



**Doc. 16311**

19 December 2025

## Supporting the commitment to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace for Ukraine and the security of the European continent

### Report<sup>1</sup>

Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy

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1. Bureau decision, Reference 4755 of 23 June 2023.



## A. Draft resolution<sup>2</sup>

1. The Parliamentary Assembly welcomes diplomatic efforts deployed by the United States, Ukraine and its allies to end Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, which since 24 February 2022 took the form of an illegal, unprovoked and unjustified full-scale military invasion. As this war of aggression enters its fourth year, the Assembly renews its call for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace, which is essential for the security and stability of Ukraine and the entire European continent. The Assembly considers that the outcome of the war of aggression against Ukraine will have a significant impact on the future of European security and stresses that the security of Ukraine is indivisible from that of Europe.

2. The Assembly deplores Russia's refusal to agree to an immediate ceasefire as a prerequisite for genuine negotiations, and the escalation of its war of aggression against Ukraine, by committing ever more war crimes and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. Russia is intensifying its drone and missile attacks on civilian infrastructures, including massive strikes on Kyiv, Dnipro and Kharkiv, resulting in numerous civilian casualties. As winter sets in, Russia is relentlessly targeting the country's critical infrastructure and energy networks in an attempt to undermine the population's exceptional resilience. Russia is also endangering the nuclear security of Ukraine and the continent by occupying and militarising the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant.

3. The Assembly condemns the countless crimes and violations of international law committed by Russia, notably its systematic policies of forcibly transferring and deporting civilians, including children, from the temporarily occupied Ukrainian territory, as well as its co-ordinated operations to empty this territory of its Ukrainian population, denounced in a report by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine to the United Nations General Assembly, which explicitly refers to these acts as "crimes against humanity". The Assembly also condemns the indoctrination of young people, the militarisation of children in camps, the deliberate destruction of Ukrainian identity and the widespread torture of Ukrainian prisoners of war and civilians.

4. Furthermore, the Assembly is deeply concerned by the intensification of Russian provocations and threats on the European continent, such as violations of the airspace of other European States, the organisation of sabotage and the deployment of its hybrid warfare in Europe. This escalation demands an unwavering commitment to ensuring the security of the European continent.

5. The Assembly reaffirms its unwavering commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders, including its territorial waters, and to Ukraine's European future, as well as its commitment to peace and democratic security in Europe. It reaffirms its solidarity with the Ukrainian people, pays tribute to their courage and resilience, and calls for the immediate return of prisoners of war, illegally detained civilians, and forcibly transferred and deported children, as well as the safe return of forcibly displaced persons.

6. While the security threats facing Europe are unprecedented since 1945, the Assembly acknowledges the evolution of the transatlantic relationship between Europe and the United States, prompting the European continent to mobilise in support of Ukraine and to ensure its own security and resilience. The Assembly considers it essential that the Council of Europe member States and their allies, notably the United States, join forces in the face of the threats posed by Russia to Europe and the global security.

7. The Assembly welcomes the unprecedented initiatives taken by Europeans and their allies to strengthen European defence and security, in particular the "Coalition of the Willing", as well as those to support Ukraine in holding Russia accountable. It also welcomes initiatives to uphold European democracies, such as the New Democratic Pact for Europe launched by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, which aims to strengthen democratic security within the member States of the Organisation.

8. The Assembly believes that the European security architecture must be swiftly adjusted and reinforced, particularly to support Ukraine and counter the hybrid warfare deployed by Russia. It believes that this architecture must be based on a strong bond of trust with the United States and its allies, as well as on a European defence and security system and that it must also fully integrate democratic security, embodied on the continent primarily by the Council of Europe.

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2. Draft resolution unanimously adopted by the committee on 10 December 2025.

9. In light of these considerations, regarding peace negotiations and any possible agreement aimed at ending hostilities, the Assembly, referring to its relevant resolutions, urges Council of Europe member and observer States, as well as the European institutions and relevant international partners, to:

9.1. develop unwavering European commitment and greater unity beyond Europe, including with the United States, in support of Ukraine and a comprehensive, just and lasting peace, which is indispensable for the security and stability of the entire European continent, where the aggressor is not rewarded but held accountable for its crimes;

9.2. increase their support for Ukraine, including political, economic and military support, to strengthen Ukraine's position in peace negotiations and to defend regional security and European values;

9.3. demand an immediate and complete ceasefire as a precondition for genuine negotiations, because Ukraine must not be forced to negotiate under bombardment, and to prevent Russia from resuming fighting at a later date;

9.4. ensure that any negotiations aimed at ending hostilities involve Ukraine and its European allies, and respect Ukraine's right to determine its own future, including its sovereign right to continue integration into the European Union and its membership of other international organisations, as Ukraine has the sovereign right to choose its own security arrangements;

9.5. ensure that these negotiations include the necessary effective legally binding security guarantees for Ukraine and all of Europe, in order to prevent any future aggression by Russia, and to support ongoing European efforts to provide part of such security guarantees, while emphasising the United States' indispensable role in these efforts;

9.6. recognise that Ukraine's accession process to the European Union constitutes a security guarantee and an important contribution to the European security architecture;

9.7. oppose any enforcement of territorial concessions on Ukraine that are contrary to the principles of international law and the interests of peace, and reject any recognition of the temporarily occupied territory of Ukraine as Russian, which would legitimise a change of borders by force;

9.8. ensure that humanitarian issues – in particular the exchange of prisoners of war and release of illegally detained civilians, the return of forcibly transferred and deported children and displaced persons – are included in any negotiation process and agreement. The Assembly stresses the importance of their full and rapid return and, pending such agreements, recalls its [Resolution 2606 \(2025\)](#) “Support for political negotiations to enforce exchange and release of prisoners of war”. The Assembly also calls for recognition that a comprehensive, just and lasting peace should also be anchored in the international human rights framework, as specified by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights;

9.9. ensure that monitoring of the implementation of future peace agreements, involving the United States and European allies, is provided for in those agreements;

9.10. ensure that sanctions against Russia are lifted only gradually and conditional upon compliance with international law and any peace agreements, when Russia's war of aggression stops and a comprehensive, just and lasting peace is restored;

9.11. ensure that any peace negotiations and agreements provide for the necessary funds for accountability mechanisms and the reconstruction of Ukraine, including through the use of frozen Russian sovereign assets where appropriate.

