



Delegation to the EU-Ukraine Parliamentary Association Committee

**STATEMENT BY THE CHAIR OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
DELEGATION TO THE EU-UKRAINE PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION
COMMITTEE, MEP WITOLD JAN WASZCZYKOWSKI,**

**on the recognition of the non-government controlled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk
oblasts of Ukraine as independent entities**

Brussels, 22 February 2022 - “On February 21, during his bizarre address, Vladimir Putin announced Russia’s recognition of the so-called people’s republics of Donetsk and Luhansk. Shortly after, Russian tanks entered the Eastern region of Ukraine commonly known as the Donbas. The region had long been controlled by Moscow and its proxies. Since 2014, over 700 thousand Russian passports have been distributed among a portion of the Donbas’ population in preparation for - what is clear today - further aggression.

The most recent escalation has been in the works for weeks, if not months. During this time, many Western leaders made it clear that actions such as this one would be followed by severe sanctions. Taking over sovereign territory of a neighboring state, with the use of extensive military force, is not a “small incursion.” Rather, it is a disregard of the international law, the rules-based international order and Russia’s very own international obligations, including those enshrined in the UN Charter, the Helsinki Final Act, the Minsk Agreements and the Budapest Memorandum of 1994.

In the face of Putin’s continued aggression and his insatiable imperialist and revanchist appetite, the time for the most severe sanctions the free world can impose on his regime has come. The autocrat ignored numerous attempts of mediation, biding his time, building up his military strength and inspiring divisions within the EU and NATO. Our appeals for peace, our constant declarations of unwavering support for Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity will be nothing more but empty words if not followed by decisive actions.

Words alone mean nothing to Putin. Words did not stop Putin in 2008, when he attacked Georgia and when late President Lech Kaczyński tried to warn against the scenario we are all bearing witness to today. Words did not stop Putin and in 2014, when he started occupying vast territories of Ukraine and preparing for further escalation. Had we responded with adequate measures than, today, we would not be facing the greatest geopolitical crisis since the end of the Cold War.

Given the above, I call on the EU and its Member States and on our NATO allies, most notably the USA to exclude Putin's Russia from the global financial system including by denying it access to SWIFT; on the EU's Member States to explore sources of energy alternative to Russia; on the EU's Member States and their NATO allies to impose travel bans and asset freezes on the entire Russian ruling elite, including Putin's oligarchs; on the EU's Member States and our NATO allies to ban all Russian maritime vessels from their ports.

I welcome the recent statements of the German government regarding the halting of Nord Stream II and I call on Germany to make good on its promises and stop the pipeline for good. The forces controlling the occupied territories to withdraw behind Ukraine's internationally recognized borders, to respect the fundamental rights of the local population and to grant access to humanitarian assistance to all those in need in the Luhansk and Donetsk regions.

Finally, I call on the EU's leadership to grant Ukraine a clear path for EU membership.

The tragic history of the 20th Century teaches us that appeasement does not stop aggressors. On the contrary, acquiescence only emboldens tyrants who regard it as a sign of weakness. It is not too late to stop Putin, but we must act now."

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