that the Ukrainian Nation is a product of the Leninist and the communist is similar to the thesis of denying of the Macedonian nation and language and the thesis that Macedonians are a product of Tito and the communists. The disputing and humiliation of both nations and languages has many symbolisms and similarities, even the same words are used. This was not accidentally noticed even by the great philosopher Francis Fukuyama, the author of *The End of History and the Last Man*, who says that there are many similarities in the narrative used against Macedonia and Ukraine and the denial of the Macedonians and Ukrainians.

The basic value of democracy is that people decide for themselves, but also for who they are and what they are. It is civilisational prosperity, from which there is no turning back, and which no war or blockade can stop anyhow.

Therefore, I can freely say to the Macedonians that our struggle and destiny is very much similar to the Ukrainian one. That is why we must support them with all our hearts. We are small. We can not do much, though the slightest support means a lot in this whirlwind of war.

The Macedonian people has always been on the right side of history. We'll be on the side of the truth in this crisis, military aggression, and this suffering and misfortune that are happening in Ukraine.

Ukraine will win that route and democracy will win.

Thank you very much.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you Mr Aleksandar NIKOLOSKI.

Next on our list of speakers is Lord David BLENCATHRA, from the United Kingdom.

Lord David BLENCATHRA, you have the floor.

Lord David BLENCATHRA (United Kingdom, EC/DA): Thank you, Mr President.

This Council should hang its head in shame, but now it has a chance to redeem itself.

We should be ashamed of when Russia invaded Georgia in 2008 the whole western world did nothing. This organisation did nothing. That was the first big green light to Putin to do whatever he liked. So Putin then took over the Crimea and two provinces in Eastern Ukraine and we did nothing.

When Russia left Council of Europe, what did we do? We went to them with our begging bowl and invited them back in. I'm proud to say that the whole British delegation was opposed to that.

Why do we take Russia back? Was it for high moral reasons? No. It was to get our hands on dirty Russian money. We were as bad then as those companies trading with Russia today.

But we can now partly redeem ourselves. We have our own solution before us today which is good, but should be strengthened. Russia is waging all-out war on Ukraine using the standard Soviet tactics of massive destruction of civilian infrastructure, mass casualties of civilians, and completely destroying everything so that the survivors are forced to surrender.

Therefore Russia does must not be asked to leave as organisation, it must be expelled as soon as possible. But of course, that does not save the Ukraine. Only the complete destruction of Russia's forces in the Ukraine will work. Russia must be beaten militarily and be seen to be beaten.

We need a resolution which calls on every Western country to immediately step up supplies and deliveries of all available weapons to the Ukrainian defence forces so they can take out Russian planes, artillery and tanks, and destroy their logistical chain. It should be amended to state that all assistance will be given to Ukrainian defence forces to defeat Russia.

We must not be blackmailed by Putin's oblique threat of nuclear war. Do we then run scared and leave Ukraine to be destroyed?

Also, colleagues, we must guard against false ceasefires and peace talks. I'm afraid I don't trust any other country to negotiate a ceasefire with Putin, especially President Macron and his long chats with Putin. If Russia agrees to a ceasefire then it is because they feel that they've got their boots on Ukraine's neck. Russia will only silence its guns when Ukraine is defeated. I want all the guns to fall silent but only when there is not a single Russian weapon system left intact to fire shells and missiles.

Now some on this Council say that our mandate is only human rights, democracy and the rule of law, and not European security. Colleagues, I'm afraid that is absolute nonsense. There is no rule of law, there are no human rights, there is no democracy if we let one country unlawfully destroy another and commit genocide.

We solve the humanitarian and refugee crisis not by getting Ukrainians out of the Ukraine, but by getting Russia out of Ukraine and the Ukrainians back to their homeland. Peace comes from victory. Let us help the Ukraine to victory.

Slava Ukraini!

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, David.

Now I call in the debate Mr Pedro BACELAR DE VASCONCELOS from Portugal.

Pedro, you have the floor.

Mr Pedro BACELAR DE VASCONCELOS (Portugal, SOC): Thank you very much, Mister President.

This is my last intervention as a member of this Parliamentary Assembly. I regret it happens in such tragic circumstances.

Of course we fully support the draft resolution proposed by the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy. The main urgency is to help the victims reach an effective ceasefire, secure humanitarian corridors and resume a serious engagement of the relevant parties in peace conversations.

The Russian invasion was viewed worldwide through our media with a unparalleled detail and realism. That have placed a strong condemnation of this military aggression and a passionate solidarity with Ukrainian people. To the best of our hopes the solidarity with Ukrainian victims ought to signal a new awareness to the absolute need to condemn any attempts to solve this one or any other conflict by the use of force.

We lost the extraordinary opportunity offered by the peaceful extinction of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact 30 years ago. The world keeps changing now towards a polycentric balance of powers in which the European peoples must be bold and assert a strategic autonomy to promote values that since the defeat of Fascism and Nazism in 1945 conquered a prestige and sound respect from the entire international community: democracy, human rights, and rule of law.

The obsolescence of the present military pact has become notorious. We have to resist the calls asking for growing investments in the military industry and to start building a new security system. National budgets have to appease the inequalities growing in our democratic societies and to foster general cooperation between the rich and the poor countries. Definitely the strategic autonomy of Europe demands official apology of universal disarmament and the destruction of all the nuclear weapons. We welcome enthusiastically the sanctions against the Russian oligarchs, well aware that they were born under Western complicity, and we need also to promote stricter transparency in global financial transactions, namely when tax havens and forbid the service offered by a deregulated banking system to notorious international criminals.

Systematic violations of public international law have increased astonishingly everywhere for the last 30 years. A new security system is urgently needed for the prevention of war, improved cooperation of sustainable development, and quality of fundamental rights.

Weapons or use of force cannot promote democracy and human dignity.

I'm finishing.

The Council of Europe must assume a more efficient rule with effective instruments to scrutinise democracies, to denounce and prosecute human rights infringements. The world is not black and white – on the contrary, it is vividly coloured by human diversity and too big and rich to accept submission to any imperialistic ambitions.

Thank you very much, Mr President, my only wish is peace.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much Mr Pedro BACELAR DE VASCONCELOS.

I allowed you some seconds more as you indicated that this might be your last speech here.

Thank you very much for being with us in the past years.

Now I call to the debate Mr Franz Leonhard ESSL, from Austria.

You have the floor.

Mr Franz Leonhard ESSL (Austria, EPP/CD): Dear Mr President,

Ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, a message to our Ukrainian delegation and especially to the Ukrainian people; you have our support.

Yes, ladies and gentlemen,

It is true – in the Council of Europe we have been discussing the relationship with Russia for eight years now, because at that time Russia already violated international law with the occupation of Crimea. I was and still am of the opinion that the Council of Europe should be that body, that place, where we can start dialogue and where we can resolve conflicts in a peaceful way.

Unfortunately, in the past, Russia has not conducted this dialogue with the necessary seriousness, no; Russia has not ended the aggression, but Russia has intensified the aggression. With armed force, the Russian rulers are now going against the integrity of an independent state, against Ukraine, destroying infrastructure facilities, thus livelihoods, and killing people – both civilians and the soldiers.

Our task is to speak out clearly and unequivocally against this, and we are doing so today with great unity.

It is about solidarity with the Ukrainian people, but it is not only about this solidarity. This aggression is not directed against Ukraine alone, but against our social system, where democracy, the rule of law and human rights are indispensable basic values.

Therefore, we strongly condemn this aggression. We here in the Council of Europe are not doing it with force of arms, but with determination and unity on issues of international law; and Europe is also doing it with the economic sanctions.

Yes, ladies and gentlemen,

Russia's behavior has united Europe, and not only Europe, but also the UN General Assembly has condemned the Russian invasion of Ukraine by an overwhelming majority, 141 votes to 5.

So let us stand up here and today together – against dictatorship and against war. Let us stand up here and today together – for democracy and for freedom. Let us vote for the exclusion of Russia, let us vote for a life in freedom and peace, let us support the long-suffering people in Ukraine and let us also support those people who stand up for democracy in Russia.

Perhaps this is the key to a future in peace.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much indeed.

Now we move to Ms Lesia VASYLENKO.

Ms Lesia VASYLENKO (Ukraine, ALDE): Colleagues,

I usually write very detailed speeches which I read off papers, unless I forget something.

Today I have also written down a couple of prompts. In all honesty, I don't think I'll be needing them because I will be speaking of the last 20 days. I will be testifying of the atrocities that have been happening and are still going on in the middle of Europe after Russia escalated its aggression against Ukraine to an unprecedented scale.

I will be speaking of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

However, these legal terms, these words, they don't do justice and they will never do justice to Tanya, a girl of eight years old who died of dehydration in besieged Mariupol. Her mother was killed by a missile attack and Tanya was left without a drop of water for six days in the basements of Mariupol.

These terms, these legal terms and dry words will never do justice to baby Amir, who lived only 39 days of his life, because babies are not supposed to live in basements which are 13 degrees cold.

These dry words and terms will never do justice to Polina, a ten-year-old-girl who was shot point-blank in the middle of Kyiv, her native city, together with her parents, and leaving her little brother and little sister to survive and wake up in an ER unit only to realise that they are orphans.

Russia is waging a war of extermination of the Ukrainian people, of the 44 million Ukrainians. Putin doesn't want an independent Ukraine. Because of that, he's prepared to do anything.

He already razed to the ground a city of 100 000 people: Volnovakha. That city is no more. That's it. Forget about it. It stopped existing two days ago.

Putin is targeting the most vulnerable of the vulnerable. He hits maternity wards, he hits cancer hospitals, he hits hospices for blind children, this is the information I received just two hours ago. And why? For what?

You know, I addressed this to all the parents who are here. I imagine all of you are parents. Can you imagine what it's like to not be able to say good night to your child, or not know when it will be the next time to kiss him or her, your daughter or your son? It's painful.

I can tell you that, because I'm a mother of three. My youngest baby is 9 months. One of my older children asked me: "Mom, when will we see you again? Why are we here and you're there?" I have nothing to say to them. I don't have the answer. Because you know what? Only Putin has the answer to that.

The uncertainty is killing.

When I was making the choice to separate myself from my three children, I was making that choice for them to live. Because I gave them life to live. I will fight for their lives.

I urge all of you in this Assembly to do what you can yourself, but also to petition your governments to stand with Ukraine. But really stand with Ukraine. For the sake of democracy, for the sake of a 44-million-large nation, but also for the sake of your people, who you represent. Because if Ukraine falls, Europe will fall, and the world will fall. It's not just words to make it big. It's the truth.

We have hazardous facilities in the territory of Ukraine. We are a responsible partner that says to you responsibly that we are unable to protect our skies and our land without the help. This is something that we ask of you.

I'll finalise. I just want to say six words that all of us need to do and concentrate on in order for Europe and the world to be a safe place for all people to live. Six *D*'s.

We need to help Russia and the Russians to demilitarise, decommunise, deputinise, denuclearise, democratise and destalinise. That is it. Those are the six *D*'s we need to concentrate our common efforts on for our children to be able to listen, not to missiles and rockets and bombs and shell fire, but to be able to listen to birds sing, and to be able to grow up in a beautiful future.

Thank you and glory to Ukraine.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Madam Lesia VASYLENKO.

Now Mr Bjarni JÓNSSON.

Mr Bjarni JÓNSSON (Iceland, UEL): Mister President,

Europe stands united and shocked as war rages in Ukraine and innocent lives are lost every day, communities and families ripped apart, children robbed of the future they dream of.

Our thoughts are with the innocent people in Ukraine who are suffering and those who are displaced, seeking shelter. The horrific invasion has already had devastating consequences.

I express my deep sadness over the developments we are watching get worse by the day. Iceland strongly condemns the Russian invasion into Ukraine.

This war of aggression is a clear breach of international law and grim reminder of a past most of us believed would never be repeated.

We must react strongly and do more to respond to the urgent and increasing need for humanitarian aid in Ukraine and neighbouring countries where refugees are seeking shelter.

Further, Europe must indiscriminately welcome refugees and without hesitation, during a fast-paced and evolving humanitarian crisis.

As we need to take on the unfolding tragedy in Ukraine caused by the horrific invasion of Russian forces, with both strength and wisdom, we not only need to secure peace for Europe for the times to come, but also to keep peace and unity to resolve the deadly threats to the planet due to climate change, to further cement and protect the foundations of human rights this Assembly holds so dear, and to protect and nurture what makes us human, never losing sight of the importance of unity and peace.

Today marks history for the Council of Europe. We stand united in condemning in the strongest manner this appalling aggression of one state against another, an act which will have dire consequences for the aggressors.

We call on Russian leadership to cease its military action immediately and withdraw its troops from Ukraine to be a nation among nations and deserve to be a member of this Assembly. Until they do so, they have no place in the Council of Europe.

Calm and firm, we must shape our shared path for peaceful future and never cease having hope during the darkest nights.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

Now we move to Mexico and Mr Éctor Jaime RAMÍREZ BARBA.

Mr Éctor Jaime RAMÍREZ BARBA (Mexico)*: ...principles, common good, dignity of human persons, solidarity and subsidiarity.

We believe in the fight for freedom, democracy, the rule of law and human rights.

On behalf of our National Action Party, and the millions of Mexicans we represent, we have come to say in this Parliamentary Assembly that we strongly condemn the Russian invasion of Ukraine. We repudiate the autocratic imposition of force which has crushed reason and laws in the eyes of the whole world, causing suffering, pain and the loss of thousands of lives.

We have projected the Ukrainian flag on our party headquarters in Mexico City as an affirmative gesture of brotherhood and solidarity with the Ukrainian people.

Our national leader, Marko Cortés Mendoza, has created spaces for dialogue with the Ukrainian diplomatic corps in Mexico, expressing his rejection of the unprecedented and undiplomatic offensive against Ukrainian sovereign territory. He expressed the measures that our party is demanding from the Mexican government, from congress and other spaces, until the atrocities committed by Vladimir Putin's government cease.

It is time for decisiveness. Mexico should not play on the concealed vagueness of neutrality under the misunderstood principle of non-intervention. In the UN, our country has achieved an energetic position, voting in the Assembly to condemn Russia on the one hand, and calling, together with France, to analyse the humanitarian situation in Ukraine on the other.

Mexico has also demanded an end to hostilities, the protection of the civilian population, and the application of international humanitarian law. We call on the government, the business sector and civil society, as their legal, ethical and moral duty, to do everything possible to press for a return to peace.

Among other measures, we have asked to suspend all trade and economic activities with Russia, Aeroflot and charter flights coming to our country, all exchange programmes and projects of all kinds. We have asked to send humanitarian aid, and that we receive our Ukrainian brothers, including women, children and the vulnerable population until they can return to their country.

The Russian population is also suffering. We hope that this torment will end soon.

Finally, we want to express to you, the Council of Europe, our admiration and respect for the solidarity, humanitarian and empathic attitude towards this ominous aggressive event.

Long live Ukraine and long live the Council of Europe.

I will tell you that in Mexico we have our own struggle to reverse the dictatorship of populist President López Obrador, who has been undermining democracy, rule of law, human rights, freedom of speech, security and the economy of our great nation.

A fraternal hug to the people of Ukraine. Mexico is with you.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

I now give the floor to Mr Pierre-Alain FRIDEZ.

Mr Pierre-Alain FRIDEZ (Switzerland, SOC): Thank you, Mister President.

I arrived in Strasbourg full of emotion a few years ago. Entering the temple of human rights, in this high place where all European countries, except Belarus, had united to build a Europe of peace, of respect for human rights and democracy, with the underlying founding idea: never again this, never again a war that tears our continent apart.

I have long believed in dialogue with Russia and in peaceful co-existence. Today I can hardly believe the magnitude of the terrible events that have struck our Ukrainian friends. I am devastated.

I took part in the evaluation of the elections in Russia last September, an evaluation by observation because we were only five parliamentarians present and therefore unable to carry out a real observation. Because of the pandemic, the Russians unilaterally reduced the composition of the delegation of our Assembly to 10 instead of 40 and to 50 instead of 500 from the OSCE and the ODIHR, thus preventing a sufficiently large deployment in this immense country to properly assess the electoral process. So the OSCE and ODIHR gave up, and we went with five.

The Russian argument that it was risky to bring 500 observers, in view of the pandemic, is laughable in a country that stretches from St. Petersburg to Vladivostok, especially since, at the same time, a large number of complacent observers, declared friends of Putin's Russia, were present. We were able to observe that the Russian electoral system did not give by far an equal chance to all the candidates and that many people labelled as foreign agents had their rights violated because of a revised electoral law. There was also media bias, a suspicious Internet voting system, a reduction in the means of monitoring the ballot boxes as the voting was extended to 72 hours, and campaign conditions that fell far short of our standards.

During the Bureau of our Assembly in Rome last November, I was able to tell Mr Tolstoy, who boasted that these elections had been exemplary, that his country was practicing a revisited version of democracy. Democratic formalism has the taste or color of democracy, but it is not democracy. Others call it a democrature.

Lies and distortions of the truth continue, a national sport in the Kremlin. Who will believe that it is the Ukrainians who systematically violate human rights in their country and that their valiant President Zelensky wants to use chemical weapons?

The Ukrainian people are paying dearly for their situation outside the NATO zone of influence and close to a military power that keeps the Western world at bay with the threat of nuclear weapons. Russia is a poor military power that will be exhausted by the heroic resistance of the Ukrainian people.

Two other countries are also deprived of the NATO umbrella: Georgia and the Republic of Moldova. As co-rapporteur for the Republic of Moldova, I fear that Putin wants to push his offensive to Transnistria, where a Russian army is stationed, and threaten the Republic of Moldova.

So let us stand in solidarity with Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, and vote for the exclusion of Russia for now.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mr Pierre-Alain FRIDEZ.

We now move to Bulgaria and Ms Ekaterina ZAHARIEVA.

I hope I pronounced your name correctly.

Ms Ekaterina ZAHARIEVA (Bulgaria, EPP/CD): Thank you Chair, Ekaterina is enough.

Dear colleagues,

I believe we all have seen on the news the consequences of the Russian war on Ukraine. In my country Bulgaria we can see and feel the war because thousands of people already came to seek shelter. These mothers and children running from their homes tell us stories of horror and inhuman atrocities.

I am proud that the Bulgarian people all over the country offered their hospitality and showed that they are dignified descendants of these ordinary Bulgarians who saved our Jewish population during the Second World War.

We also commend the people of Ukraine for their enormous courage in defending their country and our shared values of freedom and democracy. We must not leave them alone. We must act now and provide them all possible assistance. I repeat: all possible assistance. Humanitarian, medical, military one.

Even before the military aggression, Moscow already had a long track record of breaching international law and human rights. Now we also see how Russia commits war crimes – they fire cluster bombs at civilian population. We see their missiles hit civilian homes, schools, hospitals, maternity wards, kindergartens, etc.

Putin's regime also crushed all people who oppose this bloody aggression in his own country.

Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine grossly violates international law. Putin's war can be stopped only by stepping up pressure on the Kremlin by all possible means: by severe economical and political sanctions.

That's why today we should explicitly demand the Russian Federation be expelled immediately from the Council of Europe, as provided by Article 8.

Slava Ukraini!

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

Now we go online to Mr Harald WEYEL from Germany.

Mr Harald WEYEL (Germany, EC/DA): Yes, thank you very much, Mister Chairman.

My best regards, condolences, and sympathy to the Ukrainian people, to all the people groups who are victims of the fighting, aggression and so on.

Yesterday, when I went from the west end of Germany, from Cologne, to the east end, to Berlin, the first thing I saw when I came out of the main station was a big tent that said "Welcome Ukrainians", also in Cyrillic letters. I don't know now whether this lettering was in Ukrainian or Russian. In addition right there were buses that bring the people arriving here in Berlin Hauptbahnhof to the reception centers.

The willingness to help in Germany is great and in an extraordinarily justified case. We are very much in favor of the accommodation near the border, hopefully succeeding in the shortest possible term. We also support the immediate neighbouring countries. We are also prepared to take in refugees ourselves.

Nevertheless, I would like to make one more point. It cannot happen that in the course of this development the unauthorised, the non-Ukrainian citizens, that is, people who show up here via Belarus and Poland as so-called refugees, that these people take the place away from the actual refugees: women, children, old men, and sick people. Therefore, we also very much support Poland's paying attention at the border so that unauthorised people do not enter.

We would see it the same way even from our government. I know that, for example, the Moroccan ambassador in Ukraine and the actual Moroccan students flew out. The same should be done with all those who are unauthorised. Nevertheless, I would like to ask further for more thoughtfulness for the view toward the future. The EU is not an all-round carefree contract. You don't have everything economically when you are in the EU, and you don't have an additional security package.

The same is true, I'm afraid, for NATO membership. Look, NATO may protect against non-members conditionally. All other things being equal, it may be an insurance policy to some extent, but it is not an insurance policy against members. Here I want to address the conflict of NATO members Turkey and Greece, respectively Cyprus. It is a particular footnote in history that if Cyprus now has the Russian S-300 air defense systems—not the most modern like the 400, but the predecessor—if it cannot put that into operation because otherwise Turkey will threaten to act militarily. Yes, then it is now the laughing stock in the context if these S-300 systems are transferred to Ukraine. I am making it clear or the facts are making themselves clear and noticeable. It is not an all-round insurance policy to be in NATO, not even against its own members. The same is true for the EU.

Thank you very much and all the best.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

I give the floor to Ms Nerea AHEDO.

Ms Nerea AHEDO (Spain, ALDE)*: I am speaking in Spanish.

I will be very brief because many things have already been said, and this is an issue which seems to me a very important one. It's a demonstration of the unanimous support of the Council for Ukraine.

First of all, we need to show our most energetic condemnation of military aggression against Ukraine by Russia.

Secondly, our total support to support Ukraine on our total solidarity both with those who are within Ukraine today, defending and struggling for their country, as well as those who have been obliged to leave. Solidarity with refugees and we must give them proper integrated attention.

I understand also that we have to start mechanisms of co-responsibility between countries and, moreover, mechanisms of how responsibility that are not simply for this specific crisis. Border countries could not be the only people responsible for managing the crisis. If something happens on our southern boundaries when people flee from other forms of war or persecution, the distribution is not always as fully in solidarity as we might wish it to be.

This war affects Ukraine terribly and directly, but it also affects Russian people living under a repressive regime which does not respect rights and freedoms. I think we all agree, and we all are aware of this: it affects all of us. The sad thing is we didn't see it coming.

This war, in addition to humanitarian consequences which are already more than clear, has economic and geopolitical consequences. This war is, I think, important even for our conception of Europe in the world. It will have to do with the peace culture resolution of conflict via dialogue and negotiation and the defence of rights and freedoms and democracy and of the law.

This war is changing the world order. There will be destabilisation which will absolutely affect all of us. So, I've already said that there will be consequences for everyone and I think what we need to do here is to think things out properly to be ready to consider this attack on Ukraine unacceptable and this attack on our European values.