10. Furthermore, with a view to supporting the commitment to the security of the continent, the Assembly, referring to its [Resolution 2622 \(2025\)](#) “Russia: new threats to European democracies” calls on the member States of the Council of Europe, as well as the European institutions and relevant international partners to:

10.1. strengthen and adapt the European security architecture, as well as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) strategies, to the needs of Ukraine and new threats, and to strengthen nuclear security in Europe and support for the International Atomic Energy Agency;

10.2. support the States most exposed to Russian military or hybrid threats, particularly those near Russia, Ukraine or the Baltic Sea, and provide the European security architecture with an adaptable and flexible multilateral geographical framework that enables contributing States to work together effectively, regardless of whether they belong to the European Union or other organisations, while ensuring the cohesion of the European continent;

10.3. develop a comprehensive security approach that fully integrates democratic security, recognising that only such an approach, which also respects international law, can protect European democracies, their institutions and their values in the face of the continent's growing militarisation, as highlighted by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe.

11. With regard to Russia's accountability, the Assembly welcomes the unique role of the Council of Europe, in particular through the European Court of Human Rights, the Register of Damage Caused by the Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, and the work to establish the International Claims Commission for Ukraine and the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine. The Assembly, referring to its relevant resolutions and opinions, calls on Council of Europe member and observer States, and like-minded States, to:

11.1. expedite the establishment of a comprehensive accountability system, in particular by signing and ratifying without delay the future Convention establishing an International Claims Commission for Ukraine, and by intensifying efforts to establish the third component of the international compensation mechanism, namely an international compensation fund, which could be funded by repurposing and transferring frozen Russian sovereign assets where appropriate;

11.2. following the landmark signing of the agreement between the Council of Europe and Ukraine on the establishment of the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine on 25 June 2025, work without delay towards the establishment of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on the Management Committee of the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine, to join it as soon as possible, in accordance with their national procedures, to ensure its viability, including in budgetary terms, and to conclude co-operation agreements with the future Special Tribunal;

11.3. strengthen accountability mechanisms for all war crimes and violations of international law by Russia, and, in particular, to take the necessary measures to ensure accountability for deliberate and systematic attempts to erase Ukrainian cultural identity;

11.4. increase diplomatic and economic pressure on Russia, until Russia stops its war of aggression and until a comprehensive, just and lasting peace is restored, in accordance with [Resolution 2622 \(2025\)](#) "Russia: new threats to European democracies", in particular by reinforcing the current European and American sanctions regime against Russia, its allies and their political and military leaderships, in particular measures against violations of the airspace of sovereign States, violations of maritime sovereignty and measures against the Russian shadow fleet.

12. With regard to the resilience, reconstruction and democratic security of Ukraine, the Assembly commends Ukraine for its achievements in implementing the Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine "Resilience, Recovery and Reconstruction" 2023-2026, and for the progress it has made in the accession process to the European Union, despite the immense challenges posed by Russia's illegal, unprovoked and unjustified full-scale military invasion. It invites Council of Europe member and observer States as well as relevant European institutions and international partners to:

12.1. strengthen support to Ukraine's democratic resilience, including its capacity to effectively protect human rights, the rule of law, and democracy, and more particularly parliamentary, local and regional democracy, as well as its capacity to effectively combat corruption, which is essential in the context of its accession process to the European Union;

12.2. support Ukraine's accession to the European Union, recognising that the integration process provides a strong incentive to pursue relevant reforms and a guarantee of security.

## B. Explanatory memorandum by Mr Piero Fassino, rapporteur<sup>3</sup>

### 1. Introduction

1. For more than a decade, Ukraine has courageously defended itself against Russian aggression, which began in 2014 with the occupation of Crimea and escalated into an illegal and unjustified full-scale military invasion on 24 February 2022. Russia's aggression has changed the face of Europe. The consequences of this war, now entering its fourth year, are manifold and far-reaching, above all for Ukraine, but also for European security.
2. The 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe, held in Reykjavik on 16 and 17 May 2023, was an expression of unity in support of Ukraine and of Russia's accountability. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has spoken out on several occasions on the political and legal consequences of the war of aggression since 2022<sup>4</sup> and on the need for a just and lasting peace.<sup>5</sup>
3. The year 2025 marked a turning point for Europeans, notably with the intensification of the war of aggression in Ukraine, the proliferation of Russian threats on the European continent and a redefinition of the transatlantic alliance embodied by the Trump presidency.
4. Russia responded to the diplomatic efforts to end hostilities by stepping up its attacks and atrocities in Ukraine and violating the airspace of other European States. In addition, it has intensified its hybrid warfare in Europe, orchestrated sabotage, and developed alliances with States that want to establish a new international order, notably China.<sup>6</sup>
5. As Russia's attacks on Ukraine rage on and its threats to European security multiply, the transatlantic relationship between Europe and the United States has evolved, prompting the European continent to mobilise in support of Ukraine and to ensure its own security and resilience.
6. In order to defend peace and security in Europe, it is essential that the member States of the Council of Europe and their allies, notably the United States, fully understand the ongoing geopolitical upheavals. They must present a united and lasting front against Russia and its allies, primarily to bolster support for Ukraine, as the outcome of the war will have a significant impact on the future of European security. The security of Ukraine and Europe are becoming inextricably linked. In this rapidly changing geopolitical context, European States and the United States must intensify their efforts to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace.
7. The report therefore focuses on the recent geopolitical developments and the major challenges posed by the full-scale war of aggression, to Ukraine and Europe as a whole. It also outlines the main areas of support for Ukraine, particularly in terms of accountability mechanisms. This report is based in particular on my visit to Kyiv on 21-23 July 2025, for which I am very grateful to the Ukrainian authorities, in particular the Ukrainian delegation to the Assembly, the team of the Council of Europe Office in Kyiv and the other interlocutors I met.
8. During this visit, I was able to see the damage caused by some of the drone attacks on Kyiv. I would like to reaffirm my support for Ukraine and my solidarity with the Ukrainian people. International interlocutors have warned that the situation could become alarming for Ukraine if Russia further intensifies the number of missile and drone attacks at the current rate. Additional, multifaceted support is therefore urgently needed.

