



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

Statement by Yoka Brandt  
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Nations

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.

Mr. President,

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

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

Mr. President,

It is the third time that we meet in this Emergency Special Session in just over a month. Today, like before, the exceptional circumstances caused by the war in Ukraine leave us no other choice.

We meet because we are horrified by the reports of atrocities committed by the Russian armed forces in Ukraine. By the images from places like Bucha, Stryi Bykiv, Mariupol and Hostomel that show a complete disregard for human rights and lives of civilians. And by the personal testimonies of rape and sexual violence that are emerging.

Clearly, these actions are unacceptable. For any UN member state. But even more so for a member of the Human Rights Council. It is, therefore, important that the General Assembly has just voted to take the exceptional step to suspend the membership of the Russian Federation of the Human Rights Council.

It is important because membership of the Council comes with responsibilities and duties. Resolution 60/251, which established the Council, clearly states 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’. The Benelux countries as recent and present members of the Council are strong supporters of its mandate. We note that 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.

But, Mr. President,

This is not just about the Human Rights Council. What is at stake is the credibility of the UN as a whole. The UN Secretary-General in his statement to the Security Council on Tuesday, clearly stated that the war in Ukraine is one of the greatest challenges ever to the international order and the global peace architecture that was founded on the United Nations Charter. That is what is at stake if we allow the Russian Federation to commit these atrocities without consequences. In its resolution on March 2, the

General Assembly 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 final point is on accountability. I am repeating the call by the UN Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights that all efforts be made to ensure an independent and effective investigation into what happened in Bucha and other places.

We therefore fully support the work of the Commission of Inquiry that was established by the Human Rights Council. And the essential role of the International Criminal Court when it comes to investigating possible war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. These efforts complement the investigations undertaken by the Prosecutor-General of Ukraine, which the EU stands ready to support.

So let's be clear: the perpetrators of these crimes are being watched and evidence is being compiled with a view to their prosecution. We owe it to the victims and their families to find the truth, and to provide justice and accountability

Mr. President,

There is of course a solution to stop these atrocities. The Russian Federation chose to start this war of aggression against Ukraine. It can also choose to stop it. To immediately cease hostilities, withdraw its troops and fully respect international, humanitarian and human rights law.

Thank you Mr. President