We are aware also that sanctions will have an effect, but we don't know when. We need to think, while we're waiting for the real effect to hit, what we can do here in this council. We need to make a decision that will also have consequences.

We need to go forward with caution. Everything we do will require prudence. Prudence doesn't mean inaction or a lack of firmness. Humanitarian action needs to be brought on the situation in an energetic way. We need to send a clear message to the Russian government and not to forget Russian citizens and especially...

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

Let us move straight away to Ms María FERNÁNDEZ.

Is Ms María FERNÁNDEZ online?

Ms María FERNÁNDEZ (Spain, SOC)*: Yes, here I am.

Good afternoon.

Thank you, Mr President.

From Spain, I would first of all like to express the regrets of the Spanish for the loss of life in Ukraine.

We would like to state our most firm condemnation of this unjustified and irrational invasion of Ukraine by Russia, which puts into risk stability and peace in Europe and the world. Spanish people give their full support to the Ukrainian people and express their support for Ukraine's national sovereignty over the entirety of their national territory. We want to express our admiration and respect for the determination with which these people are fighting for their freedom and their independence.

Spain is a country which loves peace and is a country of the Council of Europe, defends democratic values, freedom and respect of fundamental rights as well as the rule of law. For this reason, the Spanish people are deeply moved when they see people fighting for their freedom.

President Putin is not going to affect the unity of the European Union whose basic values are what they are and cannot be subjected to a totalitarian regime such as Russia has.

This attack by Putin is a flagrant violation of international law. It is trampling underfoot the Charter of the United Nations and also trampling over the Council of Europe and the European Union, which have led it to peace and prosperity.

To define the European boundaries by force is what is being attempted here. This is basically strengthening the European Union, strengthening our values and our principles, and our way of understanding the world we are living in.

For these reasons Spain demands Putin that he immediately and unconditionally ceases his aggression against Ukraine, that he withdraws military forces from Ukrainian territory and that he comes back to dialogue and to the respect for international law.

We entirely support the immediate and coordinated response by the European Union, and also with the idea that Russia ends its attacks against the Ukraine. Moreover, we support the protection of the international community for Ukrainian refugees. We admire the generosity and attitude of the neighbouring countries that receive thousands of Ukrainian refugees every day. We need full support from the international community for Ukraine, for it is defending its security and the law, and democratic consolidation.

It is necessary that this unprecedented situation in the Council of Europe be resolved by the immediate and unanimous decision to expel Russia for its failure to support the fundamental values of this institution.

We wish, therefore, to support all actions to end the conflict and the petitions made by the Parliamentary Assembly to this end.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

Now Ms Boriana ÅBERG.

Ms Boriana ÅBERG (Sweden, EPP/CD): Mr President, dear colleagues,

I'm ashamed, I'm terribly ashamed over what's happening in Ukraine, over what we're allowing Russia to do to Ukraine.

What's currently taking place in Ukraine is incomprehensible. That this genocide of Ukrainians could happen in our civilised society, despite all lessons given to us by history, is incomprehensible.

From where does this utter contempt towards everything our civilisation represents come, towards everything the Council of Europe represents? What kind of people are these who bombard kindergartens and hospitals, who are shooting children and their mothers with intent?

That this malevolence would exist is unfathomable. I sincerely hope that the decent Russian people wake up and rid themselves of their cruel ruling dictator Putin – to rid themselves of the regime that considers its citizens serfs, that sends unprepared young men to kill innocent people on the other side of the border. A cruel war machine that even brings mobile crematoriums so as to not have to return the fallen home. To deprive their mothers of the possibility to see their dead sons one final time. The Russian regime has industrialised the killing. Both of their neighbours and their own.

No, Russia has no place in the Council of Europe. It was a mistake to once grant Russia membership, it was wrong to over and over again grant concessions – after Transnistria, after Georgia, after Crimea. If Putin is not stopped now he will not quit. We will have to ask ourselves who's next. The Baltic countries? Poland? Sweden?

Dear colleagues, we must support Ukraine in every possible way because Ukrainians are fighting for our freedom, too.

Dear Ukrainians, your courage has gained the admiration of the whole world. We are with you. And we will help you to rebuild Ukraine.

Slava Ukraini!

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

Now Mr Norbert KLEINWÄCHTER.

He's online, is he?

Mr Norbert KLEINWÄCHTER (Germany, EC/DA): Mr President, thank you for the Presidential Committee especially for making this debate and session today possible and to the rapporteur and staff who have delivered this excellent report.

We should send a strong signal tonight with a unanimous vote to Russia. And distinguished colleagues, our hearts and prayers are with Ukraine and with the people of Ukraine who are mourning their deceased relatives, who are mourning the loss of their home, who are defending the only and one home they have.

This conflict is an atrocious, despicable war of aggression against not only a country but against our common values and against humanity.

What division have we seen in this Council of Europe and in the European Union in debates about our supposed common values that we have, about the supposed lack of rule of law in several countries, about the supposed lack of support for refugees, or the supposed lack of support for people with a different definition of gender.

Today we stand united because Russia attacks our real common values that we all share: democracy, freedom, sovereignty, the right to self-determination, everyone's right to live in peace. These values are put in question by Putin's Russia, and this Council of Europe is no place where these values can be questioned.

Therefore it is sad but it is right for the Russian Federation to leave this organisation, and I hope that you all support this vote tonight. But I also ask you not to use this report to bring in things that we've always been divided about, and to bring in amendments which are not universally shared, amendments, such like helping refugees without discrimination of race.

You know what really shames me? Millions of Ukrainian women and children and elderly are fleeing because they can't stay home, because they have no one to go to, because they can't stay home where they would have loved to stay. We need to take care of them urgently and with priority. And it shames me when I read on the news that in some facilities in Germany there is no room for them because they are still illegal immigrants with no passport in the facilities. I'm ashamed when I read that an 18-year-old Ukrainian woman was raped today in a German facility by a Nigerian and an Iraqi refugee with probably a false Ukrainian passport. Shame on them but also shame on us for allowing this to happen.

Putin's Russia is threatening who we are and what we are. He actually wants to destroy them. It's time to throw out ideology, it's time for us to get back to the roots. It's time to distinguish right from wrong, and it's time to stand in for democracy, for freedom and to stand with Ukraine.

Thank you.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

Now I think we stay online for Ms Luz MARTINEZ SEIJO.

Is she online?

Yes.

Ms Luz MARTINEZ SEIJO (Spain, SOC): On a matter as sad and painful as the one we are experiencing, even now verbalising it, it is difficult to assume that in our Europe, a neighbouring country, Russia, is committing such an atrocity as an invasion and what that entails.

As a European, as a member of the Spanish delegation, I want to express my strongest rejection to the violation of international law in Ukraine.

These last weeks we have verified that Putin is afraid of democracy. He wants to do away with a strong Europe, and Ukraine represents the struggle between two models: the democratic one, with rights and freedom, and the authoritarian, that Putin represents.

Putin is an autocrat. He practices censorship. He persecutes the opposition and promotes disinformation campaigns. But there is another Russia that we must not forget. The Russian people who suffer from the regime of the war and deserve our solidarity too. This war condemns Russia to poverty and ostracism.

As a Spaniard, I defend the position of my country, coherent with the rest of the countries of the European Union and the Council of Europe. Spain is contributing with humanitarian and health aid shipments, and is hosting Ukrainian refugees.

Ukrainians need our help now, and will need it whilst this nightmare is over.

We Europeans will all have economic consequences in our countries. The impact on gas, the rising prices, the well-being of families, companies' and business' health, the provision of basic products, immediate services. But there is someone to blame for this: Putin.

This is the sacrifice of Europe. But the sacrifice of the Ukrainians is the lack of freedom and horror.

In short, we are committed to defend human rights, to condemn Russia's aggression. I'm strongly convinced that we must keep unity in the European response, requesting Russia to withdraw from this Council. Putin believed that Ukraine was going to give in, that Europe would split. But he was wrong. We are more united. We must keep together to face the consequences of sanctions and maintain the unity to soften the impact of war in civilians.

To end up, there are two paths ahead: ppeace, legality and solidarity; or war. We know that war is never the solution. Europe learnt well the lesson from its history of pain and suffering.

Thank you very much and good evening to you all.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much indeed.

Now Mr Sławomir NITRAS.

Mr Sławomir NITRAS (Poland, EPP/CD): Thank you, Mister President.

As Europe, we aspired to a stabilise the world, to create a global security system. We have laid the foundations of international legal guarantees for every human's security.

Those are our declarations which we have written in countries' documents. We have achieved great things in the matter of conflict resolution. Among others, the Council of Europe has contributed to it.

However, there are the times in history when the simple declarations, appeals, and classic diplomacy, are not enough. We happen to be living through such days today. The worst of evils is happening.

The war is destroying human lives. Russian missiles are ruining the heritage of multiple generations and the cultural achievements of nations. Millions of refugees, women and children, who left their husbands, sons and fathers in the war zone, are now at our borders.

Today our duty is to cut off the fuel of Putin's regime. We need to introduce sanctions that will not only weaken Putin's Russia, but also paralyse the Russian war machine. Paralyse it immediately. Every tanker, every ship, every truck, coming to or from Russia and Belarus, finances Putin's bombs. I'm calling on all the governments of Europe to stop this immediately. Putin will not stop, not by himself.

Here I appeal for aid to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, for Poland, Hungary, Romania, Moldova and Slovakia. Those countries had to take the responsibility for accepting millions of refugees. I express my respect for the kindness and generosity they showed. It's a great act of new solidarity, the new idea that was born in Central Europe, in my country, in Poland, 40 years ago.

However, these countries are not able to handle such an amount of people by themselves. I appeal first to the states of the European Union and other European countries for solidarity and developing a system of aid for European refugees.

In my final words, I'd like to thank those citizens of Russia and Belarus who in the face of crimes performed by their governments are not afraid to express resistance. Your acts of bravery are defending the honour of your own nations.

Most importantly, I want to address the people of Ukraine, those who are here with us today, and your brothers who are defending their motherland. In those cruel times, Europe stands with us, but with you.

Slava Ukraini, heroiam Slava.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

The floor is now given to Mr Jean-Pierre GRIN.

Mr Jean-Pierre GRIN (Switzerland, ALDE): Thank you very much, Mister President.

Good morning from Switzerland.

There will be a before 24 February 2022 and an after. Who could have imagined, before this fateful February 24, that a war would break out between two sovereign European countries? Vladimir Putin's warlike madness has taken everyone by surprise.

The European countries and the NATO alliance maintained an armament that everyone hoped would be a deterrent. Switzerland, my country, maintains a militia army that some people were contesting, even calling for the abolition of our army. At present, they are still contesting the purchase of equipment and new aircraft.

After 24 February and for the last three weeks, the awakening is brutal. It shows us that, sometimes, human madness has no limits and that we must always, unfortunately, be ready to defend ourselves against a potential invader.

What is happening in Ukraine is a mess and the negotiation, this ordeal, is a crime against the Ukrainian people. Our Parliamentary Assembly must condemn in the strongest terms the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine. We express our solidarity with the entire Ukrainian people.

The Russian authorities are suppressing freedom of expression and freedom of assembly in Russia with a fierce repression of peaceful demonstrations. We are deeply concerned about the situation of Ukrainians who are forced to flee their country in fear for their lives. Neighboring countries and further afield must show solidarity and generosity by continuing to receive thousands of refugees, mostly women and children.

Switzerland, in order to welcome these people in distress, has set up a special status for these refugees with a Permit S: this permit allows them, upon arrival, to obtain psychological support, to send their children to school and to benefit from a work permit for a certain period of time.

These tragic events confirm the usefulness of the Council of Europe in denouncing all these violations of human rights, firmly demanding that Russia cease hostilities, withdraw from the territory of Ukraine and comply with its obligations under international humanitarian law. Unfortunately, our Assembly has only words, and Putin has the weapons.

For the time being, the Russian Federation no longer has the legitimacy to be part of the Council of Europe, and we must exclude it.

Thank you for your attention.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, Mister GRIN.

Now we go to Mr Titus CORLĂȚEAN.

Mr Titus CORLĂȚEAN (Romania, SOC): Dear Colleagues,

Over the years I have told my students in international law or human rights protection from the University that the most profound and important achievement of humankind after World War II, at least here in Europe, was peace. I never had, until now, the feeling that these students really understand what I was talking about. This year was for the first time when, unfortunately, they finally understood.

A war started through acts of aggression by a European state, the Russian Federation, against another European sovereign state, Ukraine. This represents an objective reality that can be described as a crime of aggression, a violation of the foundation of the functioning of the international society after World War II as established by the UN Charter, and also a long list of war crimes or crimes against humanity.

Humankind, that includes the innocent civil population, most of them women and children, some of them suffering from cancer in Ukrainian hospitals targeted by Russian missiles. That means a tragedy first of all for the Ukrainian Nation including for the ethnic minorities living in Ukraine as it is the case of ethnic Romanians, also. It is a tragedy for the nation that sees its homeland destroyed and its sons and daughters being killed, but it is also a drama for the free world that did not have the capacity to prevent or deter this aggression of Vladimir Putin because of its own weaknesses or economic interest.

Finally, in reality it is a drama also for the Russian nation and its own elites that were at the origin during the time, not only of imperial ambitions or wars of occupation, but also of acts of culture, music, art, literature of universal value. The key phrase for me of the entire draft report is "in the common European home there is no place for an aggressor".

All of us, the Europeans but also our American allies and humankind in general should have understood this from the beginning, from the moment when Russia committed the aggression against the Republic of Moldova occupying Transnistria, from the moment of the aggression committed against Georgia, or when it illegally committed the annexation of Crimea.

Today the Assembly is called upon to adopt a clear political stand and decision. I invite colleagues to take the right decision and to vote in favour of the proposal tabled by the rapporteur.

At the same time for me, as a Romanian, the most significant signal I saw these weeks was the huge wave of solidarity, love, and support showed also by my fellow compatriots for the Ukrainian refugees that came in my country in an impressive number, and mainly what is done by the people from the ethnic Russian minority from Romania, starting with the women who became mothers for the Ukrainian orphans and sisters for the Ukrainian mothers suffering for their losses, while welcoming them with love and compassion in their own houses and shelters.

It is the most powerful message of solidarity but also strong opposition and protest against war and aggression, a message sent in the same Russian mother tongue to Vladimir Putin and his own sister.

We'll do our job. I will vote together with most of the colleagues. I hope all, everybody is in favour of the report and the draft opinion.

Thank you very much.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

Mr Marek BOROWSKI.

Mr Marek BOROWSKI (Poland, EPP/CD): Thank you, Mister President.

Dear colleagues, Dear Ukrainian Friends,

As soon as Putin became President of Russia, he immediately started to build a system based on fear, corruption, gradual elimination of freedom of speech and free elections, all according to the best model of the Soviet KGB political police of which he was an officer for many years.

The greatest threat to this concept was not the democratic and wealthy European Union, portrayed by Russian propagandists as a rotten and culturally alien "*Yevropa*", nor the former Soviet, Asian or Belarusian republics, which were also governed by more or less dark dictators. The biggest threat was Ukraine, a large country culturally and linguistically very close, with many family ties to Russia. Of course, it was not a military threat. Democratic, respectful of developing civil liberties and not afraid of Europe, Ukraine could become a good example for all Russians: look, it is possible to live differently, in freedom and without fear!

This is the real reason why Putin has decided, in his sick and dangerous mind, to weaken Ukraine and, preferably, to subdue it as he did with Belarus. The sanctions imposed on Russia will delay its development for a few or several decades. It is possible that in some time they will lead to a change of power in the Kremlin, but they will not persuade Putin to stop the aggression, especially since 75% of Russians, bludgeoned by false propaganda, support Putin and accept the thesis that the West has attacked Russia. They are ready to suffer.

Only the simultaneous action, severe axes of sanctions, and effective resistance of Ukrainians can stop this aggression and bring about changes in the Kremlin. Therefore, I ask you to support all amendments to the report that help this country to increase the protection of its territory and strengthen the Ukrainian army, for example, through the delivery of anti-aircraft and anti-missile defense weapons.

Here in this room, there have always been many parliamentarians who believed that dialogue and co-operation with Putin's Russia would bring that country into the family of democratic states. Today, they know that this was naivety. But if Ukraine does not lose this war, and this also depends on us, this dream can become reality.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to the heroic Ukrainians who are fighting not only for the country but for the future of our continent. What a paradox for democracy in Russia. Poles, we know well what heroism means. *Slava Ukraini, slava Yevropa!*

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

We move straight away to Mr Manuel VESCOVI.

Mr Manuel VESCOVI (Italy, EC/DA): Thank you Chairman,

First of all, thank you also for this opportunity to convene the Assembly in extraordinary session.

In my mind, in my heart, but I think in each one of us are imprinted the images we see on television. I think of the employee who yesterday on Russian state TV said no to war and today in our media they say that this woman has disappeared.

I think of that mom, that little girl, who we saw in images that died together. I think of Lisa who was shot. When you think about these things, my hope is that it really touches your heart today, it touches everything, because you're upset about the war in Europe that is so close.

So I want to thank all the countries that are helping the refugees.

I am convinced that today all together we will vote this resolution, but I think that today the Council of Europe must vote it unanimously.

This is my hope to give a strong signal that it is okay to discuss, it is okay to discuss in an animated way, but we must never go to war, never.

This is an invasion, a people has been invaded, I think that today the Council of Europe must do so unanimously, to distance itself from this invasion, which is a war.

So help is welcome from our side too, from the country, but I think that today every state has made itself available to help refugees.

I heard earlier from my colleague who left Ukraine to give her children a future and to tell us first-hand what is happening there, even though we learn about it from the newspapers.

We therefore give our full approval to this resolution.

I hope it will be voted unanimously.

Thank you President.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

Now I think we go online to Mr Thomas PRINGLE.

Is he not online?

No.

Then let us go again to Mexico, to Mr Héctor VASCONCELOS.

Mr Héctor VASCONCELOS (Mexico)*: Thank you very much.

It's a great satisfaction to be able to take part in this debate although I'm doing so remotely.

It seems to me that the most serious aspect of this crisis in Ukraine is something that we don't like to mention. It's a little like the elephant in the room that no one wants to talk about. This is the risk of the use of nuclear weapons in this conflict. It seems to me that this is absolutely intolerable for any civilised nation, as it would involve the destruction of countries and of civilisation as we know it.

In Mexico, I have suggested that we seek an agreement, a covenant, between nuclear nations that would consist in declaring that there should be no situation, no circumstances linked to the present conflict where nuclear weapons can be used.

I think this is something that could at least be suggested. I know it would be difficult to achieve, but I think that any nation that wishes to maintain and develop the culture that it took millennia to establish, any country that has that as a value, I think could agree that eliminating this nuclear threat is the absolute priority.

I very much hope that this possibility will be examined so that we can reach a pact between all nuclear states so that in no circumstances these arms could ever be used. I think that is the most serious aspect here. Of course, there are many others which are also very important in this crisis, like the huge exodus of refugees towards neighbouring countries with Ukraine.

Thank you very much for your attention.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

Now we go to Poland, to Mr Krzysztof ŚMISZEK.

Mr Krzysztof ŚMISZEK (Poland, SOC): Mister President,

We have to say very clearly in this room today that today Russia is a contradiction of everything that the Council of Europe stands for. Its criminal imperialism is paid for with the tragedy, death, and pain of millions of Ukrainians.

Its recurring totalitarianism manifests itself in prison penalties for telling the truth. Its degenerated oligarchy deprives ordinary people of all opportunities for development. There is no longer place for Russia in the community of values based on human rights, because Russia is the greatest threat to human rights today.

Today, as Polish parliamentarians, we feel responsible to speak on behalf of many absent parliamentarians of Ukraine. Many of them could not come here because their relatives are dying right now in their country. Women and children are killed in rocket attacks. Bombs fall on homes, hospitals and kindergardens. Young people who had dreams, who were to be the future of Ukraine and the future of Europe, are fighting on the war front. Their courage and dedication in the fight for freedom, justice and Independence should be a model for us.

We must also be brave today and do everything we can to make Putin's regime feel the consequences of its crimes. It is time to remove Russia immediately from the Council of Europe and to support humanitarian organisations and countries assisting refugees from Ukraine by all means.

The Council of Europe is a place of values. It should be a privilege and honour to have the right to be a member of this community. So far, Russia is a contradiction of everything we are here for in Strasbourg, which is peace, democracy, rule of law, protection of human rights, and also prohibition of discrimination.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank millions of Polish citizens for their open hearts and open homes for almost two million refugees from Ukraine.

This is a moment of truth. This is a time to change words of compassion into concrete actions.

Polish citizens, along with Romanians, Moldovans, Slovaks and Hungarians are passing their exams very well. Now it is time for us, politicians gathered here in Strasbourg.

Please, always remember that there is no symmetry in this war. If the Russians put down their weapons there will be no more war. If the Ukrainians put down their weapons there will be no Ukraine.

As a Pole, as a Polish parliamentarian, I want to underline there is no free Europe without free Ukraine.

Glory to Ukraine, glory to its heroes, *slava Ukraini*.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

Is Ms Marie-Christine DALLOZ now signed in?

Yes.

Ms Marie-Christine DALLOZ, the floor is yours.

Ms Marie-Christine DALLOZ (France, EPP/CD): Thank you, Mister President, Madam Rapporteur.

Dear colleagues,

Since the totally unjustified armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine on 24 February, Europe has been confronted with an extremely serious situation that brings back the darkest memories and the fear of a conflagration on our continent.

The conflict between two of our member States is dramatic. Civilian victims are counted in the hundreds, migrants in the hundreds of thousands, if not millions. Cities are destroyed. Besieged populations are beginning to lack everything, and the nuclear threat looms large.

Peace and democracy are essential but fragile values. They seem to be taken for granted when everything is going well, but these days we see how threatened they are. We must defend them.

The Council of Europe was founded in 1949 with the aim of reconciling the peoples of Europe. In order to achieve its goal of promoting human rights, it created the European Convention on Human Rights. Ten years later, in 1959, the European Court of Human Rights was created to enforce this Convention.

As a parliamentary body of the Council of Europe, PACE has a duty to work to preserve these values.

On 25 February, the Committee of Ministers suspended the Russian Federation's rights of representation in the Council of Europe. This decision was taken in consultation with our Assembly. I fully agree with it because it was necessary and right. At the same time, on 1 March, the European Court of Human Rights called on the Russian Federation not to undertake military attacks against civilians and to preserve schools and hospitals.

It is obvious that these reactions are insufficient and that we should already start thinking about the actions that PACE should take to contribute to the resolution of this conflict. Then, when it comes to finding a path to reconciliation, we must be as firm as possible with regard to the integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine, because these principles are non-negotiable.

I would like to thank our rapporteur, Ms Ingjerd SCHOU, for her work. I will of course vote for the proposed resolution and recommendation.