### 2. Geopolitical developments

#### 2.1. 2022-2024

9. On 24 February 2022, Russia launched its full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine. At an extraordinary plenary session on 14 and 15 March 2022, the Assembly unanimously adopted a historic [opinion](#) recommending that Russia be asked to “withdraw immediately from the Council of Europe”. One day

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3. The explanatory memorandum is drawn up under the responsibility of the rapporteur. Its original French version was translated into English by a machine translation tool.

4. See the numerous texts adopted by the Assembly: [War of aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine: special page](#).

5. *Idem*.

6. See [Resolution 2622 \(2025\)](#) “Russia: new threats to European democracies”.

later, on 16 March, the Committee of Ministers [decided](#) to expel Russia from the Organisation, thus ending its 26 years of membership. A few months later, the Ukrainian President addressed the Assembly, emphasising the “power of dialogue” in a “united and strong Europe”.

10. Russia was also suspended from certain institutions and groups of States, notably the United Nations Human Rights Council on 7 April 2022. It had already been excluded from the G8 (renamed since as the G7) in 2014 following its annexation of Crimea.

11. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has been condemned by the Council of Europe and the European Union (EU), and their member States, and the United States, among others. This condemnation has been enshrined in several resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly.

12. On the European continent, the Reykjavik Declaration expresses full support for the principles of a just and lasting peace, as set out in President Zelensky's peace formula. Major work has been undertaken to establish accountability mechanisms and combat impunity in the context of Russia's aggression, notably through establishing a comprehensive international compensation mechanism and within the Core Group on the Establishment of a Special Tribunal to prosecute Russian and Belarusian leaders for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine. The Register of Damage Caused by the Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, Enlarged Partial Agreement of the Council of Europe, and first element of the international compensation mechanism, was established with the support of the United States, which became an associate member on 16 May 2023 alongside Canada, Japan and the EU (which became a full member on 22 July 2024).

13. Diplomatic initiatives have also been developed. The most significant of these was the Bürgenstock Summit on Peace in Ukraine, organised by Switzerland on 15 and 16 June 2024. This event was attended by representatives from the United States and was based on President Zelensky's peace formula. In its joint communiqué, there are several key priorities for achieving comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine: nuclear safety and security, food security and the human dimension. The follow-up conference, held in Montreal in October 2024, defined concrete measures to support the return of prisoners of war, illegally detained civilians and deported children.

14. The United States and European countries, in particular, have taken economic and diplomatic measures and imposed sanctions on the Russian regime, its allies and their political and military leaders in order to weaken the Russian economy and limit its ability to continue the conflict.

15. On the other hand, Russia's war of aggression, carried out with the participation of Mr Lukashenko's regime in Belarus, has led to both regimes hardening their stance. This has been condemned by the United States and Europe. As an accomplice in the war of aggression against Ukraine, Belarus has also reportedly strengthened its military alliance with Russia by hosting tactical nuclear weapons on its territory. The Council of Europe, and in particular the Assembly, have severed all relations with the authorities of both countries while developing their support for Belarusian<sup>7</sup> and Russian<sup>8</sup> democratic forces.

## **2.2. The internationalisation of the war**

16. The end of 2024 was marked by the arrival of North Korean soldiers and the acceleration of the hybrid war in Europe, led by Russia and actors likely linked to Russia and China. These developments signalled a new escalation and the internationalisation of the war. In January 2025, in its [Resolution 2588 \(2025\)](#) “European commitment to a just and lasting peace in Ukraine”,<sup>9</sup> the Assembly noted that Russia had “strengthened its military co-operation with States seeking to undermine the international rules-based order, notably through agreements with Iran and the deployment of soldiers of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (“North Korea”) in this war of aggression”. The war of aggression has brought Russia closer to China, North Korea and Iran in certain military and/or economic respects.

17. In October 2024, in response to developments in the conflict and based on its peace formula, the Ukrainian presidency emphasised the importance of “peace through strength”. President Zelensky reiterated the need for a just and lasting peace in Ukraine, emphasising that any peace agreement must be negotiated with Ukraine and that any concessions must be acceptable to Ukraine. In particular, he called for Ukraine to be given sufficient security guarantees.

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7. [Resolution 2530 \(2024\)](#) “A democratic future for Belarus”.

8. [Resolution 2621 \(2025\)](#) “Russian democratic forces”.

9. [Resolution 2588 \(2025\)](#) “European commitment to a just and lasting peace in Ukraine”.

18. At the end of 2024, European leaders echoed his concerns that a hasty peace initiative, decided without Ukraine, could be detrimental to both Ukraine and European security. A peace that did not offer Ukraine sufficient security guarantees could be a pause before a wider war and pave the way for instability in Europe and beyond, as it would give Russia more time to strengthen its economy and military forces. It was also pointed out that Vladimir Putin would seek to hinder Ukraine's reconstruction and its European path, in particular through disinformation, the delegitimisation of the Ukrainian authorities and interference campaigns aimed at promoting the establishment of a pro-Russian regime.

### **2.3. The turning point of 2025**

19. President Trump, who took office on 20 January 2025, and his administration marked a turning point in US foreign policy, particularly in its relations with its European allies. This evolution was illustrated by the US positions expressed at the Munich Security Conference held on 14-16 February 2025 and then, among other things, by the US vote, alongside Russia and its allies, against a UN General Assembly resolution on 24 February 2025 condemning the aggression and calling for a comprehensive, fair and lasting peace. In Munich, US representatives emphasised the need for Europe to take on a greater share of the burden of aid to Ukraine and European defence and security.

