President Metsola: “An opportunity to transform Ukraine”

European Parliament President Roberta Metsola addressed Ukraine’s Verkhovna Rada as part of the country’s Statehood Day celebrations.

Dear President Zelenskyy,
Dear President Nauseda,
Dear Speaker Stefanchuk,
Dear Members of Verkhovna Rada,

Thank you for having me with you here today. It is a privilege, but more importantly it is a responsibility for me, as the President of the European Parliament to again have the honour of addressing the Verkhovna Rada on this important day.

The Day of Ukrainian Statehood is always important but this year, the anniversary has taken on an ever more important meaning. All of Europe marks this day with you. In solidarity. In friendship and in a bond as Europeans that I hope will be formalised soon.

Today we celebrate not only the foundations of Ukrainian statehood, but also the courage, determination and resolve of all Ukrainians fighting to preserve Ukraine’s statehood and its territorial integrity. For all those who have died and who give their lives still.

Today is symbolic not just for Ukraine and for Ukrainians but for all of Europe. It is the day that we reaffirm our commitment to Ukraine as a European nation. As a nation free to make its own choices. Free to choose its own destiny. Free and proud to stand up for the values that bind us all.

Putin wants a future – where history can be re-written, where spheres of influence exist, iron curtains are drawn closed, where might is right, and where personal liberty and dignity denied. With their actions, it is clear that Russia wants a return to a past we had consigned to history books. A past where Europe’s geographical integrity and Europe’s freedom to choose with whom to cooperate and how to integrate is called into question. For him the real enemy is democracy, freedom and truth. Our way of life is seen as a threat to autocracy. That is what is at stake.
That is a past we can never return to. We will never accept the invasion of a peaceful and independent European country like Ukraine.

We will never turn a blind eye to the atrocities and crimes committed by Russia on Ukrainian soil. What happened in Irpin, in Bucha, in Mariupol, in so many other cities.

We will never forget that over six million Ukrainians were forced to flee the country and another eight million have been displaced internally.

And we will always remember the courage, the defiance, the resistance of Ukrainians, your resistance, who fought through pain and sorrow to inspire the world.

Friends, dear colleagues, let me say that we are with you and we will be with you when we start to re-build and make new again.

On this important day for independent and sovereign Ukraine, I want to assure you that Ukraine belongs with us. With nations that cherish the values of freedom, independence, democracy, the rule of law, the respect for human rights.

Your place, as cemented already by Grand Prince Volodymyr the Great, is among European nations.

And now, the torch is in your hands to take it further.

With us, you are among equals, among friends. We will stand by Ukraine’s side in times of tragedy as in times of prosperity.

These are not just words.

Granting Ukraine candidate status on 23 June confirms our commitment to walking side-by-side towards your full membership of the European Union. It may not be an easy road, but the European Parliament, your strongest advocate, is there for you, to assist you on every step of the way. We are ready to provide expertise and advice to strengthen your parliamentary democracy. We will also continue to support the Verkhovna Rada with any help you may need to operate smoothly under these very difficult circumstances and with any assistance needed to fight the consequences of Russia’s war in Ukraine.

On behalf of the European Parliament, I assure you that we will dedicate all resources, energy and know-how available to helping the Verkhovna Rada. A strong parliament is crucial for the stability of any democracy.

And we will go further.

When I was there with you, at the Verkhovna Rada on 1 April, I said that we will together rebuild Ukraine - every city and every town from Mariupol to Irpin, from Kherson to Kharkiv.
Today I will go further. This is an opportunity to transform Ukraine. To build-back better. A modern Ukraine. A sustainable Ukraine. A resilient Ukraine.

The Ukraine Solidarity Trust Fund together with the Ukraine reconstruction platform and Ukraine’s Recovery Plan are our masterplan. But we also know that Ukraine needs resources coming from different sources - from international financial institutions, but also from the private sector and from frozen assets. Rest assured that the European Union will continue to look for all the means to achieve this.

The European Parliament together with the Verkhovna Rada will continue to follow closely the coordination of finances and spending for the relief and reconstruction. In this context, the strengthening of Ukrainian state institutions, which play a crucial role in implementing reforms consistent with Ukraine’s European path, is vital.

Friends, we know that you and your citizens are not only fighting for your own freedom but you are fighting for ours too. I know how essential it is for the rest of the democratic world to continue to provide military support to Ukraine, and as I promised you and President Zelenskyy on 1 April 1 in Kyiv, I and the European Parliament will continue to do everything in our power to see that happen.

Dear President,

Dear Speaker,

Dear Members,

Dear colleagues,

Dear friends,

Thank you for your commitment to Europe.

Thank you for your extraordinary efforts, for your remarkable sacrifice and for your personal commitments in sustaining a vision of a European future for your country, against all odds.

Thank you for standing up and showing the world.

You will prevail.

Slava Ukraini.
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