Courage and will for Ukraine.

Thank you.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Madam.

You have the floor now, Ms Nicole TRISSE.

Ms Nicole TRISSE (France, ALDE): Thank you, Mr President.

Dear Rapporteur, dear colleagues,

The holding of this extraordinary session bears witness to the severity of the situation, and I would like to say at the outset that our hearts go out to our Ukrainian colleagues who are with us today and, through them, to the entire Ukrainian people.

I am the elected representative of a French territory strongly marked by the two world wars of the 20th century. I would never have imagined that I would live through events and see images that would take me back to the darkest hours of our history.

The Russian Federation, by joining the Council of Europe, committed itself to a set of shared goals, a humanistic ideal and progress. Its current President, by deliberately choosing to launch a war of aggression against Ukraine, is flouting the values we hold dear. He has reneged on his word and plunged the whole of Europe into a crisis that the creation of the Council of Europe in 1949 was precisely intended to avoid.

As my colleague said earlier, we were able to react quickly because on 25 February 2022, we suspended the rights of representation of the Russian Federation and then, on 1 March 2022, the European Court of Human Rights itself formally asked them to stop bombing civilians, schools and hospitals. Obviously, this is not enough and it is not enough anymore.

We are now 20 days into the deadly fighting, the bombing, the killing of civilians, the abductions and the torture. Every day brings us its share of atrocities perpetrated by Mr. Putin. And here I make a distinction between the leader and the Russian people who, in the end, are also victims of their President.

This war, wanted by a single person who has this fantasy of a "greater Russia"; the one whose regime had the right of life or death over its inhabitants, is not only completely insane but, moreover, puts in danger all of Europe.

Today, it is Ukraine that is a martyr country but what about tomorrow?

Dear friends, the Russian Federation has clearly crossed the red line. If we believe in our values, we must make this clear. As long as Mr Putin has this attitude, we cannot keep the Russian Federation in our organisation. To accept it would be, for me, a form of passive complicity. This is not my idea of the Council of Europe, we are much better than that.

So yes, we will be told that the Russian people will once again suffer but the argument of the European Convention and Court of Human Rights is counter-productive. If we keep Russia as a member state, we risk letting people believe that their might be mitigating circumstances that would therefore be encouraging social media which is already full of fake news. No, let us stand firm, let's not compromise.

Of course, when Ukraine returns to peace as a sovereign and independent state, and when the Russian Federation will have changed and will sincerely wish to conform to the values of the Council of Europe, we will be able to consider welcoming the Russian people again and to dialogue with its leaders.

This is what we managed to do at the end of the Second World War, between France and Germany, and this is how the Council of Europe was created. But in the immediate future, the question does not even arise. We must vote massively for this resolution.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

Mr Lukas SAVICKAS.

Is he here?

Very good.

Mr Lukas SAVICKAS (Lithuania, SOC): Mr President,

Dear colleagues,

I am a child of the 90s and in Lithuania that is quite special. I was born just a month after the restitution of our independence. This meant I did not experience Soviet occupation despite the fact that on the cover of my birth certificate still shines the Soviet symbol of the hammer and sickle.

This also meant, that while my grandparents and parents lived through multiple episodes of war and occupation, I, during my 30 years did not really have to consider the prospect of a war in my life.

However, since 24 February 2022, we have a new reality. In this reality, in which it is not just the children of Ukraine, but also of other European countries, [who] no longer have the luxury to live a life without the prospect of war. A new reality in which Ukrainians, by their thousands, lay their lives defending their right to exist, defending the security of all of us, defending all the values we represent in this Council.

This reality was brought to us by Mr Putin by waging a war of aggression, by ordering an armed attack on Ukraine which qualifies as a crime against peace and the Nuremberg Charter, by attacking civilian targets, taking elected representatives hostage, attacking humanitarian corridors, using artillery, missiles, bombing indiscriminately.

Despite many appeals to seize those hostilities, Russia persists in its aggression, escalating violence, making threats should our states interfere. This part, in my opinion, is a vital part of Putin's goal: to threaten us. To see Western allies quietly stand by his army progressing to the sovereign country, the sovereign territory of Ukraine.

The quote of a prominent French politician comes to my mind: "Fear prevents us, prevents you, from taking any action. It hinders commitment. When you are afraid, there are no dreams left, no plans are made for the future. Fear is the main threat."

Therefore, we must follow suit of our courageous friends in Ukraine, and stand united defending our shared values, calling out Putin for his actions.

In my opinion, the Report in front of us today does exactly that. It clearly states that the Russian Federation can no longer be a member of this organisation.

Thank you.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

Now Mr Sorin-Titus MUNCACIU.

Mr Sorin-Titus MUNCACIU (Romania, EC/DA): Thank you, Mister Chairman.

Ms Rapporteur,

Dear Colleagues,

I come before you with a message of peace. My country Romania is a country that has always wanted peace. War means destruction; it means chaos and death. War is one of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.

We strongly and unambiguously condemn the premeditated aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine. We should consider all peaceful means to stop this criminal war unleashed by Putin.

Since the start of this war, Romania and the Republic of Moldova have received over 600 000 Ukrainian refugees, mostly women and children.

Romanians' attitude has been empathetic. They have shown compassion to refugees providing all the help they needed. The Alliance for the Union of Romanians, the party I'm representing, has been actively involved in delivering humanitarian aid to Ukraine.

The scale of the current humanitarian crisis justifies the Romanian access to the European Refugee Fund, to which we have been a part since 2010.

As you may know, in Ukraine there is a Romanian minority of half a million people for whom we are deeply concerned. We want the Romanians in Ukraine to dwell in the territories they have been inhabiting for centuries, in peace and harmony, and to effectively enjoy the fundamental rights and freedoms proclaimed by this Council of Europe. The rights include the right to education in their mother tongue and to direct communion with the Romanian Patriarchate, which unfortunately is in dispute with the Moscow Patriarchate over disastrous consequences of the odious Ribbentrop-Molotov Treaty on the ecclesiastic level.

Russian aggression in Ukraine is a threat to us and to millions of Romanians living in the Republic of Moldova. I have to say we might be the next one.

We remind you Moscow illegally maintains troops in the Transnistrian region, from where in 1992 Russia launched a bloody proxy war against the Republic of Moldova. It has been 30 years since then.

Romania has a historical responsibility towards our brothers. The war in Ukraine determines us to consider the possibility of reuniting Romania with the Republic of Moldova.

There is the option of my political party and the conservatives in Romania that the Russian Federation has to be expelled from this body.

Thank you.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Ms Khatia DEKANOIDZE.

Thank you.

Ms Khatia DEKANOIDZE (Georgia, EPP/CD): Thank you, Mister President.

Our hearts are bleeding as Ukraine is under attack. Russia launched a devastating attack on Ukraine, a European democracy of 44 million people, killing innocent people, children, women, pregnant women. This is a disaster of modern history.

We all think it's a bad nightmare: a madman's desire to destroy an independent country. For us Georgians, because I'm from Georgia, Russia's behaviour bears a chilling resemblance to its approach to Georgia in 2008. Putin follows his old textbook in almost every single detail aggressively staged by propaganda media controlled by the Kremlin. Back then in 2008, Russia openly invaded Georgia under a so-called humanitarian pretext and installed its official military presence in Georgia. We had been warning the world about his delusional ambitions to come for Ukraine next, but Georgia's exclamation was not heard well.

Even Putin's presidential decrees signed for his puppets in Georgia 2008 and Ukraine 2022 were almost completely identical in their wording and structure.

Ukraine and Georgia were mentioned in Putin's so-called security demands made in December and addressed to NATO and the EU requesting to cancel the Summit decision, the one where both countries said they could become members of the North Atlantic security alliance.

Did the world fail to learn the lessons of Russian aggression? As the Prime Minister of Great Britain said, "we have turned the other cheek". Yes, it is true.

We did warn our friends, but little had been done to stop the madman. On the contrary, President Saakashvili, who was the first anti-Putin president and warned and gave notice about Putin, is now in jail, imprisoned in my country.

Ukrainians and President Zelenskyy fight for their freedom, independence, land, homes, families, children. For most, they are the heroes fighting for European security, for European security, because the truth has never been so bold, my dear friends. If Ukraine stands back, Putin will go further and deeper into Europe.

Ukrainians sacrificed a lot, as did Georgians. They die for freedom, the desire to be a part of Europe and the free world. Ukraine is fighting our fight, doing the heavy lifting on behalf of Europe, and it must be supported. Civilisation must be protected in Ukraine, my dear colleagues and friends. We implore you to protect the sky in Ukraine, to protect the Ukrainian people. This is our duty and the duty of civilisation.

Slava Ukraini! Heroiam slava!

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

Ms Fiona O'LOUGHLIN now?

Ms Fiona O'LOUGHLIN (Ireland, ALDE): I'm here, Mister Chair. Thank you.

The right to live a peaceful existence is the most fundamental and the most basic human right of all. It is one that rings true in every single one of our own countries. Indeed, in my own country of Ireland we have had our own conflict and have learned many lessons from it.

We've had the opportunity over the last two days to listen to the heartbreaking and very powerful testimonies from Mariia, from Yuliya, from Narisia, from Zhenya, from Licia. The stories that these nine brave women, who called themselves the women diplomatic battalion, are telling us are very, very difficult personal stories to hear. They undertook difficult journeys to come here and brought their own children because their husbands and their fathers and brothers were away fighting for their homeland. You can see the terror, the exhaustion, the fear in their faces, and as they checked their phones to make sure that their loved ones were safe.

They've given us the facts of this unimaginable nightmare. They have told us about the 90 children that have died, the 57 schools that have been bombed, the seven hospitals that have been bombed. These women represent the men that are fighting for their homelands. They're fighting for their children to have the right to live in a democracy and to enjoy the human rights which we do.

They represent the women giving birth in bomb shelters. We learned today that 8 000 babies have been born since 24 February. That's 8 000 babies born into a world in Ukraine without hope at this moment in time. We have a huge duty to help and to protect them.

We not only have to stand with Ukraine; we have to stand for them.

We must also show our solidarity with those who are oppressed in Russia, those that are risking jail and indeed risking life by demonstrating against Russia.

There will be a time post-Putin where we must all hope that there will be a time for diplomacy once again, a time to sit around the table, and once again believe that there is more that unites us than divides us.

But that is not for now.

We must stand firm. We must send a unanimous message tonight to the Committee of Ministers to say that we must expel Russia.

We have an Irish saying "*Ní neart go cur le chéile*": we are stronger together and we must stand together.

Mister Chairman, next Thursday is St. Patrick's Day. It is a day of unrivalled support for Ireland as we travel the world.

Our prime minister and Taoiseach Micheál Martin has given the very strong message that we will use our access to every parliament across the world to stand with Ukraine and to make sure that there is justice and compassion for the Ukrainians.

Slava Ukraini.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

Now, is Mr Pere LÓPEZ online.

Yes, Mr Pere LÓPEZ.

Mr Pere LÓPEZ (Andorra, SOC)*: Good afternoon.

First of all, I would like to say that I would have loved to be present in Strasbourg for this very important debate, which is taking place in order to make it very clear how very concerned we are about the Ukrainian citizens, and the safety of our Ukrainian parliamentary colleagues.

I started taking part in the work of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe three years ago. I remember the vote for the re-integration of the Russian Federation to the work of the Assembly; we had a very long debate until 1 a.m. in the morning at that time. I am not sure how useful it is to go back on the strategy that was followed at that time.

I think that today, one thing is certain: we have tried to entertain a dialogue with the Russian Federation. It is equally clear today that this dialogue has failed to yield any results. It's very clear that we can no longer accept the participation of the Russian Federation to this organisation.

The international community will be looking at the decisions taken in Strasbourg. I would like to support this report which has been submitted. It's important to be as clear cut as we possibly can be. We must act very swiftly in our decision. We must also vote unanimously, I think - this is not the time for any half-hearted speech or any lukewarm position when a member State has attacked another one.

Therefore, I think we need to take a clear and quick decision today.

We cannot accept this sort of behaviour. We need to reinforce our role at the Council of Europe. We also have to demonstrate that of course we are at the side of the people of Ukraine.

We also have to show that it is totally incompatible to talk about democracy and human rights when a civilian population is being bombed and when people have nothing to eat and drink, and are so worried.

Thank you.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Now we go to Mr Ondřej KOLÁŘ.

Mr Ondřej KOLÁŘ (Czech Republic, EPP/CD): Thank you.

Dear Chair,

Honourable Delegates,

In the past 19 days we have been witnessing extreme brutality and destruction. Putin's felonious regime has unleashed hell upon an innocent state, upon a sovereign state, which unlike Russia, has chosen to follow the path of freedom, democracy, rule of law, and respect to human rights.

By doing this, Putin has violated all conceivable rules and conventions. He has turned Russia into a dictatorship where people are being sacked on the streets for simply thinking differently. Yesterday, a Russian journalist, Marina Ovsyannikova, was arrested for protesting against Putin war live on Russian TV. No one has seen her since. She just simply disappeared.

Putin has turned Russia into a terrorist state which without the blink of an eye kills innocent people in their homes, schools, in kindergartens, in hospitals, in elderly homes. It is a state that uses weapons of mass destruction against children and their mothers.

In the past 19 days, we have also witnessed enormous bravery and courage of the Ukrainian people and their leaders.

I myself come from a country which was betrayed by its friends in 1938. Our allies thought that by sacrificing our sovereignty and independence, they would avoid war. Now we all know that this ended in the worst bloodshed in human history with more than 60 million victims.

Today, cowardice has disappeared, fortunately. Our Prime Minister, together with his Slovenian and Polish counterparts, are travelling to Kyiv to show absolute support to President Zelenskyy and the Ukrainian people in their rightful fight for freedom and for their homeland.

Unfortunately, it took the rest of us too long to realise who we are dealing with. I am therefore grateful that this honourable institution found the courage to stand up against a brutal bully, an aggressor, and a war criminal, and will expel it from its ranks.

We can no longer let Putin wage a war against the free world. Russia needs to see that the civilised world will not accept such behaviour.

Thank you.

Slava Ukraini.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

Now we go online to Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO.

Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO (Ukraine, EC/DA): Hello dear colleagues.

I do not know - do you see me now and do you recognise me? Because now, I'm probably not looking like a member of the parliament, because now, I am more a member of the territorial defence of Ukraine like thousands and thousands. More than 100 thousand of my compatriots joined the territorial defence just to fight for our land, just to fight for our freedom - because unfortunately the time of words ended.

Today is the time to fight for our values - if we really have them.

I think that many of you when you were listening to my speeches in this Assembly, you were thinking "oh maybe he's exaggerating", "oh he's so emotional", and even on the appeal of Mr Petr TOLSTOI and Mr Leonid SLUTSKIY, these murderers. I was even sanctioned in our Assembly for my words that they were "murderers" and Putin is a murderer.

But now the whole world knows that they are murderers.

Now I can tell you that it is time today to fight - not to speak. Ukraine today is fighting, is fighting for our common values, fighting for everything which is important for us - human rights, democracy, rule of law.

Make your decision: do you stand with us within this fight?

Will we fight shoulder-to-shoulder with you against this dictatorship?

That's so important and I hope that you will do it.

I want to tell you that you know maybe in September 1939 somewhere in France people were thinking, oh it's just a German Polish war - no. It was World War II. The same today - it is not a Russian-Ukrainian war. It is the third world war, started.

Please, help us, support us, to stop Putin now or this war will be over the whole of Europe - and not only Kiev but Warsaw, Strasbourg, Berlin and Paris will burn. I don't want this. I believe we can stop this now.

So please help us. Help us with weapons; provide us with aircrafts and air defense, because now Putin is killing our children and women from the air.

Please, I address those who are members of the European Union - support the Ukrainian appeal to become candidate, candidate now to the European Union.

We show to the whole world that we are Europeans, but now Europe should show to the world.

Do you stand with those who fight for democracy or not?

Do you stand with those who fight for light against darkness or not?

So please, when we could stop them with words you were not always listening to me.

Now the words are over, but please listen to me now.

Help us to stop Putin today and we will make together a stronger Europe with human rights, democracy, and the rule of law where Ukraine will be one of the leaders.

Slava Ukraini and to Europe, a free Europe, which will stop dictators and stop the third world war.

I believe in you.

Thank you.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

You now have the floor, Mr Christophe LACROIX.

Mr Christophe LACROIX (Belgium, SOC): Thank you, Mister President.

It is obviously very difficult to succeed our Ukrainian colleague who is fighting on the ground, with his people and with all the resistance fighters of Ukrainian democracy, this outrage and this ignominy which are inflicted on this beautiful country by Vladimir Putin's Russia.

"Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood clean from my hand?"

Indeed, what an aggressive dynamic of Vladimir Putin and this new Russian imperialism that he embodies. It began with Georgia, the first victim in 2008; outside Europe, it is the military expansion towards Syria where, already, he has sent and multiplied the militias, the Wagner group and others who are fighting odiously today on the Ukrainian ground. It is, since then, the radicalisation against opponents, against a free, pluralist and independent Russian public expression; it is its propaganda; it is the persecution against NGOs and against LGBTQI. This long-considered imperialist project is the basis of this savage and despicable aggression against Ukraine.

It is a crusade, dear colleagues! It is a conservative crusade, supported by the Russian Patriarch Cyril of Moscow, against the democratic values of freedom, progress, respect for human rights and European values. Yes, we, the free citizens of Europe, must be on the alert. We must leave behind our pusillanimity, we must leave behind our mixture of unconsciousness and hesitation towards all those who, even within Europe and sometimes even within this Assembly, fight our democratic values and our European values.

This Europe, which is rediscovering war with its share of refugees, misery, and human distress, must today welcome, of course, our Ukrainian friends, but more broadly, all those who are victims of conflicts throughout the world. To save our freedoms, our lives, our peoples, to save Ukraine, to save Europe, to save our values, but also to save the Russian people who believe in freedom, throughout Europe, so that these peoples can choose their destiny freely and express themselves without fear, it is imperative, my dear colleagues, to support, defend and help those who resist with valour, dignity and courage

"All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this hand", concludes Lady Macbeth in Shakespeare's tragedy.

Vladimir Putin, you join the bench of infamy, that of the barbaric and bloodthirsty dictators. Shame on you! Get out of this House.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Now I give the floor to Mr Uldis BUDRIKIS.

Mr Uldis BUDRIKIS (Latvia, EPP/CD): Thank you, Mister President.

Dear Colleagues,

24 February. If you listened closely enough you heard that the rose-coloured glasses shattered one by one. One by one politicians started talking, and they were convinced that they were having a dialogue with a dictator.

Guess what? No more glasses, no more dialogue.

But what was the price?

Just now in the news we heard that there's a hospital taken hostage with all their staff and with all the patients in Mariupol.

Thousands have been killed, thousands wounded. Almost three million already are refugees.

But what can I see now?

There's a silver lining. In these troubles we see that even our Institution is closer together, more united, and we're standing with Ukraine.

Dear colleagues, on the subject of the matter, this is not only a legal document for the Committee of Ministers. On the one hand, we are politicians, and this will be a political message which we will send to the whole world, to the United Nations, to the EU, even to Russia, and even our Ukrainian close friends.

The most important part is that Ukrainians are waiting for this message. The Ukrainian people and the free world need to step up with helping Ukraine and step up with fighting fascism, which is in Russia, and with fighting evil.

Thank you, Ms Ingjerd SCHOU, for your report. Brilliant work.

Thank you for the Presidential Committee, which were gathering the amendments for Statements 19 and 20. I applaud them, but there's more work to do. The first steps are here on the table.

Of course, I will ask you, colleagues, to support all the amendments, to support the final draft report.

Since I see that I have time, my speech does not beg for applause. I would want you, colleagues, to once more applaud those heroes who are fighting in Ukraine for all our values and for the free world and against fascism, against the aggressor, against occupants, and also for the Women's Diplomatic Battalion which are here. They are our heroes. Lesia, Maryna, Mariia, both Yuliya, Yevheniia, Yelizabeta, Larysa, you are our heroes. I applaud you.

Slava Ukraini!

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Now, is Ms Petra STIENEN online?

Yes, Ms Petra STIENEN.

Ms Petra STIENEN (Netherlands, ALDE): Mr President, Madam Rapporteur, dear colleagues.

On 22 February 2022, I had dinner in the Hague with our Ukrainian colleagues Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK and Penelope Denu, Head of Secretariat PACE Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination at Council of Europe.

It seemed like a moment of normality, but Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK was on the phone all the time with her family. She was in the Netherlands for a fact-finding mission for her report "Justice and Security for Women in Peace Reconciliation" and I hope that this report will be useful as soon as possible because this war needs to stop.

Two days after our dinner, Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK was sending us pictures of the devastation Russian planes had caused in the cities of Ukraine.

My heart goes out to all of our Ukrainian colleagues, their families, their friends and the Ukrainian people.

Dear colleagues,

What we are seeing today - what we have been seeing over the past years - is a war of aggression straight out of the dictator's handbook.

This is Putin's war - Putin and his kleptocrats and oligarchs.

This war aims to hurt everybody who does not share their worldview, which doesn't recognise human rights, democracy, or rule of law for everybody.

Therefore, there is no place for Russia in this organisation - as long as Putin does not stop this war.

In the meantime, dear colleagues, we should do everything possible to maintain contacts with the pro-democracy forces inside Russia.

All those courageous people who are standing up, and who are paying a really big price.

Now we have seen this behaviour by Putin before in so many other countries.

We also are seeing another war - the war of disinformation, the war of fake news - indeed, straight out of the dictator's handbook.

Therefore I call on the secretary-general Ms Marija PEJČINOVIĆ-BURIĆ, the Committee of Ministers, the human rights commissioner, and the president of the Assembly to do their utmost to also counter this war - the war of disinformation because the truth has to be told - to the Russians, to the Ukrainians, to the world.

We can also see another chapter out of the dictator's handbook. Putin is counting on the destabilisation of our countries by creating a crisis with refugees. I know Mr Putin understands German, so in the words of Angela Merkel: "*Wir schaffen das, Mr Putin*" ("We can manage, Mr Putin" in German).

We can all see in many of the Council of Europe member States the hospitality for the Ukrainians is heartwarming.

Let's hope this hospitality will last, and will be inclusive to all refugees.

Mr President, to conclude: human rights are not a luxury for good times but a bare necessity for turbulent times.

Therefore, it's up to our organisation to step up and be as pro-active as possible.

Let's learn from the good experiences during the COVID-19 crisis.

I therefore support Amendment no. 8 to establish a task force into the long-term questions ahead of us.

Thank you, Mr President.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

Now Mr Domagoj HAJDUKOVIĆ is online.

Mr Domagoj HAJDUKOVIĆ, you have the floor.

Mr Domagoj HAJDUKOVIĆ (Croatia, SOC): Thank you, Mr Chair.

Dear colleagues,

The war in Ukraine is certainly not the last war we've had in the last 30 years on European soil, but certainly is the biggest.