20. Subsequently, in February 2025, the US administration began a process of bilateral negotiations. This process was symbolised by the telephone conversation between Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin on 18 March 2025, which re-established official US-Russian dialogue at the highest level, by the bilateral meeting in Alaska on 15 August 2025, by the peace plan unveiled at the end of November 2025 and the negotiations that followed (see below). The American bilateral exchanges were accompanied by intense diplomatic activity in Europe aimed at strengthening support for Ukraine and offering security guarantees. They sparked a surge of activity aimed at strengthening European security and developing a new defence policy (see below). The presence of European leaders alongside the Ukrainian President also symbolically signified Ukraine's membership of the European family and the irreversibility of its future accession to the EU. Negotiations between Ukrainians and Russians, held in Istanbul in July 2025, also led to a significant exchange of prisoners of war.

### **2.4. End of 2025: what outcome for the new negotiations?**

21. At the end of November 2025, the Ukrainian authorities received a draft peace plan from the Americans, which was reportedly the result of discussions between the Americans and Russians. European leaders immediately expressed their reservations about the initial approach of the plan, which they considered too close to the Russian position and which, in effect, would deny Ukraine's existence as a sovereign State. Ukraine and its allies, notably in Geneva on 23 November 2025, then amended the plan. To date, it has not been accepted by Russia.

22. Following the meeting of the "Coalition of the Willing" held with the Americans on 25 November 2025, the Coalition's Chairs<sup>10</sup> reiterated their support for President Trump's efforts to end the war and stressed that any solution must fully involve Ukraine, preserve its sovereignty, and guarantee Ukraine's long-term security. The leaders welcomed assurances that issues relating to European and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) interests would be addressed separately, with the full participation of European partners and NATO allies. They stressed that a swift decision on securing long-term financing for Ukraine, including through the use of the full value of frozen Russian sovereign assets, would be essential. They also emphasised that a just and lasting peace will need to be based on robust and credible security guarantees for Ukraine, in order to deter any future aggression.

23. On 27 November 2025, the European Parliament adopted a [Resolution](#) on the "EU position on the proposed plan and EU engagement towards a just and lasting peace for Ukraine". The resolution calls on the EU and its member States to assume more responsibility for European security and to support efforts towards a just and lasting peace in Ukraine. It stresses that any lasting peace must be preceded by a ceasefire and be underpinned by robust EU and US security guarantees to Ukraine. The Parliament also recalls its position that the temporarily occupied Ukrainian territory will not be legally recognised by the EU and its member States as Russian territory. It further stresses that any peace agreement must guarantee Russia's full accountability under international law for the crime of aggression and the war crimes committed by Russia and its allies. During the debate, on behalf of the Council of the EU, Denmark's Minister for European Affairs, Marie Bjerre,

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10. "Chairs' statement following 25 November Coalition of the Willing Leaders' meeting" | Élysée.

reaffirmed that “peace must be comprehensive, just and lasting” and fully respect Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. For her part, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen presented [five priorities](#) for the EU in this context:

- Any agreement should deliver a just and lasting peace and ensure real security for Ukraine and Europe.
- Ukraine's sovereignty must be upheld. Russia sees “our continent in terms of spheres of influence. So we need to be clear that there cannot be unilateral carving up of a sovereign European nation. [...] Ukraine's future lies in the European Union”.
- The EU has committed to covering Ukraine's financial needs for 2026 and 2027. “This includes an option on immobilised Russian assets.”
- “Nothing about Ukraine without Ukraine. Nothing about Europe without Europe. Nothing about NATO without NATO.”
- “The return of each and every Ukrainian child abducted by Russia.”

24. To date, the territorial issue remains at the heart of the diplomatic knot. Russia's claims on the territory of Ukraine, a sovereign State, are contrary to international law and the interests of a just and lasting peace. Credible security guarantees for Ukraine are equally crucial to the interests of peace in Ukraine and to the security of the European continent.

### **2.5. Increasing Russian provocations and threats in Europe**

25. Not only has Russia intensified its attacks on Ukraine (see below), but it has also stepped up its provocations and threats in Europe. It is responsible for incursions into the airspace of Council of Europe member States by unidentified drones and Russian military aircraft. In September 2025, Estonia, Poland and Romania recorded intentional and unacceptable violations of their airspace, leading Estonia and Poland to request consultations under Article 4 of the North Atlantic Treaty. Drone activity near sensitive infrastructure and military sites in Danish and German airspace also disrupted civil aviation, leading in particular to the temporary closure of airports in Denmark. Since then, other drone incursions have also been reported, including by Belgium. Several other Council of Europe member States, including Lithuania, Latvia and Finland, have reported similar incursions or overflights by unidentified drones, demonstrating the scale of the phenomenon in Europe. On 25 November 2025, a Russian drone crashed in the Republic of Moldova and others violated Moldovan airspace. These deliberate provocations form part of a broader strategy aimed at testing Europe's commitment to supporting Ukraine, Europe's internal cohesion, its response capacity and the strength of Euro-Atlantic relations. They recklessly increase the risk of an escalation of military operations in Europe. If left unanswered, these airspace violations risk normalising Russia's deliberate provocations and undermining collective security throughout Europe. The Russian ghost fleet also poses a worrying threat to European security, as its clandestine activities contribute to escalating maritime tensions and ecological risks.

26. Furthermore, as highlighted by the Assembly in its [Resolution 2622 \(2025\)](#) "Russia: new threats to European democracies", Russia has intensified its hybrid warfare – combining hard and soft power – through sophisticated cyber-attacks, intelligence operations, co-ordinated disinformation campaigns and hybrid attacks on European electoral processes.

27. As long as Russia continues to seek to impose its will through military force and hybrid warfare, European States and the United States must maintain diplomatic and economic pressure on Russia. The Assembly must continue to call on member States to reinforce the current sanctions regime against Russia and its allies, as well as their political and military leaderships. Furthermore, the Assembly must encourage member States to isolate Russia diplomatically by co-ordinating efforts to rally global partners in defence of international law and exclude Moscow from key forums, including sporting events, which Russia uses extensively to project its influence.<sup>11</sup>

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11. See [Resolution 2557 \(2024\)](#) “The role of sanctions in countering the Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine”; [Resolution 2588 \(2025\)](#) “European commitment to a just and lasting peace in Ukraine”; [Resolution 2622 \(2025\)](#) “Russia: new threats to European democracies”; [Resolution 2507 \(2023\)](#) “War of aggression against Ukraine – Participation of Russian and Belarusian athletes in the Paris 2024 Olympics and Paralympics?”.

