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UKRAINE

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR MAKSYM KONONENKO
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF UKRAINE TO THE OPCW
AT THE NINETY-NINTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
IN EXERCISE OF THE RIGHT OF REPLY**

Mr Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

The full-scale military aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine using all available conventional means of army, navy, and air force creates a direct threat to nuclear and chemical facilities and installations in Ukraine, and challenges with regard to the security and well-being of the entire European continent and beyond. This aggression is aimed at the total elimination of all Ukrainians, and the destruction of the whole State of Ukraine and democratic order all over the world.

Ukraine strongly condemns the shelling and seizure of the Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant (NPP) site in the town of Enerгодар by the occupying armed forces of the Russian Federation. As a result of the shelling on the territory of the nuclear power plant, a fire broke out, killing and injuring several people. The fire has now been extinguished. The Zaporizhzhya NPP site as well as the Chernobyl NPP are currently under the control of Russian armed forces.

In addition to the six power units at the Zaporizhzhya NPP, there is a storage facility for spent nuclear fuel on site. Any damage to this facility can also lead to nuclear radiation release. As a result, a nuclear disaster of this scale may exceed all previous accidents at nuclear power plants, including Chernobyl and the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant disasters.

Russia has consciously undertaken an armed attack on the nuclear power site, an action that violated all international agreements within the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), in particular the IAEA Charter, the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management, the Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident, the Convention on Nuclear Safety, and the Convention on Assistance in the Case of a Nuclear Accident or Radiological Emergency. The shelling of the Zaporizhzhya NPP is also a gross violation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism.

Russian occupation forces tortured the operating staff of the Zaporizhzhya NPP. According to our information, occupiers compelled the Plant's management to record an address that they plan to use for propaganda purposes.



Russia's propaganda machine aims to create another fake incident for its citizens and international community in an attempt to justify its crimes.

Operating staff of the Zaporizhzhya NPP have been held hostage for six days. There are about 500 Russian soldiers and 50 units of heavy equipment inside the station.

The employees of the station are physically and psychologically exhausted.

On 6 March 2022, Russian forces hit the research installation "neutron source based on a subcritical assembly driven by a linear electron accelerator" located in Kharkiv.

The international community has repeatedly urged the Russian Federation to stop armed aggression against Ukraine and to refrain from attacks at the nuclear facilities, as the tragic consequences of a potential nuclear disaster will affect not only Ukraine, but could turn into a global nuclear catastrophe.

We call on our international partners to take all measures possible to withdraw Russian occupation forces from captured nuclear objects and impose a no-fly zone over Ukraine.

A breakdown at a nuclear power plant due to the use of weapons by Russian troops will lead to a disaster for the whole of Europe. The responsibility for this will be entirely on Russia. If a breakdown happens, Europeans will be forced to switch from the comfort of their homes to radiation shelters.

We must stop Russia's nuclear terrorism together. We must do it now—before it's too late.

In the background of constant air attacks, Russia has distributed disinformation on a "dirty" nuclear bomb created in Ukraine, and thus questioned the IAEA nuclear material control procedures.

As Ukrainian Armed Forces are doing everything possible to protect Ukrainian critical infrastructure on the ground, the sky remains vulnerable and should be controlled by international organisations.

The European Nuclear Safety Regulators Group consisting of experts in the field of nuclear security confirms the urgent necessity to impose a no-fly zone over Ukraine as the risks of a global nuclear catastrophe are as high as ever.

The Ministry of Health of Ukraine has refuted information circulated by Russian propaganda media about the alleged "emergency stripping of the military-biological program funded by the United States Department of Defense" and the "destruction of especially dangerous pathogens". The Ministry of Health of Ukraine also stresses that there are no American laboratories in our country.

All laboratory facilities in Ukraine perform a single general function—the indication and identification of pathogens of infectious diseases that have significant epidemic potential and/or international significance and are subject to regulation in accordance with international health regulations.

Ukraine does not own or operate any chemical or biological weapons laboratories in Ukraine, it is in full compliance with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and Biological Weapons Convention, and it does not develop or possess such weapons anywhere.

In this context, any attempt by Russia to seize biological materials is extremely dangerous and could pose a threat to both the security of Ukraine and the whole of Europe.

Russia's public statements about the alleged development of biological weapons in Ukraine should be considered as misinformation and provocation.