My own country, Croatia, suffered an aggression and war in the early 1990s.

Indeed, the rhetoric, the brutality of the aggressor, the intentional targeting of civilians and civilian targets like schools, kindergartens, hospitals, eerily reminds me of what happened in Croatia, because they are very very similar.

Dear colleagues, my childhood has been marked by the brutalities of the war. I too have sought shelter in the basement when the aggressors were shelling civilian targets. I too was an internally displaced person. This is why I can really empathise with what our Ukrainian friends are going through.

My heart goes out to our Ukrainian colleagues. My heart goes out to the Ukrainian people, those who are suffering. My heart goes out to your noble and brave defenders. They are the modern day heroes. *Heroiam slava*.

Your flag, dear Ukrainian colleagues, the blue and yellow one, does not only stand for your country any more. It stands for freedom, it stands for democracy, it stands for peace, for those are the qualities you are defending.

Also, these colours are the colours of the European flag. I want you to bring home my sincerest and staunchest support for Ukrainians admission to the European Union. I look forward to debating Ukrainian related subjects in our European Union meetings, and welcoming you to our European family.

That being said, my friends, we cannot stand idly while the core values of our organisation also brutally trampled on by the aggressor on Ukraine. It is time to say enough. It is time to draw a line, and it is time to say we are an exclusive club of people upholding humanity and humanitarian and human rights values.

This decision should in no way be something aimed at the Russian people. Because indeed, dear friends, many brave Russians are protesting the war, and are risking imprisonment, penalties, and maybe even worse.

So my heart is also with them because they show that there is still humanity and right values among the Russian citizens.

Allow me to end with a few words in Ukrainian.

My Ukraini, Svobodu Ukrayini, slava Ukraini.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

Now we go to Mr Marco NICOLINI.

He's online?

Mr Marco NICOLINI (San Marino, UEL): Thank you Mr Chair.

The Ukrainian people are in the dramatic reality of bombs exploding around them; people crowded into the subways or in the shelters recall past eras that we hoped would never return.

Historical courses and appeals could be of a mirthless realism.

The Russian aggression that began on 24th February has no justification because those who bomb civilians are always wrong, no matter what the reasons for disagreement between governments are.

About the economic situation we must not think that the main matter that keeps us tied to the major contributors of the Council of Europe is the money that they pay.

The Council of Europe has the duty to be prepared to fill possible gaps in the accounts, and regardless of this, try to keep every country – from the smallest to the largest – in the Council of Europe.

At this moment, Russia is next to become, with Belarus, the only European countries outside our organisation.

This suggests that something is wrong with the current democratic foundation of these two countries that are very close to each other.

Due to our founding values death penalty is unacceptable in a member State but it is also difficult to define the very long lasting leaderships of both countries as the result of a mature democratic system.

Among the many feelings of anger and empathy of for the fate of so many Ukrainians we should remember that the Council of Europe was born to protect citizens before nation, and that a government outside of the oldest European organisation will no longer answer for judgments of court, and of the resolution of this assembly.

Without listening to the voice of Strasbourg governments are less bound and the population always suffers.

Millions of Russians that today are opponents to the act of their government will be unable to address the Court of Human Rights.

I would rather think that dividing people of the world in good and Russians – as seems to be happening now – could be a very wrong way to go, leading the confused today's Russian population to the side of a government that is now behaving rather aggressively.

For this reason, the Council of Europe cannot avoid preparing for dialogue with the largest country of the world to prevent other conflicts.

Clearly, just by now, weapons shall have stopped firing.

Thank you Chair.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

Now we go to Mexico and to Madame Ms Rosangela Amairany PEÑA ESCALANTE.

She's not online? OK then.

Ms Rosangela Amairany PEÑA ESCALANTE (Mexico): Since the origin of the Mexican Magna Carta in 1917, the so-called "Carranza Doctrine" was introduced to protect and care for the sovereignty of the nation through diplomacy, but that is in the past. Because after the beginnings of the Mexican republic as an independent country, and after 300 years of Spanish rule, world powers intervened again.

From France we suffered two occupations, the United States invaded us and some of our current territory was lost.

Every foreign power takes advantage of vulnerable nations and forces them to remain under its yoke in different ways.

And so remembering the history of foreign invasions in sovereign countries, as in the case of Mexico, resonates with what is happening in Ukraine today.

Mexico has a history of foreign policy whose main pillars are known worldwide as the Estrada Doctrine, whose principles are those of non-intervention, peaceful settlement of dispute, and self-determination of people.

In this context, the government of Mexico strongly condemned the invasion of Ukraine by Russia.

We condemn any type of invasion in the world, wherever it might take place.

We condemn any intervention that aims to annihilate a people, subdue the people, and subjugate the people.

The misfortune in Ukraine requires the support of all nations. Humanitarian aid is essential, more than ever - not only for the people suffering within the borders of Ukraine, but also for those nations receiving refugees at their door.

However, human mobility not only involves the nationals of one country who move to another because of conflict. Because European nations are culturally diverse in their origin, and in the way they receive migrant populations, we have to eliminate any type of discrimination and allow the arrival of people regardless of their origin and migratory status.

We continue to bet on dialogue and diplomacy as an effective resource for dispute resolution.

We invite Russia to return to the diplomatic path.

We demand an immediate and unconditional ceasefire.

The people are those who suffer from the decisions of their leaders.

No war has benefits.

Those who suffer in the end are the people - the people who with their efforts and work have built their nations to live in adequate and harmonious conditions.

Peace must be assured.

The decision that will be taken today by this Assembly will be the one that best suits the future of both nations and the entire continent. We want peace, not tragedy.

Thank you.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

And it's a great pleasure to see you with us.

Now Ms Yelyzaveta YASKO.

Ms Yelyzaveta YASKO (Ukraine, EPP/CD): Dear colleagues,

I'm trying to write my speech all this day, but I cannot. Because there is one question in my mind that is all the time. The question is: how did it happen that we all ended up here right now in the situation that we have right now? How did it all happen that it happens in my country, with my homeland? How did it happen that thousands, millions of people that love my country, and I'm one of them, many of us are forced to leave? How did it all happen that we could prevent war but we didn't?

I want to speak personally. I was born on the year when Ukraine became independent. I'm 31 years old, I'm Ukrainian, and I've never wanted to live abroad. I always wanted to be in my country. My purpose in life is connected to Ukraine. Everything that I have is connected to Ukraine. And now I don't have anything. Even my personal life, my family, my house, everything is up to Putin.

How can it be like that?

Unfortunately there are sometimes truths that are not comfortable, and I know two people in my life that in my opinion are the strongest truth-tellers about Putin. One of them is my president, President Zelenskyy, who is putting all his life under risk to rescue not only Ukrainians but all humanity. And another one is Mikheil Saakashvili, the third president of Georgia, Ukrainian citizen, and I'm also his civil wife.

He was arrested as a personal hostage and prisoner in October, so now I don't have physically my loved ones, I don't have a house because it's ruined, I don't know when I can be back in a safe security environment. And I want to call all of you today, I know that you support Ukraine right now, but the main question is how to end this war. Not only to help refugees. That's very important, but how to make sure that we build the security system and the peace in Europe that is working. That we don't end up in the situation where we are right now.

Let's think about that. I don't know anyone stronger as Zelenskyy is right now. And I'm sure and I'm praying that one day he will receive also and we should definitely appoint him for the Nobel Peace Prize, but I really want peace in my country, I want my loved one Ukrainian citizen, Mikheil Saakashvili to be released from the Putin's prison, and I want to have peace at my home, I want to welcome you all in my country, in my house, and finally to say that we managed to build this peace all together.

Let's do it, please, because we really need this for our future and for our tomorrow.

Thank you.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much indeed.

Now Mr Paul HOWELL.

Mr Paul HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA): Thank you, Mr President.

I'm new to this forum, and I could never have imagined that this would be the subject I would talk on first, nor that I would be following a member whose state is subject to attack by a state supposedly signed to our values.

Russia is clearly not aligned and needs to be expelled.

I've listened to many speakers who have spoken with so much passion and support for standing with Ukraine. In particular, they reminded us all that our Ukrainian colleagues are at risk of not even being able to join us in April. This just brings into stark contrast the reality of this war driven by Putin, the aggressor.

I, like others, have also seen so many people in my home constituency, which is Sedgefield, in the Northeast of England, putting their hands up to help by offering homes, raising funds, collecting and sending supplies. This is clearly mirrored across all of our constituencies. It's incumbent upon us all to reflect their sentiments in our actions today.

Whether it is the appearance of the children on the balcony earlier, or the appearance by video-link, into our political group yesterday, of a Ukrainian delegate dressed in army fatigues who drove to an apartment block in Kyiv that had just been attacked. The bravery of the Ukrainian delegates to us is a strong and clear message, as it is possible for us to receive without us actually travelling to Ukraine.

I would like to thank them and others, like the Russian journalist Marina Ovsyannikova, who are doing all they can to ensure that the world understands the gravity of what is happening. I salute you all and thank you for giving us this clarity.

It is, for me, an imperative that we fought today to push for the urgent expulsion of Russia from the Council of Europe. We must do everything we can to help Ukraine and ostracise Russia. This should include all we can do to support by increasing assistance to Ukraine in its efforts to strengthen the protection of its territory, including its airspace, in order to reduce the severe human cost and tragic humanitarian consequences of the ongoing Russia's war of aggression.

We clearly distinguish between the people of Russia and its leadership, but we cannot have representatives of its leadership as part of this forum whilst they act completely outside what all of us would understand as acceptable, moral, and legal boundaries.

I, like so many speakers today, want to see the Russian flag removed from outside this building as soon as possible. But it is not just the symbolic flag that should fall, it is the belief of Mr Putin that you can rewrite history to justify his actions while the world looks on.

We must today send a message to the Committee of Ministers that our opinion is that you should do everything in your power to frustrate and then reverse this obscene agenda that Putin is pursuing, and that we are united in that view.

Slava Ukraini.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

Now Mr Irakli CHIKOVANI.

Mr Irakli CHIKOVANI (Georgia, SOC): Thank you, Mister President.

An unprecedented aggression and full-fledged war by the Russian Federation against Ukraine has breached every principle of international law and the rules governing international relations. And this is happening in Europe, in 2022. And this is happening despite the efforts that everybody gave here to give peace a chance.

It is almost impossible to find consoling words or grasp the magnitude of pain, Ukrainians are going through right now. I once again reaffirm our solidarity to Ukraine and the Ukrainian people.

We have been witnessing Russia's full-scale military attack against Ukraine, breaching the basic principles of international law and causing disastrous consequences, including flagrant human rights violations, massive human sufferings and forced displacement. We have all been appalled by witnessing the casualties of peaceful civilians. We stand once again with Ukraine and strongly condemn the attacks. And this must end and must end immediately.

The current situation in Ukraine brings flashbacks of the Russian aggression on Georgia in 2008.

Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova for decades have faced acts of aggression and war with devastating effects that resulted in hundreds of thousands and now millions of fragmented families, occupation, and annexation of territories, hundreds of thousands, and now millions of refugees and IDPs, and countless enforced disappearances of civilians. And it is with a great sorrow, I have to say, that we did not mitigate or respond adequately.

It is clear, we need to do our maximum to stop the bloodshed, show our solidarity and, most importantly, be resolute that this will not be tolerated. The situation is very grim, and we have to face it.

I would like to, once again, commend and support the immediate action the Council of Europe has taken in the Council of Ministers with the consultation of the Parliamentary Assembly and with the use of Article 8. Georgia supported the above-mentioned decision.

I would like to recall that in 2019, Georgia was among a few member states of the Council of Europe, which opposed a change to the rules that allowed the return of the Russian delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly.

Georgia and Ukraine have indeed been closely connected with strategic partnership and with historic brotherly friendship for centuries.

Historic injustices saw our countries' destinies and intertwined them even more. We share common values and vision for our nations' European future.

I would like to, once again, reiterate that the Council of Europe was one of the first to react to this crisis, and this is very pleasing.

Also, I would like to underline that and welcome that the report and the draft opinion have been rather unifying for the Assembly and not divisive. I am sure we will all act together.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

Now we go online to Mr Serhii SOBOLIEV. Is he online? Good.

Mr Serhii SOBOLIEV (Ukraine, EPP/CD): Thank you very much.

Dear Chairman, dear colleagues,

I am just now only 30 kilometres from Kyiv, where, some hours ago we had our parliamentary session.

Yes, in Kyiv were missiles and bombing, we decided to provide our parliamentary session in order to show the whole world, to our people, that we are not afraid of Putin and his regime.

Just now we have alarm in Kyiv, in Chernihiv, in Vnyitsa, in Ivano-Frankivsk, in Lviv.

I am not mentioning Mariupol and Kharkov where people had to provide all their time hiding from the bombs and missiles of Putin.

Just now, we have a horrible situation all over Ukraine, where only for the last 21 days more than 800 missiles were on our cities, where we can see hundreds and hundreds of schools, universities, kindergartens, where we can see hospitals, maternity hospitals, totally destroyed.

And this is the second so-called biggest army in the world that can't fight against our soldiers, because only for 21 days our army destroyed one-third of the Russian army. They can fight only against our children and against our women. It's the only way they can do.

What we need now only one thing – and I ask you – this thing is to close our sky from Putin's regime.

It's very important. It's very important not only for us, because they fight not only Ukraine. They fight all of Europe. So be strong.

I think that the main amendment – not only to get the way out from the Assembly for Russian delegation. We need aerial protection for the whole of Europe. We need to close our sky, as well as the sky of the whole of Europe from Russian missiles and Russian bombs. Our army will do their work. They will destroy Putin's army.

Thank you.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you Mr Serhii SOBOLIEV.

I wish you well over there.

Stay well and sound if possible.

Next in the debate I call Mr Zeki Hakan SIDALI, from Turkey.

You have the floor.

Mr Zeki Hakan SIDALI (Turkey, ALDE): Thank you, Mr President.

Also special thanks to the rapporteur and my solidarity to Mr Serhii SOBOLIEV and all the Ukrainian friends.

Russia clearly shows that it doesn't recognise international law and UN principles, and ignores the Council of Europe.

It's time for honesty and self-criticism. Today we are all together standing against Russian expansionism, and we sincerely show our solidarity to Ukraine. But what did we do when it first started in Crimea?

During the annexation of Crimea, people were subjected to modern exile. The demographic structure has been changed, and the situation of Crimea was on our agenda in PACE recently.

We accepted the report on human rights violations in Crimea. The report requested the ban on the Crimean Tatar Parliament to be lifted, including their leaders Mr Jemilev and speaker Mr Chubarov.

Russian aggression is not for the first time. Did we take any convincing action? No.

Instead we prioritised our interests to democracy, which encouraged all illiberal democracies and authoritarian regimes and their leaders, to be more illiberal and more authoritarian.

Non-action or blame words increase the pressure on their people and even on their neighbours. There is no useful coup attempt, or acceptable terrorist organisation, or manageable authoritarian regime. The short-term benefits of playing three monkeys is going to cause greater losses in the long run.

We must be able to state our shared values without regarding our country's short-term interests or our bilateral relationships with parties affected.

Additionally, double standards of international organisation members against developing democracies hinder all efforts to improve their democratic values. Such implementations also create excuses and propaganda materials to radicals, illiberal and authoritarian demagogues within their countries.

Keeping on differentiating nations with biases will be the main source of polarisation in the future.

Hopefully all the refugees from Ukraine will be more welcome than before, without any discrimination of colour of their hair, eyes, or religion.

Dear members, we cannot remain silent and leave Ukrainians to their destiny. We must take every possible action for the Russian Federation to stop aggression and return to the path of diplomacy. But the Russian Federation willingly refuses to take that path.

Today we will vote for democracy and peace. Today we will show our determination against the aggressor and our solidarity to the victims of this aggression.

Today is not the end of our duties. Today is just the beginning.

Thank you.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Next in the debate I call Ms Jane STEVENSON from the United Kingdom.

Jane, you have the floor.

Ms Jane STEVENSON (United Kingdom, EC/DA): Thank you, Mr President.

And it is with great sadness that I rise to speak at such a dark time for our continent and a time of unimaginable horror for our friends, the people of Ukraine.

To hear the testimony from our colleagues from Ukraine has been harrowing and very difficult to hear, and it can surely leave none of us in any doubt that Russia can no longer remain a member of the Council of Europe.

The consequences of Putin's invasion will be felt across the continent and also in Russia. Putin is drawing an iron curtain back across our continent and back around the people of Russia. And our thoughts should be with those brave Russians who, even though the consequences to their families may be extreme, they continue to protest the illegal invasion and attack on Ukraine.

We must send a clear and united message from this Committee of Ministers and a message from the floor must be to act quickly and to act decisively. And I want to talk about the wording of Article 8 because I believe time is of the essence. We cannot delay. Our Article 8 is written in a way as to be courteous, to be respectful to a member. It allows them the decency of withdrawing, the courtesy to jump before they're pushed. And I want to be clear: Vladimir Putin deserves no courtesy from the Council, he deserves no respect, and I would urge the Committee of Ministers to set the time frame between their request for a member to withdraw, and the moment that they consider a member to no longer be a Member State, and there is no specified time. I would urge the Committee of Ministers to make this as short as possible, even minutes, and certainly no more than a few hours. To delay is to look weak and it is also disrespectful to our colleagues in Ukraine.

I would ask all colleagues to support some of the amendments, especially Amendment 7, which calls on us to provide Ukraine with all support to defend itself. If any colleague is reluctant or dithering or undecided about this, I want to take them back to this morning when we had two children from Ukraine in the Hemicycle with us. Those two beautiful children, because of their mother's bravery, their mother's public service to her country, are now returning to live in a war zone. This is just horrific and we cannot wait, we cannot dither, we need to act strongly, we need to be there and provide all support to Ukraine to defend itself now and to rebuild itself in the coming months and years.

Slava Ukraini.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Jane.

I'm afraid you've got me back for a little while at least.

Now, Ms Thórhildur Sunna ÆVARSDÓTTIR, over to you.

Ms Thórhildur Sunna ÆVARSDÓTTIR (Iceland, SOC): Thank you, Mister Chair.

Dear Colleagues,

I condemn with the strongest possible terms this murderous war, and I demand the immediate cessation of this inexcusable aggression of Russia against Ukraine. I declare full solidarity with the Ukrainian people who are suffering in this senseless and completely unjustifiable war.

I also call for the immediate expulsion of Russia from the Council of Europe, a murderer state that invades their neighbours, that murders its people, that commits war crimes on a daily basis. Such a state has no place in the Council of Europe.

The people of Ukraine need our full solidarity and support. Their refugees need to be welcomed, and they need to be accepted in our communities. Now, colleagues, as general rapporteur for the status of human rights defenders and as author of the report of the situation of Crimean Tatars, which this Assembly adopted last summer, as well as the rapporteur for political prisoners in Russia, I must issue a dire warning and a call to action to us all. We must do everything in our power to protect the human rights defenders in Ukraine. We must do what we can to defend them in Belarus and also in Russia.

Putin's Russia has shown the premeditated and fully calculated intent to suffocate all opposition. We have seen what Russia has done to the Crimean Tatars. We know of the enforced disappearances. We know about the summary executions, the torture, and the murders subjected to anyone that they has opposed the occupying oppressor or even just anyone that belongs to a minority group that threatens Putin.

It is our mandate and our duty to do everything we can to help human rights defenders, including activists, independent journalist, and NGO workers to stay safe and to stay strong.

There are several things that we can do to assist these brave defenders, and they include:

To provide flexible and speedy visas for Ukrainian, Russian, and Belarusian human rights defenders and their families seeking shelter.

To identify and to assist and call international attention to individual human rights defenders in Ukraine at significant risk of facing imminent threat by Russian authorities.

To use diplomatic presence in Ukraine to endeavour to protect human rights defenders and their families at significant risk and facing an imminent threat by Russian authorities.

Finally, in Belarus and Russia, to ensure safe and reliable communication channels are open for human rights defenders to share information with diplomatic missions and to prepare for the possibility of a massive crackdown, which could result in the need to exit Russia.

I must also say that we must make it our utmost priority to break through the information blockade in Russia, so that the Russian people can fully understand the horrible crimes their government are committing and the senseless and horrible reason their sons are dying. In my view, this knowledge would become our most powerful weapon against this horrible aggressor.

Thank you.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

Now we go to Ms Inese LĪBIŅA-EGNERE from Latvia.

Ms Inese LĪBIŅA-EGNERE (Latvia, EPP/CD): Thank you Chair, dear friends of democracy, human rights, freedom and peace,

I thank the Rapporteur and the colleagues who participated in the debate today from all my heart.

For a long time here in the Hemicycle the majority of the words said today were straight, based on facts, about the aggression, genocide, totalitarian regime - all by Russia, which is still a member State here.

Before we were called "Russophobes" for naming the truth.

However, this debate should not be about Russia and our long-due homework of expelling an aggressor country from a human rights and rule of law organisation.

This debate is about Ukraine and how we stop the war and build it up again.

Today we can be here for the extraordinary session. We came here to Strasbourg by plane, by train, or otherwise, [but] our colleagues - parliamentarians in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine - are working and voting the laws needed for their country, are having their homes bombed, their families far away - hopefully still alive. Moreover, this is [happening] today, in the 21st century.

This debate is also a symbolic apology to our Ukrainian, Georgian and Moldovan colleagues here, for the long sessions here in the Hemicycle, when they were supporting and defending the victims from the occupied territories by Russia, being trapped in the same room with the aggressor country, with them laughing in their face with freshly renewed credentials and voting rights.

Even more, this Assembly herself managed to draft a procedure in order to weaken its mandate to react to further aggression acts of Russia and so on - unbelievably sad, but very true.

This debate and our report should give at least the hope that we will work on the considerations [of] how to end this crucial war.

I truly hope that we all fully share the view that we need to find more efficient ways to support Ukraine and its people, to stop the war.

Parliament is the place to speak out. That is why parliamentary democracy has been effective so far.

We are a parliamentary assembly, a parliament of parliaments.

Let's vote and speak and help Ukraine - not just applaud and hug our Ukrainian friends.

We can do it. "*Wir schaffen das*".

Slava Ukraini.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much indeed.

Now we go to Ms Elena-Simona SPĂȚARU from Romania.

Ms Elena-Simona SPĂȚARU (Romania, ALDE): Romania strongly condemns the criminal attack of the Russian Federation against Ukraine.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine brazenly violates the post-World War II international legal order, causing Europe to witness the worst military aggression in decades.

I strongly join my voice in support of the countless calls on the Russian Federation to immediately and unconditionally stop the war against Ukraine and to comply with its obligations under international humanitarian law, to allow the safe evacuation of civilians, as well as safe and unimpeded access to humanitarian aid for all those in need.

Killing civilians in wartime is a very serious violation of the Geneva Convention and its protocols. It represents a war crime and a crime against humanity. Its direct perpetrators must be held accountable before the appropriate international courts.