### 3. Ukraine's resilience in the face of countless Russian crimes and threats

#### 3.1. Overview of challenges

28. The challenges posed by the war of aggression are manifold. Even today, Russia continues to commit ever more war crimes and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. It is carrying out relentless drone and missile attacks on civilian infrastructures, including in Kyiv, as in many other cities such as Dnipro, Kharkiv, and Ternopil, causing widespread destruction, death, and suffering to the civilian population, and destroying schools, residential buildings, and damaging diplomatic buildings. As winter sets in, Russia is also relentlessly targeting the country's critical infrastructure and energy networks, as well as the railway network, in an attempt to undermine the remarkable resilience of the population.

29. Furthermore, a report by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine<sup>12</sup> denounces systematic Russian policies aimed at the forced transfer and deportation of civilians, including children, from temporarily occupied Ukrainian territory. It provides evidence of co-ordinated operations to empty this territory of its Ukrainian population and explicitly refers to these acts as "crimes against humanity". The report also mentions the indoctrination of young people, the militarisation of children in occupation camps and the deliberate destruction of Ukrainian identity, as well as widespread cases of torture inflicted on Ukrainian prisoners of war and civilians. Additionally, in the territory temporarily occupied by Russia, priests and religious representatives have been arrested and churches closed.

30. Beyond the slow advance of Russian troops in the east of the country, which endangers logistical hubs and increases pressure on Ukrainian defences, Russia is threatening the nuclear security of Ukraine and the continent. This is particularly evident in the occupation and militarisation of the Zaporizhzhia power plant site, as well as the intermittent cutting off of the Ukrainian grid. The International Atomic Energy Agency has called for the plant not to be reconnected to the Russian grid and for the reactors not to be restarted while hostilities continue. It is also calling for the site to be returned to its rightful owner, Ukraine.<sup>13</sup> This situation exacerbates Ukraine's energy vulnerability and the potential threat to nuclear security in Europe, as winter approaches and energy infrastructure remains a major target.

31. In this context, the authorities must deploy the necessary human and financial resources for the war, while also avoiding war fatigue among the population and in European public opinion. The financing of the war and reconstruction is at the heart of discussions among European leaders, particularly the question of how to use frozen Russian sovereign assets, given that the cost of the war should be borne by the aggressor.

32. The humanitarian aspect of the war – in particular the issues of prisoners of war, Ukrainian children and other civilians illegally deported and transferred to Russia and Belarus, and war veterans – also remains a hallmark of this full-scale war of aggression and a major political challenge for the Ukrainian authorities, who must manage its short- and long-term consequences.

33. Ukraine must also deal with Russia's attempts to discredit its President and with Russian propaganda, and in particular, combat Russia's vision of "spheres of influence" in Europe. The risks associated with Russian disinformation campaigns are regularly raised. It has been argued that an unfair peace could provoke a political crisis in Ukraine, favouring Russian disinformation and a pro-Russian candidate. Therefore, it is vital that European leaders stand alongside Ukraine to counter such a scenario. In this context, the role of the Russian Orthodox Church as a major propaganda tool for Russia is also widely recognised.

34. With regard to the elections, during my visit it was pointed out that the Ukrainian Constitution and electoral law prohibit national elections from being held while martial law is in force, which has been the case since the Russian aggression in February 2022. Nevertheless, parliament is working on a special bill to regulate post-war elections, with the support of the Council of Europe, in particular its Assembly and the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission).

35. The heated controversies surrounding anti-corruption legislation in July 2025 served as a reminder of the importance of the authorities' unwavering commitment to fighting corruption, crucial for Ukraine's ongoing European integration. The controversies also highlighted the existence of a dynamic civil society fighting for its democratic future. The European Commission stressed that "Ukraine should advance its anti-corruption

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12. Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine to the United Nations General Assembly (A/80/497), October 2025; see also [Ukraine | OHCHR](#).

13. [www.iaea.org/search/google?keys=ukraine](http://www.iaea.org/search/google?keys=ukraine).

framework and prevent any backsliding on its notable reform achievements".<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, there has been criticism in the country denouncing the hyper-presidentialisation and hyper-centralisation of power, to the detriment of parliamentary democracy as well as local and regional governance.

36. Nevertheless, Ukraine is showing remarkable resilience and continues to make successful progress in developing its democratic security and the EU accession process, despite the immense challenges posed by the full-scale war of aggression, as recognised in the European Commission's enlargement report on Ukraine published on 4 November 2025 (see below).

37. In the context of resilience and democratic security, particular attention will need to be paid to maintaining an environment that respects freedom of expression, ensuring media independence and diversity, while combating massive Russian disinformation. The importance of ensuring the protection of persons belonging to national minorities must also be reiterated, given that these issues are particularly exploited by Russia to further its interference.

38. As the conclusions of the European Conference of Presidents of Parliaments held in Strasbourg in March 2025 emphasised: "Defending Democracy", sums up what Ukraine is doing today. And, for their part, European democracies must continue to fully support Ukraine in its fight against the Russian Federation's aggression. For it is clear: the outcome of this war is bound to shape the future of our continent".<sup>15</sup>

39. Faced with the intensification of Russia's war of aggression, Ukraine, for its part, has intensified its drone attacks on Russian energy infrastructure, particularly with the aim of weakening the Russian war economy. On 23 October 2025, the EU adopted its nineteenth package of sanctions. Meanwhile, the United States imposed heavy sanctions on Russia's two largest oil companies, Rosneft and Lukoil, along with their numerous subsidiaries and several entities in the Russian military-industrial complex.

