



## “11<sup>th</sup> Emergency Special Session”

Statement by Yoka Brandt  
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NEW YORK, 7 April 2022

Mr. President,

I deliver this statement on behalf of the Benelux countries, Belgium, Luxembourg and my own country, the Netherlands.

The Benelux countries align themselves with the statement made by the European Union.

I thank you, Mr. President, for reconvening this Emergency Special Session and for your statement.

Mr. President,

The Benelux countries remain unwavering in their support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, and for Ukraine's democratic freedom.

We condemn in the strongest terms the unprovoked war of aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine.

Mr. President,

We meet again for the third time in this Emergency Session in just over a month's time. It is unfortunate that the exceptional circumstances in Ukraine leave us no other choice.

We are horrified by the reports of the atrocities committed by the Russian armed forces in currently and formerly occupied territories of Ukraine. The images and reports from places like Bucha, Stryi Bykiv, Mariupol and Hostomel show a complete disregard for human rights and dignity of civilians. We are also deeply shocked by the personal testimonies of rapes and sexual violence that are emerging.

These actions are unacceptable for any UN member, and especially for a member of the Human Rights Council. It is also a question of credibility of the United Nations. It is, therefore, important that the General Assembly has taken the exceptional decision today to suspend the rights of membership in the Human Rights Council of the Russian Federation.

Mr. President,

As recent and current members of the Human Rights Council and as staunch supporters of the Council, we are very mindful of the fact that membership in the Council implies responsibilities and duties. Resolution 60/251, which established the Council, states clearly that Council members shall "*uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights*".

Holding a seat in the Human Rights Council is not 'a free ride'. Members sign up to a heightened level of public scrutiny and commit to engage with the Council in a spirit of dialogue, cooperation and self-reflection, grounded in a desire to use their membership to strengthen the enjoyment of human rights at home and abroad.

It is clear that with its actions in Ukraine, the Russian Federation is failing its responsibilities as a member of the Human Rights Council.

Mr. President,

My second point concerns the credibility of the United Nations. The decision today reaches further than the credibility of the Human Rights Council. Suspension of the Russian Federation from the Council was necessary to uphold the integrity and the authority of the entire United Nations.

As the UN Secretary-General highlighted in his speech to the UN Security Council on Tuesday, the war in Ukraine is one of the greatest challenges ever to the international order and the global peace architecture, founded on the United Nations Charter. The integrity of the UN could indeed be at stake if we allow the Russian Federation to commit these atrocities without consequences. In its resolution on March 2, the General Assembly has called upon the Russian Federation to abide by the principles set forth in the Charter. And yet, we are confronted with the opposite: further violations of that same Charter.

Mr. President,

My third point is on accountability. As the UN Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights stated, it is vital that all efforts are made to ensure there are independent and effective investigations into what happened in Bucha and other places to ensure truth, justice and accountability, as well as reparations and remedy for victims and their families.

The Human Rights Council has created an independent international Commission of Inquiry, which has our full support. Furthermore, the International Criminal Court already has taken up its essential role in investigating alleged crimes that may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. This is complementary to the investigations undertaken by the Prosecutor-General of Ukraine, which the EU is ready to support. We owe it to the victims and the survivors of these crimes.

Let's be clear: the perpetrators of these crimes are being watched and evidence is being compiled with a view to their prosecution.

Mr. President,

There is a solution to stop the atrocities unleashed by the Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine. The Russian Federation needs to immediately cease hostilities, withdraw its troops from Ukraine and fully respect international humanitarian and human rights law. Now.

Thank you Mr. President