So many Ukrainian lives have been lost only for the interests and boundless ambition of Vladimir Putin to bring back the Soviet Union.

Romania fully supports the substantial measures imposed on the Russian Federation as a result of the military aggression against Ukraine.

Our country has also responded to the request for assistance from Ukraine through the European Civil Protection Mechanism.

But much more important was the massive mobilization of the citizens of Romania who expressed their solidarity with their Ukrainian neighbors by offering them food, water and shelter. Moreover, a logistic hub has been realized in our country in order for international donations of humanitarian aid to be collected and transported to Ukraine and its citizens.

I hope that this war can end soon and that the way of diplomacy can prevail to stop the loss of these innocent lives.

Slava Ukrainians.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much indeed.

Now I go to Ms Inka HOPUSU. Are you here?

Ms Inka HOPUSU (Finland, SOC): Mister President,

The brutal and totally unjustified attack of Russia against Ukraine shocked all of Europe. We must stand together, show our full support to Ukraine and condemn the Russian aggression against another sovereign state.

Civilians shouldn't be part of the conflict in any war. All acts that risk the lives and well-being of civilians are unambiguously wrong and Russia must be held accountable for all attacks targeted at civilians.

We must send humanitarian aid to Ukraine and its neighbouring countries and guarantee safe evacuations from cities like Mariupol'.

It has been heart-warming to see the acts of kindness and aid offered by so many. Such willingness to help should cover everyone in need, regardless of colour, ethnic background, or wealth. The decision to grant temporary protection in the EU to those fleeing Ukraine was very welcome. We must guarantee that people who have had to flee their homes get back to as normal a life as possible and soon. By now, more than 2 million people have fled from Ukraine, over a million of whom are children.

I want us to put our attention on vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities, unaccompanied minors and minority groups such as Roma people. When considering ways to support Ukrainians, special attention must be paid to children. The pain of war will last through generations. We know this in Finland.

Mister President,

Most Russian civilians are not part of this war. President Putin's authoritarian regime supports war propaganda and restricts citizens' access to neutral information or possibilities to protest the war. One important way to restrict Russia's aggression abroad is thus to support those Russians who stand up for peace and open media. Supporting civil society and democracy in Russia will eventually upset the dictatorship.

To conclude, we must jointly condemn the Russian war of aggression and make Putin's regime suffer the consequences. I strongly support expelling Putin's Russia from the Council of Europe. Our main goal is to bring peace to Europe, to support Ukraine in the war, and to show Russia that its attempt to undermine international law, democracy, and human rights will not succeed. Europe will stay united.

Slava Ukraini!

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

Now, we move to Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN from the Netherlands.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD): Thank you, President, dear colleagues,

We are all, in the civilised world, shocked and horrified by the daily images of Ukrainian civilians, young and old, who are trying to escape the war of aggression.

The images of bombed hospitals, destroyed houses and blocks, families in basement shelters, in metro stations searching for protection but also bombed, as happened today.

We see Russians surrounding cities and citizens trying to survive, even when they are deprived from basic needs - from water, food, and daily necessities.

That such a war could be started and led by the leader of the Russian State, President Putin, who signed as an authority and ratified the values of our organisation.

President Putin, every day, shows more that his leadership is sparing nothing and no-one; [showing] disrespect for citizens in neighbouring countries, but also for citizens in his own country - in their soldiers.

A president who every day is more focused on his own interests and the interests of the circle around him.

Citizens under the hood with-holding information and silencing civilians and institutions.

This Russia we need to block.

Dear colleagues,

Together with Mr Axel Schäfer we were rapporteurs for monitoring Russia. We had several talks with NGOs [about] their difficult life in Russia. We visited the country last summer and have arranged a new visit beginning April next for our report.

With the Russian delegation, we defined the outline of the report. We would take all the critical legislative proposals and go along the advice of the Venice Commission to see how concrete positive steps - but also what I said with a timetable - could be made.

Can you imagine, President, that former colleagues with whom we made these preliminary arrangements, are now allowing their president and their government to fight against neighbours, who they also call their brothers?

Why didn't they stand up?

Why didn't these colleagues, former colleagues, not raise their voices against this devastating war, these criminal acts against human beings; and endanger also their own people?

The cruelty against citizens in Ukraine is something that also moves me day and night, but having had colleagues who I shouldn't have trusted is a deep cut in my heart.

Thank you.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you indeed.

Now we move on to Ms Minna REIJONEN. Is she in the room? Yes.

Ms Minna REIJONEN (Finland, EC/DA): Thank you.

In autumn, I visited Khmel'nitsky, Ukraine, when the city was awarded the European Prize by the Council of Europe, by us. That beautiful and progressive city and its friendly people made a big impression on me. Back then, hardly anyone could imagine what would happen in six months. Not in Europe at least. War in Europe is a terrible thing.

There are now domestic refugees from Kyiv, Kharkiv, Sumy, Mariupol' and many other places in Khmel'nitsky. For many refugees, Khmel'nitsky is a resting place on the way to Poland or other European countries.

The situation of Ukrainians is very touching. Surely every European and hopefully everyone in this chamber is shocked at the terrible devastation caused by the Russian war of aggression on the people and country of Ukraine. No one should live in fear in their own home or in their own country. No one.

It was shocking to hear that Russia bombed the Mariupol' Children's Hospital, where women were giving birth. The bombing destroyed lives and affected the future. Prevented future life from innocent children. The pain is hard. The desire to help is strong.

Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: "Everyone has the right to life, liberty, and security of person." This human right has now been flagrantly violated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the targeting of civilians and civilian targets. Ukraine has already fled two point eight million people abroad as a refugee and there are at least 1.85 million domestic refugees. They are all people who should be at school today, at work, on retirement days, or on holidays. However, they have had to leave their homes and lives, flee their own country, and leave their fathers, husbands, and sons to fight without certainty whether they will ever see their loved ones or home again.

There should be no conflict or contradiction in Europe today that needs to be resolved by arms.

We in Finland feel great pain and compassion. I hope the war ends soon.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

Now we go to Mr Adnan DIBRANI who is online.

Mister DIBRANI, you need to request the floor. Yes.

Should we go to Ms Mirosława NYKIEL?

OK.

Ms Mirosława NYKIEL (Poland, EPP/CD): Thank you Mr President.

Mayi Ukrayins'kyi druzi,

I would like to start my speech with a strong expression of solidarity and support for the nation of Ukraine. Brave Ukrainian troops protecting their motherland and their commander in chief President Volodymyr Zelensky, who has proven himself to be a true statesman.

This new completely unprecedented situation in contemporary history of Europe brings new responsibilities upon us politicians from European countries, and upon Europe as a whole.

The keyword that should be our guiding principle in the next weeks and months is unity. We should be united against the Russian aggression and war crimes conducted by Putin's regime.

We should impose even stricter sanctions on Russia and Belarus, including a total ban on Russian oil and gas imports and removing Sberbank and Gazprombank from the SWIFT banking system.

As we speak, thousands of trucks from EU countries full of medicine, food and spare parts that will be used to help Russia's military and headed towards the border with Belarus and Russia. We must put an end to that immediately.

I also have a message for Dmitry Peskov who knows that Russia is withdrawing from the Council of Europe: We are glad. We do not want you here. There is no place for war criminals and its henchmen in this chamber.

For too long, we have been turning a blind eye at Russia's actions – first in Chechnya, then in Georgia, and now in Ukraine. There is no more time for half-measures. Politicians and diplomats from Poland have been warning you about Russia for years. All our fears and concerns turned out to be completely justified.

So please, listen to us when we say more sanctions, more military aid to Ukraine, and more unity.

Glory to Ukraine. Slava Ukraini. Thank you.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

Now I would ask Mr Momodou Malcolm JALLOW to speak.

There you are, sir.

Mr Momodou Malcolm JALLOW (Sweden, UEL): Thank you very much, Mister President.

Let me start by respectfully addressing our colleagues, our Ukrainian colleagues and Ukrainian people. We stand with you, we stand with all of you. We express our deepest solidarity and support to all the Ukrainian people.

Mister President,

These are difficult times and we cannot be indifferent in the face of oppression and injustice! That is why we must condemn in the strongest possible terms the Russian Federation's invasion and aggression of Ukraine.

Mister President,

We cannot be indifferent in the face of such tragic human suffering! That is why we want to take a serious and united stand here today. Millions of women and children and disabled people are displaced, families separated and livelihoods devastated.

We cannot be indifferent, Mister President. That's why we must show our united solidarity to the Ukrainian people. We admire your courage, we are inspired by your resilience, and we will stand with you in your pursuit for freedom, peace, and security.

Mister President,

The Council of Europe is the world's largest human rights institution and we have been pursuing an ideal of peace for more than 70 years, and it is precisely for that reason we must show not only with words, but with action, our unwavering commitment to defend democracy, freedom, and the rule of law.

The attack on Ukraine is also an attack on peace and security and a flagrant violation of international law. It must stop now.

Mister President,

It is more important today than ever for us to focus on how to end this war, to focus on de-escalation, to focus on creating humanitarian corridors to help and evacuate civilians. War is always a devastating experience, and as Member States we must be active in our support for peace movements and be generous in our solidarity.

All those pro-democracy and peace-loving Russians protesting in large numbers are very well aware of the risk of being arrested, but they they go out every day and they do it.

We must ensure that everyone that seeks refuge can be protected and given full access to their rights. When I say everyone, I mean all Ukrainians, when I say everyone, I mean Russians too, when I say everyone, I also mean the African, Middle Eastern, and Asian students trapped in this tragic war seeking refuge in neighbouring countries

And yes, their experiences are real and not fake news, they are not Russian propaganda either! They are real and we cannot minimize them.

Finally, let me urge all Member States to be unified in supporting the opinion and resolution because anything else would be failing the very purpose of this great institution.

Thank you very much.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much Mr Momodou Malcolm JALLOW.

I think we go online to Ms Mònica BONELL.

Ms Mònica BONELL (Andorra, ALDE): Thank you, Mister President.

I would like to strongly condemn the violence and express absolute solidarity with the Ukrainian people and with each of the victims of this conflict.

It is precisely here, in the House of Human Rights, that measures must be taken to ensure that everyone receives the necessary help, especially in Ukraine, but not only, because we must also think of the other border countries that have been affected by this war and that are receiving thousands of refugees every day.

However, let us not forget the millions of Russians who have nothing to do with this conflict, whose rights are also violated and who will one day pay the consequences of the decisions of their rulers. They, too, do not deserve to be forgotten.

Andorra is a country with a long history of peace. That is why we call on Russia to respect the territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders. We also call on all countries that play a mediating role so that, through dialogue and diplomacy, this nightmare will soon end for the good of all.

Thank you, Mister President.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you.

Now I go to Lord George FOULKES.

Lord George FOULKES (United Kingdom, SOC): Mr President, first of all can I say it's absolutely vital that we overwhelmingly support this report and the expulsion of Russia.

We must not be in any way distracted by ploy that I understand the Russian politicians are up to. We ought to know by now that we can't trust them.

Mr President, in the calm and the reason of this Hemicycle, it's difficult for us to comprehend the atrocities that are taking place now on the ground in Ukraine. Terrible atrocities in Ukraine.

But the reality was brought to us, so strikingly today by Ms Larysa BILOZIR and her two children, Lisa and Anna Mariia. They are now returning to the uncertainty and the terror of Ukraine, while we go back to the safety and security of our homes.

I've been really impressed by the courage of the Ukrainian people, the courage of their MP's, and above all, the courage of their president.

I think we all need to look at ourselves, personally. Would we have such courage under these circumstances? I personally very much doubt it.

That's why we must do everything we can to support them in their struggle. Everything that we can as members of parliament in our national parliament, and in international organisations, not just in PACE - everything that we can to support them.

That must include strong sanctions on Putin and on the Lukashenko regime, because Belarus were complicit in this invasion and must be sanctioned also.

I fear we are in for a long, long struggle. We must not let our interest and our support weigh. Because as so many people have said, so many members, in this excellent debate that we've had: this is not just a fight of Putin versus the people of Ukraine - it's a fight of dictatorship versus democracy. And for all of our sakes, not just for the people of Ukraine, but for all of us, democracy must win this fight.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, Lord FOULKES.

I now pass the floor to Ms Eva DECROIX.

Ms Eva DECROIX (Czech Republic, EC/DA): Ladies and Gentlemen,

Madam Rapporteur,

I would like to speak to you today on behalf of the Czech nation, which experienced the humiliation and aggression of the entry of Russian tanks into its territory in 1968, but which also, somewhat more distantly, experienced the humiliation of the abandonment of our country by the European allies.

The citizens of my country bear the events of 1938 to 1968 as a deep national trauma, but today this national trauma allows us to be, in spirit, much closer to our Ukrainian friends. Because history must not repeat itself.

I am proud today that our country, including the opposition, is united behind Ukraine. I am even prouder that while I am speaking here, my Prime Minister is in Kiev with his Slovenian and Polish colleagues to support President Zelensky. Because it's not just words, it's gestures that count; it's gestures that will count for much longer, not just today. Thank you, thank you for this important gesture.

I come from the generation that did not experience war, that did not experience these events that I just mentioned. I come from the generation that was assured, during university studies, that there would be no more war in Europe, that there would be an international community through all these multilateral or bilateral treaties that are strong enough and offer sufficient guarantees that these stories will not be repeated.

The day Russia invaded Ukraine, we all knew that security in the European world would never be the same again. We know today that no obligation based on international law has proven strong enough to prevent the perverse nature of a man to declare war. But it must also be said that this system of international treaties and the international community are not shaken to the core.

Today's debate shows that we are capable of being united, of being strong. Our system is still robust enough. Of course, it has its limits; the essence of its limits is every life that is lost today in Ukraine. That is the mistake and that is the question: what will happen in the future? How can we change this system? How will we be able to push back these limits so that it does not become the reality of today?

We must also admit that in one week, we have fallen from the top of our theoretical discussions, on how to be even more equal in the peaceful moments, in the mud of the starving civilians fleeing from Marioupol, or fleeing from Irpin fire. We have also fallen into diplomatic impotence.

Slava Ukraini, and I hope that this will be a lesson for us, for the future.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Now we will go to Mr Gudmundur THORARINSSON.

Mr Birgir THÓRARINSSON (Iceland, EPP/CD): Mr President,

Our thoughts and prayers are with those who are suffering in Ukraine. Innocent people, who have lost their loved ones, women and children. Millions of refugees who were forced to leave their home. The breaking up of families.

Putin's war in Ukraine is a crime against humanity. A war against Europe. A war against democracy. The biggest assault on a European state since World War II. The world will not be the same.

We have to remember our European history. Dictators cannot be trusted. If Mr Putin is not stopped he will continue. We cannot trust Mr Putin. He lied to his own people and he lied to the international community.

More military and humanitarian aid must be delivered to Ukraine immediately.

The current Russian aggression in Ukraine is a grave threat to EU and US national security, that should not be underestimated.

The sanctions are beginning to work, but more is needed immediately to maintain this momentum. Putin must be tried for crimes against humanity.

Sanctions relief should only be considered after the good and decent people of Russia rise up and remove the criminal dictator.

The Ukrainian nation is united and ready to fight till the end. This moment of truth gives birth to the new quality of society and individuals.

In Poland I visited refugee reception centres. The Poles have opened not only their hearts, but also the doors to their homes to fleeing refugees. I commend the Polish people for their great compassion and hospitality.

Mr President,

I just came from Lviv Ukraine yesterday. I woke up in the middle of the night over the weekend during the Russian missile attack near the border with Poland where 35 people were killed. I visited a military hospital in Lviv, and spoke to young men 19 and 21 years old, who had lost an arm and a leg. I was heartbroken.

I spoke to the refugees. A young mother with two children, she had to leave her mother behind and her brother. Everything is so unreal she said. Everyday, I hope that this is just a bad dream, she said with tears in her eyes.

At the Polish border I saw families saying goodbye as men stayed behind to fight.

Mr President,

Putin's war in Ukraine is horrific and must be stopped.

May God bless President Zelenskyy and the brave people of Ukraine, and keep them safe and free.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

We now go to Ms Arta BILALLI ZENDELI.

Ms Arta BILALLI ZENDELI (North Macedonia, SOC): Thank you Mr Chair, dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

We are all aware that Europe and democracy is facing a very big challenge today.

It is a challenge because it is not only a war in the middle of Europe in 2022. It is not only a war between Ukraine and Russia, but it is a war between democratic and autocratic values.

Bearing in mind that the Council of Europe is based upon democracy and democratic values, I am convinced that we must support democracy, democratic values and exclude autocratic ones.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The 21st century was supposed to be defined by development, prosperity and partnership, but we are facing a very bad situation.

A situation according to which we have, for 18 years according to the speech of the Ukrainian prime minister, thousands of deaths, with more than 900 children that are dead during the war.

It is a very bad situation because we do not know where and when this is going to stop. That's why I think that our response must be an immediate one which will keep all the responsible persons accountable in front of the International Criminal Court.

Our colleagues from the Ukrainian parliament yesterday said that they are actually refugees. This can happen to almost all of us, especially those of us that are coming from countries with weak democracies which makes them more attractive for Eastern influence in 2022.

This is why I have to work more in partnership, integration, and collaboration in values that are a synonym for democracy, and work less or think less about the values that divide and harm us in Europe.

Dear colleagues from the Ukrainian parliament,

You are a refugee today but be a proud refugee because your country and your nation are fighting for democracy - a value that should already be guaranteed, but it seems that it is not.

The democratic world is with you. We do support you. We do support the Ukrainian people, your territorial integrity and sovereignty.

Slava Ukraini.

Thank you.

Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

We'll now go to Mister Christian KLINGER. He's online.

Mr Christian KLINGER (France, EPP/CD): Mr President,

Dear colleagues,

I would like to begin this speech by paying tribute to the Ukrainian people who are facing the fire of Russian bombs and who are fighting today with courage.

The Committee of Ministers has decided to consult our Assembly on possible new measures to sanction Russian aggression. I believe that it is our duty to show our solidarity with Ukraine, given the multiple violations of human rights that we are witnessing today. One can legitimately ask the question whether the Russian Federation still has a place in the Council of Europe, although the truth is that it should be Putin, its President, and not the Russian people, who should be blamed.

The situation in Ukraine is more than alarming, as the bombing of Marioupol shows. The inhabitants are deprived of water, gas and electricity. Food is becoming scarce. The buildings are bombarded relentlessly by the Russian forces who do not hesitate to target the civilian population.

In the face of this grave situation and these human rights violations, it is our duty to help the refugees who wish to seek asylum. We must not make the same mistakes as in 2015 and 2016. At that time, Italy and Greece were left alone in the front line to receive millions of Syrian refugees fleeing war. We must learn from our mistakes and organize the arrival of these refugees as best we can. This time, Poland and Romania in particular are in the front line. The other EU Member States must help. The refugees must be distributed among all the Member States, obviously taking into account their preferences and ties. The European Commission must mobilize human, material and financial resources to enable these people to be received with dignity.

Make no mistake, dear colleagues: this war will last and the number of refugees will increase, especially since Russian forces are stepping up their strikes on the civilian population in an attempt to overcome the Ukrainian resistance.

If we have already passed the 3 million refugees mark, experts say that this figure could quickly reach 5 million. In this context, the Council of Europe must remain active. Indeed, its expertise will be indispensable to allow a reception of refugees respectful of their rights and to guarantee that all these people who wish to leave Ukraine can do so. The management of asylum applications requires a certain amount of experience, which the Council of Europe has today. Our Commissioner for Human Rights will be able to assist the European Commission and the Member States of our Organization in this.

Finally, it will be necessary to allow nationals of third countries living in Ukraine to travel to other European countries in order to return to their country of origin if they so wish. In this emergency situation, unconditional reception should be organized, knowing that most of the refugees will want to return to their native Ukraine as soon as the conflict ends.

Long live peace in Ukraine.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

Now, next in the debate I call Mr Jaroslav BŽOCH, from the Czech Republic.

Mr Jaroslav BŽOCH, you have the floor.

Mr Jaroslav BŽOCH (Czech Republic, ALDE): Thank you, Mr Chair.

This institution stands on human rights, humanity, equality, peace, and other important things. And what are we talking about today? We are talking about aggression, about war, about the killing of innocent people, about civilians dying. That's what we talk about. We talk about everything, everything that breaks what this organisation stands for.

I think that there is no place in such an organisation like the Council of Europe, and I truly believe that there's no place on earth, for anyone who acts like Putin and his regime.

This is not a special operation. It doesn't matter what they call it. This is an act of war, it's aggression, and it's the killing of innocent people.

I'm coming from the Czech Republic where the Soviets also had their own special operation. They called it "help" when they came to our country in 1968. So we all know, when there is a country where Russian soldiers step foot on their soil, they are not coming to help. They're coming to ruin that country, to ruin the values and everything that they have built so far since World War II.

I don't even think that this is a Russian war. I think it's a war of Putin, sitting down in his bunker and thinking and dreaming about his empire, which is already in the past, and we are thankful for that.

It started in the summer of 2008, it continued in 2014, and honestly -to be honest to ourselves - we were closing our eyes to what was happening. We are all rational-thinking politicians, so we can imagine that there is something, that there could be something like a conflict like this, when bombs and rockets are landing on houses, hospitals, schools, and people are dying.

We have to stop it now. We have to stop it now. We can't take even one step back from what we are doing at the moment.

We have heard a lot about the situation in Ukraine, especially from our Ukrainian colleagues today. Their testimonies are heartbreaking.

I can barely imagine if it was happening to my country again - what happened in 1968.

We saw two young kids from my colleague from the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, and I can barely talk [about] when I saw that.

So I'm marvelling at the courage of all the Ukrainians. You have my respect, you have my heart, and I'm supporting you all the time, all day long.

We have to stop Putin's plan. Putin's plan is to divide us and conquer. We have to stop it now, because united we stand, and divided we fall.

Slava Ukraini.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, Mister BŽOCH.

Before giving floor to the next speaker, I want to make a clarification. Perhaps you already have heard that the Secretary General of the Council of Europe has received a notification from the Russian Federation announcing that it withdraws from the Council of Europe under Article 7.

For your clarification, this does not intervene in our discussions. We are asked an opinion by the Committee of Ministers whether further action and Article 8 is needed and we are in this process and we will finish this process later on in the evening. So, be aware, our process goes on.

Now I give the floor to Mr Richard HOLDEN from the United Kingdom.

Mr Richard HOLDEN, you have the floor.

Mr Richard HOLDEN (United Kingdom, EC/DA): Thank you very much Mr Chairman.

I don't think we should allow them to withdraw. I think we should force them to be kicked out and listen to this Assembly and listen to the Council of Ministers. Listen to the voices here in this room today.

I want to send a message to the people of Ukraine and let them know that we stand in solidarity with them and with their representatives. Our Ukrainian friends who are here today and those who cannot be here but have appeared on video screens and spoken so eloquently to us all, we salute you.