### **3.2. Ukraine's European Union accession process**

40. Ukraine officially submitted its application to the EU on 28 February 2022. On 17 June 2022, the European Commission recommended that Ukraine be granted candidate status, which was approved by the European Council on 23 June 2022. Ukraine began accession negotiations on 25 June 2024, alongside the Republic of Moldova. Since the start of negotiations, Ukraine has made rapid progress, but the process remains complex and demanding. In March 2025, several European leaders called for Ukraine's accession negotiations to be accelerated, despite the obstacles. On 20 March 2025, 26 Heads of State or government, meeting in the European Council, reaffirmed Ukraine's inalienable right to choose its own destiny, in accordance with the United Nations Charter and international law. They confirmed that the EU would intensify its support for Ukraine's reform efforts on the path to EU membership and emphasised the importance of advancing the negotiation process in line with a merit-based approach, opening chapters when the conditions are met, beginning with the chapter on fundamental principles as soon as possible.

41. Since then, the European Commission's Enlargement Report on Ukraine published on 4 November 2025<sup>16</sup> has recognised Ukraine's exceptional commitment to the path to accession. Despite Russia's ongoing aggression, it stresses that Ukraine remains determined, having already completed the screening process and made progress on key reforms. The Ukrainian Government has indicated its intention to provisionally conclude accession negotiations by the end of 2028. On 4 November 2025, as part of the presentation of the "2025 enlargement package" concerning all membership applications, including those from the Western Balkan countries, Ms Kallas, the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, described the current situation as an opportunity for enlargement, with the realistic prospect of new accessions before 2030. She reaffirmed that the process remained merit-based and stressed that alignment with democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights, which are core values of the EU, was essential for progress.

42. Furthermore, voices within the EU are being raised to criticise the requirement for unanimity among member States at each stage of the process. Ukraine's EU accession process should be supported and recognised as contributing to the stability and security of Ukraine and the continent.

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14. SWD(2025) 759 final, op. cit., p. 6.

15. <https://rm.coe.int/conclusions-of-the-conference-ecpp-2025/1680b4ec71>.

16. SWD(2025) 759 final, op. cit.

## 4. Major challenges for Europe and its security

### 4.1. A new diplomatic mobilisation and European initiatives on security and defence

43. The American shift on security in Europe was illustrated by the statement made by the US representative at the UN Security Council meeting on 11 March 2025: “The United States, as President Trump has made clear, is committed to ending the war and achieving a durable peace. We are counting on Europe and the European Union to help facilitate and underwrite that peace. Once a durable peace has been achieved, it will be more urgent than ever for the EU and its member States, in this forum and others, to play a key role in providing security guarantees. Europe must be strong, resilient and self-sufficient, not just to ensure peace and security in Europe but also to be a true partner in ensuring international peace and security”.<sup>17</sup>

44. The EU was initially excluded from the talks between the United States and Russia, although several European leaders stressed the importance of their participation for lasting peace. European leaders then rallied alongside Ukraine, recalling the role of European States in ensuring the defence and security of the continent.

45. On 12 March 2025, the European Parliament adopted the resolution on “Continuing the unwavering EU support for Ukraine, after three years of Russia’s war of aggression”.<sup>18</sup> It considers that “the European Union and its Member States are now Ukraine’s primary strategic allies”. It also stressed the need for the EU to maintain and strengthen its multidimensional support for Ukraine. This position was reiterated on 27 November 2025 (see above).<sup>19</sup>

46. At recent European summits, European leaders have reaffirmed their strong support for Ukraine and the need for a solid and lasting peace, rejecting any ceasefire that does not guarantee Ukraine’s security. Europeans support Ukrainian sovereignty, maintain their financial and military aid, and demand security guarantees to prevent Russia from resuming the conflict. Co-ordination has been strengthened within a “Coalition of the Willing”, mainly comprising European States, with the aim of ensuring, if necessary, the implementation of a future peace agreement and the stability of the country after the cessation of hostilities. To date, it appears that this coalition of the willing could include countries from Europe, Asia and the Commonwealth, with around 30 countries ready to contribute. The format, governance and support of this coalition are still under discussion, but it plans to deploy a multinational “reassurance” force, once a ceasefire or peace agreement has been reached. A task force will be set up to deepen consultation with the United States on security guarantees. At this stage, Russia still publicly opposes any foreign troop presence in Ukraine, regardless of their mission.

47. The EU and like-minded States<sup>20</sup> have also embarked on unprecedented initiatives to strengthen European defence and security. Since early 2025, significant progress has been made by the 27 member States to accelerate defence work, finance rearmament and pool resources.<sup>21</sup> The EU institutions have reiterated that a “stronger and more resilient European Union” contributes to global and transatlantic security, while remaining complementary to NATO, the pillar of collective defence for the member States concerned.<sup>22</sup>

48. Furthermore, in redefining the European security architecture, European States must also equip themselves with the tools to respond to hybrid warfare and growing Russian interference across the continent.<sup>23</sup> They must also counter the risk of weakening public support for Ukraine.

49. The member States of the Council of Europe, as well as the relevant European institutions and international partners, should strengthen and adapt the European security architecture – up to now based in particular on the NATO and the OSCE – to the needs of Ukraine and to new threats, including her armed confrontations with Russia, provocations and “false flag operations”, and hybrid wars.

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17. [Security Council: Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations \(EU\)](#).

18. [Adopted texts – “European Parliament resolution on continuing the unwavering EU support for Ukraine, after three years of Russia’s war of aggression”, 12 March 2025](#).

19. [Resolution on the “EU position on the proposed plan and EU engagement towards a just and lasting peace for Ukraine”](#).

20. [“Read-out of the online meeting between European Council President António Costa and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen with the leaders of Iceland, Norway, Türkiye and the United Kingdom” – Consilium \(English only\)](#).

21. See in particular the initiative [“Preserving Peace – Defence Readiness Roadmap 2030”](#).

22. [European Council – Consilium](#).

