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Consequences of the Russian Federation's continued aggression against Ukraine: role and response of the Council of Europe

Reply to Recommendation¹: Recommendation 2228 (2022)
Committee of Ministers

1. The Committee of Ministers has carefully considered Parliamentary Assembly [Recommendation 2228 \(2022\)](#) "Consequences of the Russian Federation's continued aggression against Ukraine: role and response of the Council of Europe".
2. The Committee of Ministers reiterates its condemnation in the strongest terms of the ongoing unprovoked and unjustified armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine and strongly condemns the human rights violations that are being committed in the occupied territories of Ukraine and the continuing colonial-type practices imposed by the Russian Federation. These include, in particular, the accelerated preparations for so-called local referendums to justify the annexation of Ukrainian territories by the Russian Federation, the forced deportation of Ukrainian citizens to the territory of the Russian Federation and the forced "Russification" of the occupied territories of Ukraine, including in the field of education.²
3. It will be recalled that on 16 March 2022, in agreement with the Parliamentary Assembly, the Committee decided to exclude the Russian Federation from the Council of Europe as a result of its aggression against Ukraine, "*such aggression being in flagrant contradiction with the ideals and principles which are the common heritage of member States of the Council of Europe and in violation of international law*".³
4. Now that the exclusion of the Russian Federation has been completed, the Committee shares the Parliamentary Assembly's view that the Council of Europe must continue to commit itself fully to dealing with the consequences of the Russian Federation's continued aggression against Ukraine, particularly with regard to the assistance to be provided for Ukraine, co-operation with its civil society and the possibility of holding a 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government.
5. With regard to assistance for Ukraine, the Committee would point out that at its 132nd Ministerial Session (19-20 May 2022, Turin), it adopted the "Priority adjustments to the Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine 2018-2022", which appear in document [CM\(2022\)89-final](#) and broadly equate with the areas of activity identified by the Assembly.
6. The document contains an initial series of measures intended to provide support for the authorities in addressing the consequences of Russia's attack in terms of human rights and displacement. The main aims are to support the protection services and legal professionals helping displaced persons, to implement the

1. Adopted at the 1444th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies (27 September 2022).

2. Examples of forced «Russification» in the field of education include: Russian curricula introduced into educational institutions; local teachers forced to teach in Russian language; teachers exported from the Russian Federation and parents obliged to transfer their children to Russian schools.

3. See [CM/Del/Dec\(2022\)132/2](#).



European Convention on Human Rights, to document human rights violations, to protect the rights of children affected by armed conflict, to combat violence against women in Ukraine and displaced women and, lastly, to protect vulnerable groups, including Roma, and prevent discrimination.

7. The second set of measures is designed to strengthen good democratic governance and public administration in Ukraine in times of war. The third seeks to facilitate implementation of participatory youth policies to take into account the specific needs of young people in times of war. The fourth centres on support for the Ukrainian media community in the current circumstances. The fifth includes activities to support the Central Electoral Commission, particularly the functioning, maintenance, technical support and hosting of the CEC online platform “CEC: Prosvita”.

8. Lastly, the sixth and final set of measures focuses on support for the functioning of the judiciary (ordinary courts, Supreme Court, judicial self-governing bodies, National School of Judges) and enforcement in time of war.

9. On 1 June 2022, the Ministers’ Deputies instructed the Secretariat to implement the priority adjustments and report back in due course to their Rapporteur Group on Democracy (GR-DEM). They also invited member and observer States to make voluntary contributions in order to supplement the budget currently available for these priority adjustments.⁴ In addition, a Resilience, Recovery and Reconstruction Package capable of meeting the Ukrainian population’s needs and its authorities’ concerns is currently being prepared and will be proposed to the authorities as a contribution to Ukraine’s recovery and development process in full compliance with Council of Europe standards and the Copenhagen criteria.

10. The Committee takes note of the recommendation to consider appointing a special representative on the consequences of the aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine. It will continue to deal effectively with the consequences of the aggression collectively and points out that, since 2 March 2022, an item on “Consequences of the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine” is included on the agenda of every Deputies’ meeting.⁵

11. As to relations with civil society in Belarus and the Russian Federation, at the Ministerial Session in Turin, the Committee considered that “*civil society plays a vital role in achieving the aims pursued by the Council of Europe and in the development of democracy, human rights and the rule of law in Europe, including in the Russian Federation and in Belarus*”.² Furthermore, in Resolution [CM/Res\(2022\)3](#) on legal and financial consequences of the cessation of membership of the Russian Federation in the Council of Europe, the Committee of Ministers noted, like the Parliamentary Assembly in its [Opinion No. 300](#), that “the Council of Europe will take initiatives to support and engage with human rights defenders, democratic forces, free media and independent civil society in the Russian Federation”.

12. On 1 June 2022, the Deputies instructed the GR-DEM to report back at the latest at their 1445th meeting (5 October 2022) on “how to pursue and enhance the Council of Europe’s relations with the Russian and Belarusian civil society, including the Belarusian opposition in exile, paying particular attention to youth, independent media and human rights defenders”.

13. With regard specifically to Belarus, on 6 July 2022, the Ministers’ Deputies exchanged views with Ms Tsikhanouskaya, leader of the Belarusian opposition, who presented proposals for co-operation between the Council of Europe and the democratic forces and civil society of Belarus. This exchange provided material for a debate already launched by the Deputies. On 21 June 2022, Mr Simon Coveney, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Defence of Ireland and Chair of the Committee of Ministers, had taken part in the high-level panel discussion in the Parliamentary Assembly Hemicycle on “Upholding democratic security in Europe” along with Mr Pekka Haavisto, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Ms Marija Pejčinović Burić, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, and Ms Tsikhanouskaya.

14. The Committee also points out that the High-Level Reflection Group set up by the Secretary General following the decisions adopted by the Committee of Ministers in Turin (see below) will also look into the best way of strengthening co-operation with civil society in the Russian Federation and Belarus.

15. In Turin, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs instructed their Deputies to consider “*the desirability of a 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe*”. On 1 June 2022, the Deputies agreed to resume discussion of this matter promptly, in the light of the report of the High-level Reflection Group set up by the Secretary General at the Committee’s request to consider the Council of Europe’s responses to new realities and challenges.

4. [CM/Del/Dec\(2022\)1435/1.6](#).

5. [CM/Del/Dec\(2022\)1427/2.5](#).

16. The High-Level Reflection Group began this work at the end of June and will start reporting back to the Ministers' Deputies "*at the earliest possible opportunity and no later than the handover meeting between the Irish and Icelandic Chairmanships*".²

17. The Committee is deeply committed to co-operation and interinstitutional dialogue with the Parliamentary Assembly, particularly in the context of a 4th Summit, and welcomes the fact that the Assembly has recently set up a special committee to contribute to its preparation. For its part, on 13 July 2022, the Committee decided to set up an Ad hoc Working Party open to all member and observer States to reflect on the organisational and other arrangements for a possible 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe. In the context of its overall reflection on the subject, the Committee will shortly consider whether, as the Assembly wishes, the Summit could focus in particular on promoting democratic security, ways of curbing the backsliding of democracy, revitalising democracy and stimulating citizen involvement, and the establishment of early warning mechanisms to deal with threats to the rule of law, democratic standards and human rights protection.