We stand with you. We support you. You are fighting not just for your country, your homes, and your freedom, but for values – values we share and values that I hope that we will stand together later this evening in opposition to Russia's – to Putin's tyranny on behalf of the Russian people.

I really hope that this Assembly does not allow them to withdraw, but kick them out.

I just want to mention three points very briefly.

The first of all is about sovereignty.

The Council of Europe represents sovereign states. We're a collection of sovereign states; from sovereign parliaments across Europe, we speak here today and with a common set of values.

This attack that we have witnessed is an attack on all of our countries. It's an attack on all of our rights of self-determination and sovereignty. In doing so it is a threat to us all.

Secondly to our members who have traditionally been neutral or non-aligned - that's a historic position that many have taken during periods of the past when it was understandable in a competition between ideological stances of nations, it could be understood. But when it comes to naked aggression of one of our own members against another, none of us can afford to be non-aligned.

When it comes to international violations of law, of crimes against civilians, of attack on an independent sovereign state – this isn't a matter of ideology. There is no grey zone. It's black and white. It's a matter of right versus wrong. We should be on the side of right and on the side of the Ukrainian people.

Finally I'd like to appeal to the humanity of this Council of Europe to support Ukrainians and send a united message.

We will only stop Russia if we are united and any vote tonight – and I hope there is going to be a vote still – is going to be as clear as possible in that direction.

It now appears that the Minsk agreement was a bit like the Munich agreement. Denying evil will not make it disappear.

If we do not stand up to Putin now on this, and we continue to fall for his lies, we will continue to fall for anything. Ultimately, institutions like this will fall if we do not stand for the basis on which they were created.

This is a historic moment for this institution, born out of the rubble of war, to stand united in opposition to another one.

Let's encourage our own sovereign nations to work together and do all they can to stand with Ukraine.

Let's send a clear message from this place to Putin.

Let's let the world know that the Council of Europe stands with Ukraine.

Slava Ukraini.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, Mr HOLDEN.

Next in the debate I call Ms María Luisa BUSTINDUY. Do I pronounce it properly? I hope so. From Spain.

You have the floor, Madam.

Ms María Luisa BUSTINDUY (Spain, SOC)*: Thank you very much Mr President.

Dear colleagues,

We all know that in 1949 after two world wars, a group of six European representatives, men of dialogue, decided to set up the Council of Europe with a firm proposal to build a Europe of peace based on the values of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law.

This was precisely the point of departure for work carried out over 70 years where women and men worked together. This is something we have done in spite of our differences, our specificities or our legitimate interest.

But, before all – and over and above everything else – we wanted to ensure respect for a place where we could live together and people would be respected, and their rights would be respected, and that we would have relations between territories as good neighbours on the basis of mutual respect. It has taken many years, a lot of work, and great effort, to build a better and fairer Europe. This Europe today which is damaged.

We were stunned to witness this aggression on the part of Russia against Ukraine.

We still cannot understand the reason for this aggression. Although there were some signs, it is true that we were unable or unwilling to read.

19 days of horror, injustice and destruction suffered by the Ukrainian people in their flesh, but something that – alas – we are to a degree familiar with in other European countries.

We are concerned here in our countries, and in our organisation, the Assembly. That is why we are looking at this draft resolution that, of course, we will support with no hesitation. We would like to congratulate the drafter, Ms Ingjerd SCHOU.

Our message has to be unanimous and clear – no to the breaches of international law. No to the ignoring of our treatise. No to the breaches of human rights. Above all, no to war.

They might have the force of arms, but they don't have the force of reason. Reason must prevail. This is where we come in. It is therefore very important for our message to be forceful, clear and unanimous.

Even if they have withdrawn, we have spent two days working and examining this madness.

We were aware of the situation before we came here.

As we leave, we will be really resolute in our wish to fight as hard as we can.

We have heard our Ukrainian colleagues, in particular these courageous women – they have spoken about their anguish, their fear and their concern, but they must be sure of our determination to fight to defend their country.

I would like to say to them: you are not alone. Today we all feel Ukrainian.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Many thanks, Mrs María Luisa BUSTINDUY.

The next speaker is Mr Frédéric REISS from France.

You have the floor.

Mr Frédéric REISS (France, EPP/CD): Thank you, President.

Dear colleagues,

The totally unjustified armed attack by the Russian Federation on Ukraine on 24 February 2022 has plunged Europe into a situation of extreme gravity. As an elected representative of a territory particularly traumatized by the horrors of the two world wars of the 20th century, I am both stunned by the resurgence of such a threat and determined to do everything in my power to avoid the downfall of our continent. Indeed, we in Alsace experienced the evacuation in 1939. My father and father-in-law were forcibly conscripted into the Wehrmacht in 1942, and the *de facto* annexation of Alsace by Hitler was a terrible trauma.

Today, the war that is tearing apart two sister countries, Russia and Ukraine, is appalling. The toll is already extremely heavy: thousands of civilian victims, millions of refugees, destroyed cities, populations under siege without food or water and a proven risk of a nuclear attack.

I was born in 1949, the year the Council of Europe was born. The European Convention on Human Rights and the European Court of Human Rights were also created after World War II to promote the lasting reconciliation of the European people. This objective, which we believed to have been achieved, is now suddenly called into question.

We, the parliamentarians of the PACE, have the task of working for the preservation of peace and democracy. The rights of representation of the Russian Federation in the Council of Europe were rightly suspended by the Committee of Ministers the day after the attack. It would not have been acceptable for a member state that violates the right to life and to family life, as well as the prohibition of torture and inhuman treatment under Articles 2, 3 and 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, to continue to exercise all its prerogatives in our Assembly.

Requests to the Russian Federation to refrain from military attacks on civilians and to preserve schools and hospitals have been in vain. The failure to respect the humanitarian corridors is an absolute scandal. Every morning we discover the human and material damage caused by new bombings. The worst thing is that after 20 days of conflict, this tragic information is becoming almost habitual.

I have always been a strong advocate of dialogue, but today, Russia's continued membership in the Council of Europe is indefensible in light of the atrocities committed by its army in Ukraine.

In the longer term, when a settlement to the conflict is negotiated, it will be necessary to demand the sovereignty of Ukraine and the integrity of its territory. To give in on this point would be extremely dangerous for other European countries. I am thinking in particular of the Republic of Moldova and Georgia.

We must therefore combine diplomacy with firm sanctions. But do we really have a choice?

I express my solidarity with the Ukrainian people. I will of course vote in favour of the opinion submitted to us so that Ukraine may live.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mr Frédéric REISS

Next speaker in the debate is Ms Marica MONTEMAGGI from San Marino.

You have the floor.

Ms Marica MONTEMAGGI (San Marino, SOC): Thank you, President.

Dear colleagues,

Any action that violates international law, that requires the use of arms by those who defend their land, their state is to be condemned in the strongest terms.

This far-off war has serious consequences on the civilian population and we are seeing it unfold before our eyes. The violation of human rights, the fear that forces citizens to leave their homes, their families and flee to escape from violence.

The Republic of San Marino does not intend to look aside, but to exercise its historical neutrality actively. I do not stop believing that governments must make every effort so that diplomacy and the resumption of dialogue are the only and effective tools to put an end to aggression; to return to the respect of international law, to follow peace and guarantee to the Ukrainian people - their democratic self-determination.

Humanitarian corridors and measures must be ensured so that Ukrainian citizens seeking refuge can do so in the greatest possible safety. Women are showing all their courage and strength in facing the very long journey together with their children, in order to be reunited with them.

We know how vulnerable the situation of women and children is, especially in times of war. In our country, so many voluntary initiatives have started. The Ukrainian community in our Republic is the second-largest and what the population is showing on a humanitarian level is incredible. Therefore, I would like to say to my Ukrainian colleagues that you are not alone, that your fellow citizens are not alone.

San Marino is a small state of about 34,000 people. To date more than 77 Ukrainians have been welcomed. We should also talk about the sanctions the international community should put in place to isolate Russia for its violent advance. They should only be put in place until the dialogue resumes.

I hope that negotiations can continue to take place and lead to a ceasefire. Whatever opinion will be expressed in this assembly regarding the Russian Federation must not break the link and the attention towards the Russian civil society.

The Council of Europe must continue to maintain its attention and responsibility towards the millions of Russian citizens who must be able to count on and believe in the European Convention on Human Rights.

Thank you.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Ms Marica MONTEMAGGI.

Next in the debate, I call Ms Laima Liucija ANDRIKIENĖ from Lithuania.

Ms Laima Liucija ANDRIKIENĖ, you have the floor.

Ms Laima Liucija ANDRIKIENĖ (Lithuania, EPP/CD): Dear President,

Dear colleagues, dear Ukrainians,

Russia must leave the Council of Europe immediately. A country which has, in the most brutal way, violated the United Nations Charter, and disregarded the very essence of the Council of Europe, as enshrined in its Statute must leave. There is no place for aggressive Russia in the Council of Europe which stands firmly for democracy, human rights and the rule of law, and for peace, and for our peaceful co-existence.

We condemn the military aggression and crimes against humanity and war-crimes being perpetrated by the Russian Federation, with the complicity of the Republic of Belarus, against sovereign Ukraine and its people.

I take this opportunity to express my personal and my country's solidarity with Ukraine and its people. In its recent resolution, the Parliament of Lithuania calls on the parliaments of democratic states to push for the opening of humanitarian corridors on Ukraine's territory, in particular, through the United Nations mechanism to allow civilians safe passage out of the zones of military actions and the territories unlawfully occupied and controlled by the Russian Federation. My Parliament also calls for the declaration of no-fly zones in the skies over the humanitarian corridors and over Ukraine's nuclear power plants and nuclear waste storage facilities. It is doable, colleagues.

Dear colleagues, our parliaments should urgently appeal to the Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr António GUTERRES, to expel the Russian Federation from its permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council, the main body of the United Nations, responsible for maintaining international peace and security. Russia's membership in the United Nations should be suspended.

We have to continue this policy until the full withdrawal of Russian troops from the sovereign territories of Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, and Belarus.

From this high podium of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, I call on Council of Europe member states and other democracies to provide all possible assistance to Ukraine and to strive for the widest possible accession of the world to sanctions against the Russian and Belarusian regimes.

God bless Ukraine.

Slava Ukraini.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, Laima.

Now next in the debate I call Ms Mai KIVELÄ from Finland.

Ms Mai KIVELÄ, you have the floor.

Ms Mai KIVELÄ (Finland, UEL): Dear Mister President,

Dear colleagues,

First of all I want to express my deepest solidarity with Ukraine and Ukrainian people. The Ukrainian people are bravely fighting for freedom and for sovereignty. We see you and we stand by you to end the war.

It's important that we strongly and united condemn Russia's full scale war, violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. There is simply no justification for Russia's horrific attack against Ukraine that leads only to suffering and death.

At the same time we know that many Russians don't want this war. Many of them are protesting to oppose the war. The TV news protestor, Marina Ovsjannikova, spoke to the people in Russia and ended her message by saying "Don't be afraid. They can't arrest us all."

The crackdown on civil society in Russia is deeply concerning. The fulfilment of human rights and democracy requires a strong, diverse, and independent civil society. Political opposition and non-governmental organisations must be able to work without fear and oppression.

The anti-war movement and human right defenders in Russia act despite these harsh and dangerous conditions. They also need our support and solidarity now. We see you and we stand by you, too. Russia's attack on Ukraine is also an attack on the values we stand for.

The international community's ability and will to defend human rights are now being tested. We must demonstrate that we stand for those fundamental principles and values that characterise Europe as we know it. Now it's the time to stand on the right side of history.

Thank you very much.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, Madam KIVELÄ.

I now give the floor to Mr Daniel MILEWSKI from Poland.

Mr Daniel MILEWSKI (Poland, EC/DA): There are moments in history we call decisive, and this is a decisive moment for the Ukrainians who are fighting for their freedom and the very survival of their nation. It is also a decisive moment for the Russian people who must decide whether to choose our path of peaceful coexistence and democratic future or to follow Vladimir Putin to a barren wasteland of isolation, poverty and enslavement.

But it is also a decisive moment for us, Europeans, for too long too many of us have pretended that we do not see where Russian oligarchs money originates from, for too long we have turned a blind eye to the fact that the gas and oil can be used as political blackmail, for too long business-as-usual attitudes ignored Russian trickery.

Our goal must be to advance freedom, peace, and prosperity across Europe. If we do not understand this imperative, then we shall all find ourselves in more danger.

It is time to show our solidarity, with the people of Ukraine, and yes, it is time to sacrifice short-term profit for long-term stability and peace. And then we shall have prosperity. For years we in Poland have warned that Putin's Russia is not a true partner and cannot be trusted. We were not listened to. We have done our work by reducing our dependence on Russian gas supplies, and by not profiting from Russia's money laundering. Now the free world stands united against Russia's genocidal War. All ties with Russia are being cut and Putin's dark interests are being exposed.

I can only hope and pray that something good will come from these tragic events. As Europeans, we must act now to support Ukraine against this aggression, we must fight for our democratic heritage and the future of our civilisation, and remember the glory and the freedom of Ukraine has not yet perished.

Šče ne vmerla Ukraina, y slava, y volja!

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you Mr Daniel MILEWSKI.

I call now Mr Pedro CEGONHO from Portugal. You have the floor.

Mr Pedro CEGONHO (Portugal, SOC): "What's the point of the war? Why can't people live together peacefully? Why all this destruction?"

This sentence was written on 3rd May 1944 by Anne Frank.

It should not be possible for the people of Europe to go again through the horror of war, death, and destruction.

It should not be possible for the people of Europe to go again through the despair of separated families, lost futures, and irreconcilable interests.

All of us here call for a stop to the conflict and ask for diplomacy and ethics to prevail.

We are also concerned about the world heritage in cities like Kyiv and Odessa. Museum walls are empty; cellars are filled with packaged works of art. Saving art is the second priority after saving lives, because heritage is also based on the conviction of the unique cultural identity of Ukraine.

That's why we want to remember the courage and the risk that Ukrainian artists, museum directors and technicians are taking to protect heritage. Heritage that belongs not only to Ukraine, but also to all of humanity.

For more than six years I have worked with the Ukrainian delegation to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe.

Today, our thoughts are with those women and men who fight alongside their populations.

Today, our thoughts are with those mayors who feed and care for their population, but are attacked, kidnapped, and – who knows – killed.

We should also follow the president of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe and support his statement, in which he strongly condemned the abduction of the mayors and the pressure on local elective representatives in occupied territories, and called for their immediate release.

We, the people of Europe, ask Russian leaders – please give peace a chance.

Thank you, Madam President.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, Mr Pedro CEGONHO.

I call now Mr Dara CALLEARY.

Mr Dara CALLEARY (Ireland, ALDE): Madam Rapporteur, thank you for your report, for the extraordinary work you've put into that report.

Madam Chair, I welcome the president's clarification that we are proceeding this evening in spite of the Russian announcement that they intend to withdraw from the Council of Europe.

They intend to withdraw by using Article 7.

They intend to do that to try and stop, to withdraw before we push them, and we must proceed to push them, to expel them. The Council of Ministers must expel them too, because in expelling them we defend the values of this organisation, we defend the values of Europe.

We defend the very essence of our being as citizens of Europe.

What other parliamentary assembly in this world tonight has members who are armed and in a battlefield?

What other parliamentary assembly has women of the diplomatic battalion within its ranks, who fight politically and fight here with words, with passion, and with complete courage, and with their daughters?

What other parliamentary assembly can point to its members who may not return to the next sitting of this Assembly unless we take strong decisions here this evening?

As elected representatives, we should stand with the mayors, with the local representatives who have been kidnapped because they are elected representatives. That is the only reason. They are kidnapped, because they are one of us.

We stand with the pro-democracy movement in Russia who are putting their lives on the line tonight by standing up for the values that we take for granted, possibly, every single day.

We stand with every single person of Ukraine.

Every single person who tonight does not know what faces them and does not know what faces them tomorrow.

But while we stand, Madam Chair, with the people of Ukraine this is also a moment for this institution to look at itself in the mirror and ask itself some very hard questions too.

Were those values - the values that we stand for - compromised by geographical ambition and geographical expansion?

Do the member States compromise those values by geographical ambition, by economic expediency, and by various other compromises that they are making to undermine those values.

So tonight, Madam Chair, we send our good wishes to Ukraine. *Seasaimid le muintir na hÚcráine, mar a dúirt muid.* We stand with the people of Ukraine, as we say in Gaelic.

But we must ensure that we do not reach this moment again.

We must ask ourselves the hard questions too, in this institution, in other European institutions, in member States.

We must aim to become relevant to the lives of every single citizen of Ukraine, but of every single citizen of Europe.

Go raibh maith agaibh. (Thank you all, in Gaelic.)

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, Mister CALLEARY.

And I now call for Mr Geraint DAVIES and I think he's online.

Is that true?

Yeah. Mister DAVIES.

Mr Geraint DAVIES (United Kingdom, SOC): Madam President,

Putin's unprovoked barbaric attack on the Ukraine is an attack on democracy, human rights and the rule of law. As such, it is an attack on the very founding principles of the Council of Europe set up after World War II. And so Russia must be ejected and excluded without delay.

The fact that Ukraine was considering joining the EU and NATO to protect its economy, to protect its security, is not a legitimate pretext for Putin to invade a sovereign democracy led by President Zelenskyy, a Jewish person farcically branded by Putin as a Nazi. It is Putin himself who has all the hallmarks of a fascist dictator: oppression at home, aggression abroad.

Perhaps he wants Ukraine, as the second-largest country in Europe, for its grain, for its uranium, for its gas, to bring pride and wealth to Russia. But instead, he makes a bread basket into a wasteland; a peaceful nation into a generation of heroes who will smoulder even if temporarily vanquished until the spark of resistance bursts into the flame of freedom again.

What will it mean for the people of Russia? Not pride and prosperity, but hatred, shame and poverty.

Putin, of course, gambles on the West's fear of his hand hovering over the nuclear button ready to fire. The world looks on in horror at the unfolding humanitarian catastrophe of the civilian bombardment and two and a half million Ukrainian refugees.

But let's also remember the Russian soldiers, thrown on the fire as an expendable fuel on Putin's blood-drenched journey. Surely the Russian people would prefer their own freedom, and they already have enough land. Until there is another Gorbachev figure emerging, and Russia reverses the actions, they must be ejected and excluded.

Putin only has China to turn to for economic assistance, and surely they will ultimately want Russian land in exchange, so Russia gains nothing. China wants stability and growth and power, not isolation and chaos and decay. So they won't give permission for the firing of a nuclear weapon as they understand the consequences of doing so.

So we must stand firm by our values, strong in our decisions, and as a next step, ban Russia from our Parliamentary Assembly only to let them return in the future if their actions are fully reversed and our principles fully honoured.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mister DAVIES.

Now I give the floor to Mr Tomasz LATOS from Poland.

Mr Tomasz LATOS (Poland, EC/DA): Madam President, Dear colleagues,

It must be said clearly: the Russian invasion of Ukraine is an act of unprecedented aggression, full of war crimes that are hard to imagine in the 21st century.

Russia's aggressive policy of maintaining political control over its neighbours has taken on the form of military aggression, unprecedented since the Second World War.

A full-scale war against a neighbouring state is a criminal act that requires not only condemnation, but also a firm response. I call for a strong and united opposition to Russian aggression. Only firmly implemented economic sanctions and harsh measures of diplomatic pressure stand a chance of defusing the crisis. Ukraine deserves economic and material support.

This is a testing time for the whole of Europe. The mistakes of the 1930s must not be allowed to be made again. Ukrainian independence is now a common strategic interest of the entire civilized world.

Europe must be aware that Putin's policy is not only a tragedy for the Ukrainian people, but also a threat to the security of the whole continent.

Thank you.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, Mister Tomasz LATOS.

I now call Ms Annicka ENGBLOM. I see you already. You have the floor.

Ms Annicka ENGBLOM (Sweden, EPP/CD): Thank you, Madam President.

For the last eight years our Ukrainian, Baltic, and Georgian colleagues have warned us in this Assembly about the worsened development of Europe security that we found ourselves in all its horror today.

Nearly half of the Swedish delegation have sided with them but the majority of this Assembly have chosen to put its trust in the democratic tools of our civilisations, our humanitarian laws, our democratic institutions, which is understandable. Those are the pillars upon which our nations have been built but to which Putin, his regime, and his delegation in the Assembly have been totally indifferent all along.

Well here we are. The decision we will take in a while and what we do from here will have an impact on the future for the people of Ukraine, for all of us.

Madam President, I'm not only a parliamentarian. I have a background as an officer in the Royal Swedish Navy and intelligence service.

I therefore hold in high esteem the strategic fighting skills, persistence, and heroism of the Ukrainian people. I am also a mother, so I will speak as a mother in Russian.

Ms Annicka ENGBLOM (Sweden, EPP/CD)*: Mothers of Russia. Brave mothers of Russia. You who have spoken, protested and demanded, to the war in Afghanistan, and the return of your sons. We have all seen and supported, and admired your struggle.

The time has come again to say what you must say. Your sons are waging an unjust war. An unjustified war unleashed on you, the Russian people, by your bloodthirsty cruel regime, headed by Putin.

An unjustified war that has devastated the neighbouring country of Ukraine. Your brothers and sisters.

Your sons are dying, and then lay among the corpses. They are being sent to battle in trains from Belarus.

Your sons are fighting without even knowing why and for what purpose, and why they are shooting, and why they are killing Ukrainians.

As a mother, I appeal to you. From one mother to another mother. Be on our side, in our battle for freedom and our struggle to life.

Glory to Ukraine.

Glory to the heroes.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Dear Annicka, I don't know where you did learn it the Russian language, but even more respect for you, thank you very much.

I give now the floor to Ms Yuliya LOVOCHKINA from Ukraine.

Ms Yuliya LOVOCHKINA (Ukraine, SOC): Dear colleagues,

Having invaded Ukraine, the Russian Federation unleashed their largest war in Europe since World War II.

I know — and my friend Ms Saranda BOGUJEVCI has told us a lot and everyone who was there — there were other wars, but this one is the biggest one.

We are all witness to a catastrophe on a planetary basis — let's not underestimate it, it's not a continental one. Caused by Russian aggression against Ukraine, as a result of large-scale military attacks in almost all regions of Ukraine, a huge number of my fellow citizens are suffering. Thousands of civilians, including women, young children, and infants have been killed. Many more have been wounded.

Ukraine is going through an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe. Millions of Ukrainian citizens have been forced to become refugees and IDPs.

The entire Ukrainian delegation and I fully support the decision to be taken today. The Russian Federation can no longer be a member of the Council of Europe.

Every day, the war takes the lives of my compatriots, primarily civilians.

Today in our women@PACE meeting, we discussed many consequences, how we can help, what is to be addressed, what actions are to be taken, we discussed many things — but not like this.