23. See [Resolution 2622 \(2025\) “Russia: new threats to European democracies”](#).

50. They should also develop a comprehensive concept of security, that incorporate “soft” security, i.e. democratic security, as embodied by the Council of Europe, acknowledging that only through a comprehensive approach that respects international law can the European democracies, their institutions and values be protected in the face of the growing militarisation of the European continent, as highlighted by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, it is important that the European security architecture has a flexible and adaptable multilateral geographical framework that allows contributing States work together effectively, regardless of whether they belong to the EU or other organisations, as is the case, for example, in the ad hoc formats of the “Coalition of the Willing” and the “Nordic-Baltic 8” format (NB8).

51. Nevertheless, care should be taken to ensure European cohesion and avoid the formation of new divisions on the continent, particularly “East-West” or “North-South” divisions that would separate States that feel they are “on the front line” from those that feel less directly concerned, knowing that Russia aims notably to weaken this cohesion. States most exposed to Russian threats, whether military or hybrid, particularly those close to Russia, Ukraine or the Baltic Sea, need support. Finally, nuclear security in Europe and support for the International Atomic Energy Agency should also be strengthened.

#### **4.2. The Council of Europe's support for Ukraine**

52. The Council of Europe's support for Ukraine is multidimensional. It was notably presented in the [Secretary General's report](#) “Three years of Russia's war of aggression – Council of Europe action in support of Ukraine”.<sup>25</sup> It is also expressed in the Secretary General's periodic report on the “Human rights situation in the territories of Ukraine temporarily controlled or occupied by the Russian Federation”.<sup>26</sup> The Secretary General also appointed a Special Envoy of Secretary General on the situation of children of Ukraine in February 2025.

53. For its part, the Assembly has continued to support Ukraine through its parliamentary diplomacy and by adopting a series of strong resolutions in support of Ukraine.<sup>27</sup> As a reminder, on 30 January 2025, in its [Resolution 2588 \(2025\)](#) “European commitment to a just and lasting peace in Ukraine”, the Assembly stressed that any peace negotiations must involve Ukraine and respect its right to determine its own future, including its sovereign right to continue its integration into the EU, as well as its membership of other international organisations. In its [Resolution 2605 \(2025\)](#) adopted on 24 June 2025 on “Legal and human rights aspects of the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine”, the Assembly also emphasised the inviolability of borders and the obligation to respect international law, calling for immediate action and accountability for crimes committed. In October 2025, in its [Resolution 2622 \(2025\)](#) “Russia: new threats to European democracies”, it denounced the intensification of the war and the proliferation of Russian threats on the continent. It also issued an [Opinion 308 \(2025\)](#) on the “Draft convention establishing an international claims commission for Ukraine”.

54. Beyond the political support for which the Assembly is a major instrument through parliamentary diplomacy, its support and that of the Council of Europe as a whole are manifested in two main areas: accountability and the Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine.

55. During his visit to the Council of Europe on 25 June 2025 on the occasion of the June part-session of the Assembly, Ukrainian President Zelensky thanked the Assembly for its “true leadership” in its stance against Russian aggression and praised Europe's commitment to justice in a speech to the Assembly immediately after signing an [agreement](#) on the establishment of the [Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine](#), which includes the [Statute](#) of the Special Tribunal. This is an important step towards prosecuting senior Russian officials for starting the war. This legal mechanism will fill a gap, as existing international courts do not have jurisdiction to try the crime of aggression. Adequate co-operation will also need to be organised between the relevant national and international courts.

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24. “Towards Democratic Resilience – The New Democratic Pact for Europe”; and “Advancing democratic resilience in Europe, boosting cooperation to face new challenges were in focus of the Secretary General's visit to Vienna”. See also [Resolution 2622 \(2025\)](#) “Russia: new threats to European democracies”.

25. See also [www.coe.int/fr/web/portal/war-in-ukraine](http://www.coe.int/fr/web/portal/war-in-ukraine).

26. The latest report highlights an alarming increase in human rights violations committed by Russia, the risk of expulsion of Ukrainians after 10 September 2025 and the desire to eradicate Ukrainian identity. The Committee of Ministers' decisions of 9 July: in particular, “express their support for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace for Ukraine through dialogue and diplomatic means”.

27. [War of aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine: special page](#).

#### 4.2.1. Accountability mechanisms within the Council of Europe

56. Accountability is being developed in particular through the European Court of Human Rights, the Register of Damage Caused by the Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, which is already in place and fully operational, the ongoing work on the future International Claims Commission for Ukraine, and the work to establish the Special Tribunal. The Convention establishing the International Claims Commission for Ukraine, which was adopted at the diplomatic conference in The Hague on 15 and 16 December 2025, will need to be implemented quickly to ensure that the victims of the Russian aggression can effectively file their claims. Efforts will also need to be stepped up to establish the third component of the international compensation mechanism, namely an international compensation fund, which could be financed, if relevant, by the reallocation and transfer of frozen Russian sovereign assets.

57. Now that the Agreement on the Special Tribunal has been signed, the interested parties – in particular the member and non-member States of the Council of Europe, as well as the EU, are called to express their intent to join the [Enlarged Partial Agreement](#) on the Management Committee of the Special Tribunal and notify the General Secretary of the Council of Europe about it as Ukraine did in August 2025. The EU has expressed its intention to become a founding member of the Enlarged Partial Agreement.

58. During my visit, the authorities expressed their particular appreciation for the Council of Europe's role in establishing these international mechanisms. They emphasised that strong political support was also required at this stage to ensure the effective establishment of the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine, the Claims Commission, and the provision of effective compensation from frozen Russian sovereign assets. For the Ukrainian Government and the President of Ukraine, legal work on accountability is a key part of the response to Russia's unlawful war of aggression and also a tool for prevention. They stressed that the accountability process must remain separate from any political negotiations and that the Tribunal must be established regardless.