Moreover, on 9 March, the United States Department of State made a statement saying that the Kremlin is intentionally spreading outright lies that the United States and Ukraine are conducting chemical and biological weapons activities in Ukraine.

Russia has a track record of accusing Ukraine and other countries of the very crimes that Russia itself is perpetrating. On 10 March, Russia again accused Ukraine in its Note Verbale No. 5 (dated 10 March 2022) of organising possible provocations with the use of toxic chemicals against the civilian population. Once again, Ukraine does not use such methods. We are strong supporters of the Chemical Weapons Convention. These tactics are an obvious ploy by Russia to try to justify further premeditated, unprovoked, and unjustified attacks on Ukraine.

On 10 March 2022, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Dmytro Kuleba, said: "The manic obsession with which various Russian officials fantasise about non-existent biological or chemical weapons or hazards in Ukraine is deeply troubling and may actually point at Russia preparing another horrific false flag operation".

Let me just express a couple words from the statement of my President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, dated 11 March 2022: "Russian propagandists have substantially intensified their activity today. And they tried very hard. Probably in order to cover up the crimes of their army in Ukraine. Crimes against Mariupol; against Donbas; against Kharkiv; against dozens of other cities. Cover them up with new accusations. New-old fakes. They accuse us—again us!—that we are allegedly developing biological weapons. Allegedly, we are preparing a chemical attack. This makes me really worried, because we have been repeatedly convinced: if you want to know Russia's plans, look at what Russia accuses others of. Look, spreading such accusations in the Russian media shows that it is THEY who are capable of this. The Russian military, the Russian special services. It shows that they want it. They have already done such things in other countries. Similar! They themselves announced, they themselves organised, they themselves complained. And they will do so again; again and again. If they are not stopped. We are accused of attacks on allegedly peaceful Russia. And now what? What are these allegations of preparing chemical attacks? Have you decided to carry out the "de-chemicalisation" of Ukraine? Using ammonia? Using phosphorus? What else have you prepared for us? Where will you strike with chemical weapons? At the maternity hospital in Mariupol? At the church in Kharkiv? At the Okhmatdyt Children's Hospital? Or at laboratories, most of which have remained since Soviet times and are engaged in ordinary science. Ordinary—NOT military technology! We are adequate people. I am the President of an adequate country, an adequate nation. And the father of two children. And no chemical or any other weapon of mass destruction was developed on my land. The whole world knows that. YOU know that. And if YOU do something like that against US, you will get the most severe sanctions response".

In violation of the previously reached agreements, on 7 March 2022 the Russian Federation yet again sabotaged the opening of the humanitarian corridors for the evacuation of the civilian population from the besieged cities of the Kyiv, Kharkiv, Donetsk, and Kherson regions.

Russia's armed forces continue bombardments and missile attacks on Kyiv, Mariupol, Volnovakha, Symy, Mykolaiiv, Kharkiv, and other cities, towns, and villages. This prevents the safe exit of humanitarian convoys carrying Ukrainian and foreign citizens, as well as the delivery of medications and food.

Russia must stop violating the ceasefire agreement, and put an end to spreading disinformation and manipulating the lives of civilians. Evacuation through humanitarian corridors is only possible when the ceasefire regime is fully upheld. The Ukrainian side is ready for that. We also consider as inappropriate any attempts by Moscow to force civilians in the besieged cities to flee to the territory of Russia and Belarus, taking into account a high probability of provocations, in particular taking those evacuated as hostages or using them by the Russian armed forces as human shields.

Ukraine calls on States, in particular those whose leaders maintain contacts with President Putin, to make all possible efforts to force Russia to ensure the ceasefire regime is upheld in order to open humanitarian corridors and prevent a large-scale humanitarian catastrophe.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine continues to remain in constant contact with embassies of foreign States whose citizens remain in the hottest spots of Russian war against Ukraine, and provides them with maximum assistance for the evacuation of their citizens through the territory of Ukraine.

We strongly condemn the unprovoked invasion of Ukraine by the Russian armed forces. We also condemn Belarus' involvement in this aggression against Ukraine and urge them to abide by their international obligations.

Russia's military attack on Ukraine, an independent and sovereign State, is a gross violation of international law and the basic principles on which a rule-based international order is built.

We demand that President Putin immediately cease Russia's hostilities and unconditionally withdraw all forces and military equipment from all over Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders. Russia is fully responsible for this act of aggression and all the destruction and human losses it will cause. It will be held responsible for its actions.