Just an hour ago I received a call from a friend who was in her first trimester; she lost her child because of the stress everyone is going through. She was too stressed. She's in a safe condition, but she's too stressed and she said she lost her child.

So today Ukrainians have one main request: to stop the war and the cruel bloodshed.

An immediate ceasefire based on proper negotiations is of vital need.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has repeatedly stated that he is ready for that, in order to stop killings and distractions.

There is an online format of negotiations which gives a little hope. In view of this, I call upon the Assembly and its individual members to stimulate negotiations at all possible levels, at plain force, so we are to stop this horror, the street fires, the cruel bloodshed and large-scale destruction of Ukrainian cities.

In addition, I urge the Assembly to call on the international community and Council of Europe member States to provide assistance to Ukraine.

We need both immediate aid — everything possible —, as well as long-term post-war assistance to overcome the consequences of destruction and humanitarian disaster.

Just one last sentence — the war of aggression against Ukraine presents a threat to all of Europe and now it is self-evident that we need a new European security architecture.

It is time to embark upon a discussion on its format and possible modalities.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

Now I give the floor to Ms Jorida TABAKU from Albania.

Ms Jorida TABAKU (Albania, EPP/CD): Dear Colleagues,

It is always difficult speaking after one of our colleagues from Ukraine sharing their very powerful stories.

Let me start by paying tribute to the courage of the Ukrainian people and its leaders for their determination to fight for freedom. What we are doing now is a lesson for everyone.

Thanks to Mariia, Olena, Larysa, Yuliya and everyone else who is here with us in this room, but also who are working out of this room.

This is my my first mandate in the Council of Europe. I was really touched by the solidarity and unity shown by members here during the last two days but also by the leadership of the rapporteur for the excellent work with the opinion that we have. A very strong political document.

We must hold high the freedom and human dignity that the European Convention of Human Rights has been teaching us for more than 70 years now. This invasion is from one member of the council to another member of this council, and cannot be acceptable. We have to recall how war unfolded in Europe 80 years ago.

Some of us have very fresh memories of other wars in the Balkans. I'm from Albania. Vivid images of the cost of a war only 25 years ago are very strong among people in the western Balkans. Therefore, we have to prepare and to act quickly not when things are at a stage where decisions as the one that we are taking today should have been taken before.

We cannot allow for another precedent to unfold in front of our eyes.

We have seen humanitarian, economic, and social crises where women, children, and everyone else has been under attack. Mariupol' images have been shocking for everyone, especially for those who also have children at home.

I believe that the territorial integrity, safety of people, providing minimum requirements, and living conditions is now an obligation for all of our countries independently of size. I heard great discussions yesterday and today. The report voted unanimously in the political group shows that this Assembly knows its path. This Assembly will also provide guidance to the Council of Ministers for the final decision for the expulsion of Russia.

I believe that asking nicely will not work anymore.

What is happening contradicts international law, all standards and principles. No one can close their eyes.

I believe that we should also give a strong message to help with the humanitarian crisis to ask EU member states to continue with support packages for the Ukrainian people, devote all energies and resources with plans to restore the action plan for democratic reforms in Ukraine.

Above all, we must help to stop war.

Thank you.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, Ms Jorida TABAKU.

I now give the floor to Mr Claude KERN.

Mr Claude KERN (France, ALDE): Thank you, Madam President.

Dear colleagues,

Only two years after the war in Nagorno-Karabakh, a new conflict has broken out between two Member States of our Organization. A conflict of a magnitude that shakes the whole of Europe and that questions very directly the values of our Organization.

I sincerely regret that all the diplomatic efforts made to avoid this conflict did not bear fruit. The Russian aggression against Ukraine, which began on 24 February, is unacceptable. The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe decided on February 25 to suspend the Russian Federation from its rights of representation in the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

This decision was an absolutely necessary first step. It is now clearly insufficient, even if the path that follows will eventually lead to depriving Russian citizens of recourse to the European Court of Human Rights. Vladimir Putin leaves us no choice. To be convinced of this, one only has to observe the Russian attitude since 2014: the suspension of the powers of Russian parliamentarians in 2014 did not lead to any significant progress on the situation in Ukraine. Neither did their return to our Assembly in 2019, and it did nothing to prevent war.

It is true that defense and security issues do not fall within the competence of the Council of Europe. However, the preamble of our Convention recalls that the Council of Europe must strengthen the links between the member States, which are deeply attached to the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms, which constitute the very foundations of justice and peace in the world. These values are not shared today by the Russian Federation, which has constantly tested the credibility of our Organization.

The intensified bombings directly targeting the civilian population to frighten them, or the creation of humanitarian corridors leading to Russia or Belarus show the cynicism of the Russian leaders, who do not take into consideration the rights of the Ukrainian population. On the contrary, Putin and his entourage are behind massacres and real war crimes.

What NGOs and journalists are telling us about the situation on the ground is particularly worrying. We are witnessing, with this conflict, the negation of all the values defended by the Council of Europe since its creation. This is why we must react today, both to affirm our solidarity with the Ukrainians and to recall our attachment to our values. Vladimir Putin's Russia cannot be part of the Council of Europe: the credibility of our organization depends on it.

In conclusion, I would like to congratulate the Ukrainian people for their courage and give them our full support.

Slava Ukraini!

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, Mister KERN.

The floor is now given to Mr Paolo GRIMOLDI.

Mr Paolo GRIMOLDI (Italy, EC/DA): Thank you, Mister President.

Thank you all for the interesting debate we have had.

I would like to emphasise, I think, that this is the time for firmness, but it is also the time for responsibility and solidarity.

I am one of the few members I have heard today who have gone to the region to see what is happening. Last week I was in Poland, and I had the opportunity to go to the Ukrainian border. I also saw the humanitarian tragedy we are witnessing.

Since here in the Council of Europe we also deal above all with human rights, I think that this is something that should concern all of us.

I met with Mr Mykyta POTURAEV, who is head of Ukraine delegation to OSCE. He told us what the primary issues are. My thanks go especially to Poland, which has this morning taken in 1 800 000 Ukrainians in trouble and to the other neighboring countries, including Hungary, Slovakia, Romania and so on.

Let me say that they deserve a big thank you. I find it strange, and I have not heard anyone say this today, that the European Parliament, with an almost comical timing, sanctions Poland and Hungary just when Poland and Hungary are among the countries that are making the greatest effort to try to take care of this humanitarian drama.

At least ask yourself if the timing was appropriate, because at this moment I think that Poland and other Eastern European countries should be given help and not sanctions.

Among other things, some of these countries have been criticised in the past for their attitude towards immigration. Today we realise that when real refugees arrive, these countries deserve great thanks and respect.

After that we pass also the pragmatic aspect, there are problems of management character.

I am told that many Ukrainians arriving in Europe are not even able to change their currencies, because in European banks they do not change the hryvnia and the Ukrainian currency. These are small things, if you will, but they are critical in trying to help these people.

Today Germany has told the Ukrainian government and the Polish government to stop the trains of these refugees, these refugees, these people who are also moving to Germany. Here I think instead that solidarity must prevail at this time.

Do not stop the trains, but try to move and give assistance to these people a little bit on the whole European territory. Let me conclude with one last note. Some time ago there was a girl from Germany, Carola Rackete, who criticised the Italian government for stopping economic migrants. Since this time we are talking about real refugees, fleeing from war, I wonder where Carola Rackete has gone.

Thank you.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

I give the floor now to Ms Tamar TALIASHVILI, from Georgia.

Ms Tamar TALIASHVILI (Georgia, SOC): Dear President,

My dear colleagues,

I represent Georgia, the people who have suffered from the grave atrocities of the Russian aggressive warfare several times throughout recent decades, including an ongoing occupation of the Georgian regions.

Our delegation in the Council of Europe, including personally me, together with the Ukrainian colleagues, and several other countries, have been extremely vocal at warning, that Russia has not abandon its goal of the free Europe conquest. Unfortunately, the aggressor exploited an opportunity to negotiate from the position of continued strength.

Now, dear colleagues, now that Europe faces a full-scale war, where to find the solution? One of the responses is unity, the unity not only within the Council of Europe through its numerous bodies and institutions, but beyond. Coordinated action among all European institutions is needed to face this threat, and on the other hand, to embrace friends and allies and strengthen their confidence in the European leadership.

The survival of European freedom will be determined by whether Europe has the courage to meet this challenge of leadership.

Georgia stays committed to the goal of a just, fair, and lasting peace in Europe. Georgia was among the co-sponsors of the UN-Security Council resolution in Ukraine's support. Georgia also co-authored the call for an investigation of the Russian war crimes at the International Criminal Court.

Today, my colleagues, by voting in favour of this powerful, fair, and just decision of the Parliamentary Assembly to expel Russia, we once again reiterate our full support for Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence.

Now the time is priceless, every minute innocent children and helpless people become new targets of the aggressor's bullets and bombs.

I appreciate this resolute determination of the Assembly and address the Committee of Ministers with confidence that this trait of unity and strength within our Parliamentary Assembly will be carried out into immediate execution.

Slava Ukraini!

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, Madam TALIASHVILI.

I come now to Mr Nicos TORNARITIS from Cyprus.

Mr Nicos TORNARITIS (Cyprus, EPP/CD): Madam Chair,

Our thoughts, prayers, sympathies, and solidarity at this time are with the people of Ukraine.

Cyprus's position is one based on principles, in line with EU and UN decisions. We are clear on this. Aggression is aggression and should be condemned wherever it comes from. As a small EU member state, Cyprus, 37% of its territory of which continues to be illegally occupied since the Turkish invasion of 1974, cannot afford neutrality.

We are on the side of Ukraine.

We are on the side of international legality.

It is deplorable that yet again, Russia is invading foreign land, in blatant violation of international law, human rights, and the rule of law. It has violated the core democratic principles and values of the civilised world. Whoever tries to downplay its significance, is in fact undermining the fundamental principles that define international relations and ruining the credibility of our organisation and what it stands for.

We need to be united, decisive and clear in order to uphold our fundamental values. We cannot accept, nor tolerate, the invasion of one member State by another. We cannot accept double standards.

We also need to ask ourselves if we are willing to allow another member State of the Council of Europe, also a NATO member and an EU candidate country depart from agreed positions and collective decisions as regards the Russian aggression in Ukraine. Shouldn't punitive measures also be applied to this case?

Dear President, dear colleagues,

Last but not least, I should like to pay tribute to the plight of the Ukrainian people and express my admiration to their resolve and courage and reaffirm our determination to end this brutal invasion.

Slava Ukraini.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, Mister TORNARITIS.

I give now the floor, I think online, to Ms Blerina GJYLAMETI.

I hope that I have pressed it in a correct way, you have the floor.

Ms Blerina GJYLAMETI (Albania, SOC): Dear colleagues,

It's my first mandate in the Council of Europe and I never thought that I had to address a speech in such a crucial moment for democracy, for the real life.

A five years old boy, a 10 years old girl. A mother of three. A father who left the house by thinking of his family at all the time. They all lost their lives in a powerful bombardment which symbolises the terrible war of Putin against Ukraine.

The only member of this family to survive was Sophia, who had to fight with death without knowing that her brother, her sister and her parents, didn't live any more.

This is just a tiny bit of the terrible stories of war happening in the heart of Europe. The ones who think it is far, are wrong. It shows we have not learnt anything from history.

Today, 80 years after the World War, and 30 years after the fall of the Iron Curtain, unfortunately, Europe is witnessing crime, violence, bombardment of civilians whose only dream was to be part of the European family.

Dear colleagues, images and pain coming from the bombardment in Ukraine are among those moments that make us reflect about our lives, about what we do every day. It is a moment of high responsibility every time we take important decision with our vote. Like the decision we are taking today.

We should be united, and we should vote that the Russian Federation should not be a member any more of the Council of Europe.

The war in Ukraine showed that peace in Europe is too fragile. It showed us how the tears of joy and the wishes of our children's future turns into tears of despair, where death has become the companion of these cold March days under the bombardment rain.

As from a country that during its history has suffered a lack of freedom. We know perfectly what that price is really high. Unfortunately, time has shown that those who suffer the most are the elderly, children, women.

As the country where Mother Teresa was from, a woman that became the symbol of help for the ones in need, Albania, though a small country, will stand with preserving life and dignity of human values together with its allies.

Today is the time to make decisions. Hesitation make violence and extremist policies continue, thus compromising the security of the whole Europe.

If we have no peace it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other, Mother Teresa said.

Therefore, whoever said that this is not our war is wrong. This is the war of Europe, and it requires our total engagement for peace to come back again.

Thank you.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

I give the floor now to Ms Franziska HOOP.

Ms Franziska HOOP (Liechtenstein, ALDE): Dear Madam Vice President,

Dear Colleagues,

On behalf of the Liechtenstein delegation, I would like to express my deep regret and solidarity with the Ukrainian people and the Ukrainian Government.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine is to be condemned in the strongest possible terms. Not only is this military attack a blatant violation of international law, but also it contradicts all the values for which the Council of Europe stands.

I call on the Russian Federation to immediately cease the armed attack and demand the immediate withdrawal of Russian armed forces from the sovereign territory of Ukraine. I am deeply shocked by the reports of systematic and serious violations of international humanitarian law by Russian forces. Civilian lives and civilian infrastructure must be protected and safeguarded at all times. So too must the establishment of humanitarian corridors. War crimes and human rights violations must be prosecuted, and perpetrators must be held accountable in court.

My delegation welcomes the unanimous decision of the Committee of Ministers to consult the Parliamentary Assembly on further action under Article 8 of the Council of Europe Statute.

A united and cohesive approach is essential to defend human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. The immediate suspension of Russia was a clear and strong response to the military attack by the Russian Federation. The Council of Europe has thus fulfilled its role as guardian of human rights.

With the Russian Federation's now independent withdrawal from the Council of Europe, many questions arise, and many more will arise. One thing my delegation would like to say now is that it is of the utmost importance that we ensure that contact is maintained with those Russians who fear that their human rights are being violated. To them directly, or to the relevant non-governmental organisations, NGOs.

Liechtenstein believes in the strength of multilateralism and is strongly committed to it. Therefore, as a matter of principle, we are always of the opinion that it is more expedient to maintain dialogue than to close the door to talks once and for all.

However, Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine and the continued blatant violations of the Council of Europe's fundamental values now show that even this basic stance has limits.

States that protect and respect democracy, the rule of law, and human rights have a place at our table. For those who do not or no longer have a seat at the table, there should be an opportunity to become part of this community again as soon as the values of the Council of Europe are theirs also.

Thank you.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

Mr Markus WIECHEL I call now.

He is not in the hemicycle.

He's online?

Mr Markus WIECHEL, online.

Mr Markus WIECHEL (Sweden, EC/DA): Madam President,

As we gathered in this chamber less than two months ago, we were still living in what is known as a post-cold war era.

That era started in the early 1990s and witnessed the spread of democracy in previously unfree nations, the tempering of tensions in Europe generally.

There was a time when, as the saying has it, "hope and history rhymed."

To be sure, there were setbacks, as some states broke animosity - but there were also, on the whole, successful international efforts to re-install peace.

However, that era collapsed three weeks ago on 24 February 2022 as one Council of Europe member State, Russia - today as we know it, a former member State - brutally invaded another member State, Ukraine.

This came after it had amassed some 200 000 troops and hundreds of tanks, aircrafts, warships, all around Ukraine's borders.

This went on at the same time as Russia participated in diplomatic talks and refused to admit their despicable plans to break international law by invading their peaceful democratic neighbours.

Today, as we speak, Russian bombs are killing thousands of Ukrainians, levelling their cities to the ground. The target civilian neighbourhoods, where inhabitants are struggling to survive freezing nights and shelters without food, clean water, and electricity; hospitals, schools, food stores, nuclear facilities, factories - all are fair game for the intruders.

Three million Ukrainians have managed to flee the country. Millions more are trying. Our hearts are with them as they are with all those thousands of Ukrainians who continue to bravely fight for their freedom.

What we see right now seems to be the work of essentially only one man: namely the Russian dictator Vladimir Putin.

The attack seems to have had neither a clear reason nor a clear purpose, except somehow to restore a grandiose Soviet Union of the past.

The whole world is, therefore, asking itself what went on and what goes on in Putin's head.

Dear colleagues,

Only three years ago, the Russian delegation was led back into our Assembly with full rights despite the fact that they had done nothing to deserve this honour.

Even though a majority of this Assembly seem to be quite naive, I'm sure that most, if not all, have learned from their mistakes.

I hope that all do what they can in their parliaments to pressure Russia and countries in support of this invasion by tough economic sanctions, and support Ukraine with arms and other needs.

The defense of our Ukrainian brothers and sisters concerns us all.

I do wish to conclude on a more uplifting note, and that is that we have seen European countries come together in solidarity in a way nobody could have imagined prior to 24 February 2022.

Peace and freedom are, needless to say, the very core of our Council of Europe. We have it in our power again to make "hope and history rhyme."

Slava Ukraini.

Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (Netherlands, EPP/CD, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

The next speaker would be Ms Etilda GJONAJ but she is not connected. So I would like to give the floor to Mr Olivier BECHT.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Mr Olivier BECHT, please ask for the floor.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): That is not going to function at this moment.

I now give the floor to Mr George PAPANDEOU from Greece.

George, you have the floor.

Mr George PAPANDEOU (Greece, SOC): On February 24th, this war seemed to be but a bad dream, yet we woke up to a nightmare that was real when we believed we would never again see on this continent.

The first reaction of many of us was a big "why?". Why such irrationality, megalomania, brutality, and fratricidal cold-blooded war? Then the "why" became a big "no". A "no" of indignation, a "no" to the lies and fake news, a "no" to the destruction of cities, a "no" to the unimaginable suffering, war crimes, deaths of innocent people, indiscriminate killing of men, women, children, and the elderly, and a strong "no" to the lunatic mention of chemical biological or nuclear weapons.

Today, however, here in the Council of Europe, we are asked to firmly cry out a strong "yes", a wholehearted "yes" to the solidarity and assistance to the brave people of Ukraine. Women, children, families, and all fighting for their freedom, their homeland, and their livelihood. And as a Greek I didn't mention the ancient and valiant community of Greeks of Mariupol.

And a loud "yes" of welcome to all refugees who seek safe havens in our countries, fleeing from persecution, starvation, and death. And "yes", a lesson to us all to strengthen the fight for democracy, rule of law, human rights, respect of territorial integrity, and peaceful resolution of conflict. And therefore a "yes" to the clear condemnation of Putin and the expulsion of Russia from the Council of Europe.

My country, Greece, was kicked out of the Council of Europe in the 1970s. I was a young refugee, an activist in the resistance. We fought for it, we welcomed this decision. This was not a decision against the Greek people, it was a decision against a military dictatorship which imprisoned and tortured any voice of oppression.

It was against the rule of the powerful against totalitarianism. This decision strengthened our struggle for democracy and freedom in the country where the concept of democracy was born. And today's decision is not against the people of Russia, it is against the autocratic kleptocratic oppressive regime of Putin.

United today, our decision will become a beacon for all fighters for strong, democratic institutions around the world. A beacon for those who even today are bravely fighting for a different Russia and Belarussia. One of freedom and human rights and of peaceful cooperation, in a wider Europe with democratic values.

Already, Russia has been forced to withdraw from the council under the crushing weight of our voices in this room.

A first victory.

We feel all as Ukrainians today.

Slava Ukraini!

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, Mr George PAPANDEOU.

The next speaker is Ms Jennifer DE TEMMERMAN, from France.

Ms Jennifer DE TEMMERMAN (France, ALDE): Thank you, Mister President.

Like everyone before me, I would like to start by expressing my support for the Ukrainian people, but also for the neighbours, those who have supported them, from the beginning, for years, and who are also on the front line.

In 2019, we were naïve. We did not hear our colleagues' warnings. In history, there had been precedents: we failed to learn the necessary lessons. Personally, I believed at the time that it was the best thing to do for the Russian people, victims of a decadent and despotic power. They could thus continue to appeal to the European Court of Human Rights. But finally, for what results?

Even if it is a little late and even if it will not change the current situation, I would like to apologise to the Ukrainian people and to all those who have had the lucidity to support them for years. The Council of Europe was created in the aftermath of a terrible war, in the hope of avoiding a new conflagration. Are we on the verge of the end of an illusion? Peace in Europe is now hanging by a thread. Let us not look away. Do you really believe that showing weakness in the face of a monster will save us?

Today we have the opportunity to redeem ourselves by adopting our colleague's report with one voice and without wavering. We have a duty to live up to the courage of the Ukrainian people. In order to do this, I think we must listen to the requests of our friends, those who warned us and whom we failed to listen to before, including when it comes to the no-fly zone.

What kind of representatives of the people would we be if we did not take into account our fellow citizens? In my region, in Flanders, a company charters trucks to bring in donations from all over the district, a mayor welcomes a Ukrainian family under his roof. I do not doubt for a moment what they expect from my vote. A great Russian writer, a correspondent of Gandhi, wrote "*government is a meeting of men who do violence to the rest of the men*". Apples sometimes fall far from the tree. This is what is happening in Russia. Let's not forget Putin's opponents either. It is perhaps through them that the light could return.

What we are going to vote on today is only a stone, but a stone is a bulwark against barbarism. A stone can defeat a giant, and a stone makes a house.

Tomorrow we will rebuild. Today, we must give our full support to Ukraine and try to stem the tide of violence.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Ms. Jennifer DE TEMMERMAN.
The next speaker is Mr. Olivier BECHT from France.

Mr Olivier BECHT (France, ALDE): Thank you very much, Mister President.

Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine signals the return of war to Europe. We thought, with the fall of the Berlin Wall, that we would be able to enjoy the dividends of peace. Now history is brutally reminding us that we are all Ukrainians. Faced with this armed aggression of one member state of the Council of Europe by another. There is only one solution: the exclusion of the aggressor.

A few years ago, I defended Russia's continued membership in our organisation because I thought it would be useful for Russians to continue to benefit from the protection of the European Court of Human Rights. We have to admit that the opposite path has been taken. But if the exclusion of Russia from the family of Greater Europe is now inevitable, it is essential to specify that it is Vladimir Putin's Russia, because no one is in power forever, and I hope that the Russian people will find the strength to one day put at their head, a leader who will return our common values.

Russia must know that, on that day, it will be able to regain its rightful place and rank in this great European family. When the time comes, our organisation will also have to reflect on its own evolution. Indeed, values are fundamental but they are only pillars of the temple. In order to stand, values need the cement of concrete co-operation that allows for shared prosperity. This is the path that the founding fathers mapped out in 1950 when they invited the States to come together to build the conditions for common prosperity.

The Council of Europe cannot survive without moving along this same path. The Paris Agreement on Climate Change is leading us towards a society without fossil fuels by 2030. We cannot hope to live in peace on our continent without involving each State of the greater Europe in this immense challenge, which will condition future economic development and the well-being of populations. I, therefore, hope that we will be able to work, without delay, on the conditions that will allow us to do this, together with post-Putin Russia.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Now we are losing you Mr Olivier BECHT.