59. My interlocutors highlighted the increasing number of war crimes committed by Russia in Ukraine. They welcomed the decision of the European Court of Human Rights of 9 July 2025 in the [case of Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia](#). The Court found Russia responsible for gross and widespread human rights violations committed in the context of the conflict in Ukraine since 2014 in violation of the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5). The Court also concluded that these violations were not isolated incidents, but part of a co-ordinated and deliberate pattern of conduct attributable to the Russian authorities.<sup>28</sup>

#### 4.2.2. The Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine “Resilience, Recovery and Reconstruction” 2023-2026

60. This action plan<sup>29</sup> contributes to strengthening Ukraine's capacity to effectively defend human rights, the rule of law and democracy, which remains essential for Ukraine's resilience, recovery and reconstruction and for its progress in the EU accession process. In this context, a delegation from the Committee of Ministers visited Ukraine in May 2025 to reiterate its message of support for Ukraine. The delegation returned with a strengthened conviction that Ukrainians are fighting not only to defend their own country but also to safeguard the values embodied by the Council of Europe. The importance of co-operation was emphasised by all those whom the delegation met.<sup>30</sup>

61. The Assembly has also repeatedly stressed the importance of anchoring Ukraine's democratic resilience in order to secure its European future.<sup>31</sup> The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, for his part, stressed in his “Memorandum on human rights elements for peace in Ukraine”, published on 8 July 2025, that “a just, lasting and effective peace can only be achieved by anchoring it in the international human rights framework”<sup>32</sup>.

28. “PACE President welcomes historic ruling by the European Court of Human Rights in Ukraine and Netherlands v. Russia case” – Portal.

29. Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine “Resilience, Recovery and Reconstruction” 2023-2026.

30. CM/Inf(2025)12: Report on the visit of a GR-DEM delegation to Ukraine (20-21 May 2025).

31. War of aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine: special page.

32. Second periodic activity report of the Commissioner for Human Rights for 2025 (covering the period from May to August) in [English](#) and [French](#).

#### 4.2.3. Conference on the Recovery of Ukraine 2025

62. The **Secretary General** of the Council of Europe, Alain Berset, also participated in the **Ukraine Recovery Conference 2025 (URC2025)**,<sup>33</sup> jointly organised by Italy and Ukraine. The 2025 edition focused on the recovery, reconstruction, reform, modernisation and long-term future of Ukraine, with four main themes: mobilising the private sector for reconstruction and economic growth; the human dimension: social recovery and human capital for Ukraine's future; the recovery of municipalities and regions; and EU accession and related reforms. The Secretary General of the Council of Europe spoke on the panel dedicated to strengthening the rule of law through integrity and law enforcement efforts.<sup>34</sup>

## 5. Conclusions

63. As the war of aggression intensifies and the Russian regime steps up its threats against Europe, it is crucial that European leaders, along with those from like-minded countries and international organisations, including the Council of Europe within its mandate, show unity, strengthen and accelerate multidimensional support for Ukraine to ensure its security and European future, as well as the defence and democratic security of the continent. The close interconnection between Ukraine's security and European security must be emphasised. Peace and European security in Europe are at stake in Ukraine.

64. Russia's hitherto inflexible positions on territorial issues, in particular, highlight the challenge of achieving a just and lasting peace. The Ukrainian authorities reiterated that Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty are non-negotiable, that any recognition of temporarily occupied Ukrainian territory as Russian should be rejected, and that a "comprehensive, just and lasting peace" in Ukraine should be supported, in accordance with the United Nations General Assembly Resolution of 23 February 2023 "**Principles of the Charter of the United Nations underlying a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine**". Furthermore, it must be emphasised that negotiations on Ukraine cannot take place without the appropriate involvement of Ukraine, as it is up to Ukraine to decide its own destiny. Similarly, European leaders must be adequately involved in any negotiations affecting European security. European States and the United States must therefore intensify their efforts to seek a comprehensive, just and lasting peace.

65. The consequences of even a partial Russian victory and an unjust peace in Ukraine would be grave and far-reaching for Ukraine, Europe and the world. Such an outcome would reinforce power relations based on force, aggression and interference to the detriment of international law and the multilateral system established after 1945. It could also encourage further aggression and tensions from other countries. The 1938 Munich Agreement, which was deemed unjust, and its devastating consequences in Europe are sometimes cited to illustrate the failure of appeasement policies in the face of wars of aggression.

66. Faced with a multipolar world, increasingly dominated by transactional alliances and multi-alignment, often in defiance of international law, Europe must set an example of agile, determined and effective multilateralism and support an order based on international law.<sup>35</sup> Europe must also equip itself with the necessary means to ensure its security, including its democratic security.

67. In this new context, the Council of Europe, particularly its Assembly, must leverage all its influence to strengthen support for Ukraine and democratic security in Europe. Special attention is also required for accountability mechanisms, the situation of Ukrainian civilians, including children deported by Russia, and prisoners of war. The EU accession process is also fundamental to Ukraine's security, as EU enlargement contributes to the security of new member States and the continent.

68. To this end, the Assembly<sup>36</sup> should:

- support a comprehensive, just and lasting peace and formulate key principles to this end, in particular for any possible agreement aimed at ending hostilities and/or any peace negotiations;
- highlight the dangers of a peace that is neither just nor lasting;

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33. [www.unc-international.com/](http://www.unc-international.com/).

34. The delegation also included the **Commissioner for Human Rights**, Michael O'Flaherty, members of the **Congress of Local and Regional Authorities**, led by its President, Marc Cools, and the **Secretary General's Special Envoy on the situation of children in Ukraine**, Thórdís Kolbrún Reykþjardóttir. The **Council of Europe Development Bank**, represented by its Governor, **Carlo Monticelli**, also participated.

35. See **Resolution 2581 (2025)** "The need for a renewed rules-based international order".

36. If relevant, I intend to present to the committee, during the January 2026 part-session, an addendum that will take into account any new developments that may arise following the approval of this report, in order to provide the Assembly with additional information during the debate.

- take into account the link between Ukraine's security and the security and stability of the continent;
- call for the urgent strengthening and adaptation of the European security architecture in response to the new Russian threats, while including democratic security;
- call for the strengthening of multidimensional support for Ukraine;
- emphasise the need to complete the process of establishment of the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine as soon as possible for holding Russia accountable and to increase diplomatic and economic pressure on Russia;
- recognise the importance of supporting Ukraine's resilience and reconstruction, particularly through its accession to the EU, to guarantee its security.