So sorry. The connection has gone.

Dear colleagues, we now come to our last speaker on our list, Ms Maria JUFEREVA-SKURATOVSKI, from Estonia.

Ms Maria JUFEREVA-SKURATOVSKI, you have the floor.

Ms Maria JUFEREVA-SKURATOVSKI (Estonia, ALDE): Honourable President, members,

I would like to start my speech with pointing out one simple fact: the Russian Federation's actions against Ukraine is a war that brings destruction, heart-breaking losses, and death of civilians and innocent children. This war started already eight years ago, and the aggressor has never taken responsibility for its actions. Let's name things as they are.

The Assembly has always played the role of Europe's guardian of human rights and democracy. Defence and promotion of democratic security and freedom lay on our shoulders. And these values are more than ever needed right now. If we do not act right now, Russia's aggression against Ukraine will have global and long-term negative consequences that challenge the rules-based international order as we know it. We have witnessed many times how Russia ignores its obligations set out in the European Convention on Human Rights. The Russian invasion of Georgia in 2008, annexation of Crimea in 2014, poisoning of Alexey Navalny – this list can be continued endlessly.

PACE needs to proceed with the steps necessary to expel Russia from the Council of Europe. Therefore, every legal avenue available must be used to hold the aggressor to account. We have to wake up before it is too late.

Estonia welcomes the fast reaction of the Council of Europe to Russia's aggression, when Russia's right of representation in the organisation was suspended. I would also like to stress that yesterday the Parliament of Estonia adopted a declaration that calls on the United Nation member states to take immediate steps to establish a no-fly zone in order to prevent massive civilian casualties in Ukraine. We admire the astonishing courage of all Ukrainian people, and we stand by Ukrainians, not just with words, but with concrete actions.

Dear colleagues, Russia has brought war back to Europe. Millions of people have lost their homes and their loved ones. People are sheltering in underground stations and basements, crying and hoping for peace. These nightmares are happening because the president of the Russian Federation Putin decided that Russia's neighbouring country, Ukraine, has no right to exist.

There is not and there will not be a place for the aggressor in this value-based organisation.

We need to send the strong message.

Slava Ukraini, heroyam slava!

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, Ms Maria JUFEREVA-SKURATOVSKI.

Dear colleagues, we have now come to the end of the speakers list.

May I first thank the Secretary General of the Assembly, and in particular the table office, that they were able to accommodate all of you.

More than half of members of the Assembly have taken the floor in this extraordinary session. That is a record, but it is thanks to our great Secretariat that we were well able to accommodate all of you.

Also want to thank the interpreters for giving us a chance, for giving us the chance to continue the debate until now.

I want to thank all of you for your very disciplined, nobody stole speaking time of others. So in the end, you all could take the floor.

Now I call Ms Ingjerd SCHOU, the rapporteur, to reply to all the remarks that you made.

I give you the next ten hours Ms Ingjerd SCHOU. No, but feel free, but you know speaking time is limited.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, Rapporteur): Dear President and dear colleagues,

I thank you for this debate, for your dedication and respect for the seriousness of the question we have had to deliberate on.

We are in an unimaginable situation. We have war raging in the midst of Europe.

The suffering is terrible and the needs are enormous.

As an Assembly, we have consistently supported dialogue. But this aggression is a point of no return. There is no room for an aggressor in the European home. I have listened carefully to all your important comments, but I hope you understand that with such a high number of speakers it is not possible for me to respond to you all.

All of your perspectives presented here today merit attention and dedication. If not included in this text, we should keep them in mind and make sure to follow up on the needs and initiatives they represent.

Some of you mentioned the importance of reaching out to the Russian people, many of whom do not support this war and do not have access to independent and objective informations about it. I agree.

We should find ways to offer a platform to all those Russians who share the Council or Europe's values, and to those who bravely protest the war.

The text in front of you is strong and it has a clear message to the Committee of Ministers. I sincerely hope it can be supported unanimously by all 46 delegations participating here today.

History will bear witness to the truth, that it was this Assembly through these actions here this week, that told Russia that it no longer belongs here.

I encourage you all to vote in favour, to make it a unanimous decision.

As I said in my introduction, a united Council of Europe is a stronger Council of Europe. In this extraordinary situation, European unity is important.

Thank you, Mr President.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Ms Rapporteur.

Does the Chairperson of the Committee wish to speak?

Mister Kimmo KILJUNEN, you have 2 minutes.

Mr Kimmo KILJUNEN (Finland, SOC, First Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy): Thank you very much, Mister President.

First, I want to thank the Rapporteur for preparing the report. Ms Ingjerd SCHOU, you made a very good, balanced, and consensus-driven report. All of us thank you very much for this one.

We show strong solidarity for Ukraine and Ukrainians, for they are fighting not only for their sovereignty, national existence, but also for the universal values of democracy, human rights, and rule of law.

This aggression is condemned by almost the whole world. Our citizens have taken to the streets to protest, but also thousands of Russians have been very courageous in manifesting their opposition.

Mister President, I underline that this opinion paper was unanimously supported, approved by the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy. One voice was there, and I hope there will be one voice from here too.

It's time to send a strong message to Ukraine, to Russia, and to the Committee of Ministers, about what our opinion is in this regard.

Mister President, you know that I am a man of dialogue, but we are now in a situation where there is only one option.

With this existing leadership and policy, the Russian Federation is not eligible to be a member of the Council of Europe.

Thanks.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mr Kimmo KILJUNEN.

The debate is closed.

The Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy has presented a draft Opinion which you will find in Document 15477, to which 20 amendments and 2 sub-amendments have been tabled.

I remind the Assembly that the speaking time on amendments will be 30 seconds.

I understand that the vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy has proposed to the Assembly that Amendments 9, 6, 1 and 13 to the draft Opinion, which were unanimously adopted by the Committee, should be declared as agreed.

That's okay? That's all right Mr Kimmo KILJUNEN?

Yes.

As there is no objection, I declare Amendments 9, 6, 1 and 13 to draft Opinion have been agreed.

I now call Ms Lesia VASYLENKO to support Amendment 5.

You have 30 seconds.

Vote: Consequences of the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine

Ms Lesia VASYLENKO (Ukraine, ALDE): Thank you.

This amendment essentially concerns the proper sequence of events.

The aggression of the Russian Federation started not 20 days ago, but eight years ago, on 20 February 2014.

Essentially this is how the report should start: "that in continuation of the war of aggression waged by the Russian Federation against Ukraine since 20 February 2014, as of 24 February 2022, the Russian Federation started all the atrocities that we are witnessing now".

This is what this amendment is about. I ask you to support it.

Thank you.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Does anybody wish to speak against the amendment?

I do not see any.

Mr Kimmo KILJUNEN (Finland, SOC, First Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy): Voted in favour with a large majority.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): The Committee is in favour.

I now shall put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote in the hemicycle and via remote voting is now open.

The vote is closed. I call for the results to be displayed.

The amendment is carried.

I call Mr Emanuelis ZINGERIS to support Amendment no. 17. You have 30 seconds.

Mr Emanuelis ZINGERIS (Lithuania, EPP/CD): Thank you, Dear Chairman.

My amendment related to the solidarity of those courageous members of the Ukrainian parliament who are with us together.

The Assembly stands in solidarity with its Ukrainian members in those dark hours.

I would like to add, I see the children who just came during the last three days. We are welcoming the children of your families.

Thank you.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Mister Emanuelis ZINGERIS.

Does anybody wish to speak against the Amendment?

I do not see any one.

What is the opinion of the Committee?

Mr Kimmo KILJUNEN (Finland, SOC, First Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy): Voted in favour with a large majority.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): The Committee is in favour.

I shall now put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

Call for the results to be displayed.

The Amendment is carried.

Amendment 9 was unanimously adopted. Amendment 6 was unanimously adopted.

We now come to Amendment 18 with the sub-Amendment.

I first call Mr Pieter OMTZIGT to support Amendment 18.

You have 30 seconds.

Mr Pieter OMTZIGT (Netherlands, EPP/CD): Thank you Mr Chairman,

It's very important that the crimes which are at the moment being committed in Ukraine are prosecuted, so if your house is being destroyed, if your loved ones are being killed, there should be a tribunal.

Now the International Criminal Court rests on the Treaty of Rome. Russia has not ratified that treaty. By the way Ukraine has signed it but not ratified it, so I hope they'll do so soon.

So it would be very good see how we can implement an independent tribunal to do this.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, Mister Pieter OMTZIGT.

I call Ms Ingjerd SCHOU to support sub-Amendment 1 on behalf of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, Rapporteur): Thank you, Mister President.

This is a Sub-amendment no. 1 to Amendment no. 18.

This sub-amendment is very important. The Assembly should look into the possible setting up of an international criminal tribunal, but the issue must be analysed better.

We shall come back to this question in April.

Thank you.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

Does anyone wish to speak against this sub-Amendment?

I don't see anybody.

I understand that the mover of the main Amendment agrees.

Mr Kimmo KILJUNEN (Finland, SOC, First Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy): The Committee is unanimously in favour of supporting the sub-Amendment, but also the position on the Amendment as amended.

Also unanimous.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

I now shall put the sub-amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed. Please have the results displayed.

The sub-amendment is carried.

I now will put the main amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed. I ask for the results to be displayed.

Amendment no. 18 as amended has been adopted.

We come now to Amendment no. 2 with a sub-amendment.

I first call Mr Titus CORLĂȚEAN to support Amendment no. 2. You have 30 seconds.

Mr Titus CORLĂȚEAN (Romania, SOC): Mister President,

As a matter of fact, this initial Amendment was approved unanimously. It's true that the Rapporteur also proposed a sub-amendment that was also approved unanimously.

It's just a factual indication about the real figure of the refugees that came into my country, and not necessarily on behalf of the Rapporteur, but also for the Republic of Moldova.

It was approved unanimously.

Thank you.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, Mr Titus CORLĂȚEAN.

Anyone who wants to speak against this amendment?

First, I have to ask Ms Ingjerd SCHOU to present Sub-amendment no. 2 on behalf of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, Rapporteur): Yes.

Thank you, Mister President.

Sub-Amendment 1 to Amendment 2. This sub-Amendment aims at correcting factual information.

Thank you.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, Madam Ingjerd SCHOU.

As the mover agrees, as she indicated, we now shall put the sub-Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

Can we please see the results.

The sub-Amendment is carried.

We will now vote on the main Amendment as amended.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

Please, I call to see the results.

The Amendment as amended is agreed.

I apologise that I did not ask the Chair of the Committee, but I had the idea that it was good to have his approval as well.

Now I come to Amendment 15.

I understand that Mr George KATROUGALOS or Mr Momodou Malcolm JALLOW wants to withdraw Amendment 15?

Does anybody else wish to move it?

That is not the case, so Amendment 15 is withdrawn.

We now come to oral Amendment 1.

I've received an oral Amendment by the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy that reads as follows.

"Replace Paragraph 13.8 with the following paragraph: Immediately release and reinstate all kidnapped males and local representatives, as well as release activists."

In my opinion, the oral Amendment meets criteria under Rule 34.7A.

Is there any opposition against this to be debated?

Not the case.

Therefore, I call Ms Ingjerd SCHOU to support oral Amendment 1.

You have 30 seconds.

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU (Norway, EPP/CD, Rapporteur): Thank you, Mister President.

This is an oral amendment to Paragraph 13.8.

The aim of the oral amendment is to ask to release and restate all kidnapped mayors and local authorities and free activists without making names to cover all those who may be in this situation.

Thank you.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you, Madam Ingjerd SCHOU.

The Committee is obviously in favour.

Mr Kimmo KILJUNEN (Finland, SOC, First Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy): The Committee is obviously in favour.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

Then I shall put the oral amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed. May I see the results displayed?

The oral amendment is adopted.

We now come to Amendment no. 3. I call Sir Christopher CHOPE to support Amendment no. 3. You have 30 seconds.

Sir Christopher CHOPE (United Kingdom, EC/DA): Mister President,

May I make a short statement about Amendments nos. 3, 12, 7 and 4 to Paragraph 14?

At the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy this morning, there was an audible intake of breath and incomprehension where Amendments 3, 12, 7 and 4 to Paragraph 14 of the opinion were opposed by the Rapporteur.

Since then I'm very pleased to say that there have been discussions with the Rapporteur and the leaders of political groups to find a constructive way forward, so we can speak with one voice.

The outcome is an agreement that Amendments nos. 3 and 4 be withdrawn, but that Amendments no. 12 and 7, which cover similar ground, will be supported by the Rapporteur and, hopefully, by the full Assembly.

On that understanding, may I thank everybody involved in these constructive discussions and ask leave to withdraw Amendment no. 3.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, Sir Christopher CHOPE.

Amendment 3 is withdrawn.

Does anybody else wish to move the Amendment?

That is not the case.

We now come to Amendment 12.

I call Mr Emanuelis ZINGERIS to support Amendment 12.

You have 30 seconds.

Mr Emanuelis ZINGERIS (Lithuania, EPP/CD): Amendment no. 12 based on broader coalition, just the same as Sir Christopher CHOPE said, after a long discussion, Amendment no. 12 means leave humanitarian assistance and to have their resistance.

Simply to have assistance to Ukraine. I'm just asking you to support, from my heart. It's very important to assist Ukraine.

Thank you so much, and thank you very much for all members who were involved in the discussion.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Does anybody wish to speak against the Amendment?

What is the opinion of the Committee?

Mr Kimmo KILJUNEN (Finland, SOC, First Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy): The opinion of the Committee: originally we rejected it with a narrow majority.

Taking into consideration the discussion of what would have been done now, there seems to be a consensus behind this one.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much Mr Kimmo KILJUNEN.

I will now put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

I call for the results to be displayed.

The Amendment is adopted.

Amendment 7 is withdrawn.

Sorry, Amendment 7 is not withdrawn.

This is because this British language of Sir Christopher CHOPE is not always clear to me.

So Sir Christopher CHOPE, please move your Amendment.

Sir Christopher CHOPE (United Kingdom, EC/DA): Mister President,

I am delighted to be able to move Amendment no. 7.

This is all about enabling greater assistance to be given to Ukraine, and particularly control over Ukrainian airspace which is of fundamental importance in this war.

That's why we in the United Kingdom delegation - and I know our Ukrainian colleagues feel that this is a really important amendment - and I hope that the rest of the Assembly will agree.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, Sir Christopher CHOPE.

Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment? I do not see any...

What is the opinion of the Committee?

Mr Kimmo KILJUNEN (Finland, SOC, First Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy): It was rejected by a narrow majority originally, but now it seems to be a consensus.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

I now shall put the amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed. Please display the results.

Amendment no. 7 is carried.

(Applause)

I now come to Amendment no. 16. I call on Mr Momodou Malcolm JALLOW to support Amendment no. 16. You have 30 seconds.

Mr Momodou Malcolm JALLOW (Sweden, UEL): If you remember, we withdrew Amendment 15 after a conversation that we've had to try to, in the spirit of consensus, reduce the amount of amendments.

I'm calling on each and every one of you to vote in favour of Amendment 16.

As I said in my speech, this is real. It's important that everybody have access to safety and to a safe place, and to seek asylum and if they seek refuge, to have a possibility to be able to have refuge.

This is about non-discrimination. It's about equal treatment.

I hope you support it.

Thank you.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

Does anybody wish to speak against the amendment? Not the case. What is the opinion of the Committee?

Mr Kimmo KILJUNEN (Finland, SOC, First Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy): Approved by a large majority.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

We now shall put the amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed. Can I ask for the results to be displayed?

The amendment is carried.

I now come to Amendment 4 but that is with John – is there anybody else who wants to move it ?

Not the case.

We come now to Amendment 8. I call on Mr Rik DAEMS to support Amendment 8. You have 30 seconds.

Mr Rik DAEMS (Belgium, ALDE): Colleagues, today we will take a very important decision, but then there is tomorrow and the day after tomorrow.

This terrible situation will not go away in the short-term. Let's hope that we can do more.

I do believe that much is done, and I commend the President, Secretary General and Committee of Ministers for doing so but I do believe that we should look into trying to do more than what we do today.

Paragraph 15, only advises the Human Rights Commissioner and the Special Representative on Refugees. We should set up a task force to look into whatever more we can do 24/7 and act. Words matter, acts matter more.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much Mr Rik DAEMS.

Does anybody wish to speak against the amendment?

Mr Frank SCHWABE, you have the floor.

Mr Frank SCHWABE (Germany, SOC): Thank you Mr President,

I'm very sorry but I cannot support this amendment.

I ask you to follow the position of the Rapporteur and of the Committee because I think we should not create a kind of body – we don't know yet what it should stand for, what it should be. Let's evaluate it, elaborate it in the presidential committee maybe, but I think, come back maybe in April to this, but just to decide it very fast, not knowing what it is, we should not do so.

So I ask you to vote against this amendment.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much, Mr Frank SCHWABE.

What is the opinion of the Committee?

Mr Kimmo KILJUNEN (Finland, SOC, First Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy): Rejected.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): The Committee rejected it.

I now put the amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

The vote is now closed. May I have the results displayed?

The amendment is rejected.

I now come to Amendment 20. I called Mr Pieter OMTZIGT to support Amendment 20. You have 30 seconds.

Mr Pieter OMTZIGT (Netherlands, EPP/CD): Thank you.

If your house is destroyed or your human rights are not being upheld, then you can go to your local court, and in the end, end up at the Strasbourg Court here for Human Rights.

They can sue your own nation.

Well, if your nation is occupied, then the country that has effective control is the one you can sue.

It will be very tedious for Ukrainian citizens to first go to the Russian courts and then come to Strasbourg 10 years late. Therefore, this Amendment proposes that they can go directly to the Strasbourg Court.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much Mr Pieter OMTZIGT, does anyone wish to speak against the amendment? I do not see any.

What is the opinion of the Committee?

Mr Kimmo KILJUNEN (Finland, SOC, First Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy): Approved by a large majority.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

I now will put the amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed. May I have the results displayed?

The amendment is adopted.

We now come to Amendment 10. I call Mr Emanuelis ZINGERIS to report Amendment 10. You have 30 seconds.

Mr Emanuelis ZINGERIS (Lithuania, EPP/CD): Yes, the Amendment was just modified by all of you. It was before I projected the same Amendment by dear friend Mr Pieter OMTZIGT. I should withdraw this Amendment.

It's logistically the same, to establish an international tribunal. If we agree to do that in time, after some very short time, let's not vote for that. I would like to withdraw.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you very, much Mr Emanuelis ZINGERIS.

He withdraws his amendment. Does anybody else wish to move it? That is not the case.

Amendment no. 11 has fallen because Oral Amendment no. 1 is adopted.

Amendment no. 1 was unanimously adopted.

I understand that Amendment no. 19, that Mr Pieter OMTZIGT wished to withdraw Amendment no. 19, is that correct?

Yes. Does anybody else wish to move it? Not the case. Withdrawn.

I now call Ms Laima Liucija ANDRIKIENĖ to support Amendment no. 14. You have 30 seconds.

Ms Laima Liucija ANDRIKIENĖ (Lithuania, EPP/CD): Thank you, Mr President.

Paragraph 20, the very first sentence, I proposed to act immediately. So the sentence will read the following way: "the Assembly therefore is of the opinion that the Committee of Ministers should request the Russian Federation to withdraw from the Council of Europe immediately."

Thank you.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): Thank you very much.

Does anybody wish to speak against the Amendment?

It's not the case.

What is the opinion of the Committee?

Mr Kimmo KILJUNEN (Finland, SOC, First Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy): Approved.

Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly): The Committee is in favour.

I now shall put the Amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

May I ask for the results to be displayed.

The Amendment is carried.

As Amendment 30 was unanimously adopted, we now come to the vote on the draft Opinion.

I inform the Assembly that a two-thirds majority is required.

We will now proceed to vote on the draft Opinion as amended.

The vote in the hemicycle and via remote voting is now open.

The vote is closed.

May I ask for the results to be displayed?

The Opinion is unanimously adopted.

Thank you very much.

Dear colleagues, we now come to the end of the Session.

May I make a final remark to say that we are, of course, sad that we today had to ask to expel a member of our organisation that has been a member for over 25 years. I'm glad that we dared to do it.

It is clear. If you cross red lines, then there is no place for you in this organisation.

I'm very pleased that during these two days, our Assembly functioned not as an arena, where we confronted everybody with our differences, but we functioned as an agora. The unanimous vote in the end proved that.

I'm grateful to the Committee of Ministers and to the Secretary General for the effective co-operation which made it possible that this time, after a blatant violation of the Statute, we could act, and we could act in synergy.

Tomorrow I will address the Committee of Ministers and inform them about our unanimous position and our expectations. I'm confident they will react in an appropriate way.

Before going home, I want, of course, to thank Ms Ingjerd SCHOU, Mr John HOWELL and Ms Nicole TRISSE for supporting us, especially the interpreters, because they did a great great job, and made far more time than they were obliged to.

In the very end, I hope that I can wish well to all the members of the Ukrainian delegation.

Please stay safe, please stay sound. Be aware that this Assembly is now with you.

Thank you very much.

The session is closed.

Requests for an explanation of vote

Ms Margreet De BOER (Netherlands, SOC): For the record, I would like to mention that during the voting for the report on the *Consequences of the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine*, due to technical issue, I was not able to vote. My intention was to vote in favour of the draft opinion.

Ms Jeanet van der LAAN (Netherlands, ALDE): For the record, I would like to mention that during the voting for the report on the *Consequences of the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine*, due to technical issue, I was not able to vote. My intention was to vote in favour of the draft opinion.

Ms Edita ĐAPO (Bosnia and Herzegovina, EPP/CD): For the record, I would like to mention that during the voting for the report on the *Consequences of the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine*, due to technical issue, I was not able to vote. My intention was to vote in favour of the draft opinion.

Ms Iwona ARENT (Poland, EC/DA): For the record, I would like to mention that during the voting for the report on the *Consequences of the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine*, I abstained by mistake. My intention was to vote in favour of the draft opinion.

Ms Alma ČOLO (Bosnia and Herzegovina, EPP/CD): For the record, I would like to mention that during the voting for the report on the *Consequences of the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine*, due to technical issue, I was not able to vote. My intention was to vote in favour of the draft opinion.

Ms Natalia DAVIDOVICI (Republic of Moldova, EPP/CD): For the record, I would like to mention that during the voting for the report on the *Consequences of the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine*, due to technical issue, I was not able to vote. My intention was to vote in favour of the draft opinion.

Ms Borjana KRIŠTO (Bosnia and Herzegovina, EPP/CD): For the record, I would like to mention that during the voting for the report on the *Consequences of the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine*, due to technical issue, I was not able to vote. My intention was to vote in favour of the draft opinion.