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## Prime Minister's reply to the Address by Volodymyr Zelensky, President of Ukraine

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky addressed the House of Representatives today. Read Prime Minister Alexander De Croo's full reply here.

- *Check against delivery* -

*(in English)*

Mr. President,

You thanked us for helping Ukrainian refugees,  
For providing shelter to women and children fleeing Putin's bombs.

But we should be thanking you, thanking the Ukrainian people for fighting the fight.

For the struggle you are waging is not only a struggle for the survival of Ukraine, it is a struggle for the survival of our common values of freedom and democracy.

We hear your message. And I understand your frustration. You have been pleading for a no-fly zone imposed by NATO since the beginning of this war.

But let's be frank: this would mean shooting down Russian planes and an escalation that might engulf the whole of Europe. More lives lost and a wider war without any solution.

NATO is not a party to this conflict. And it should not become one.

I realize that is not the answer you want to hear, but I believe that you understand the argument.

Still, this is a time for us to take sides. That's what Belgium has done, and we will continue to do so. We will continue to support Ukraine.

Politically, by imposing high economic costs on Russia. Diplomatically, by isolating Russia. By providing humanitarian and military aid and by sheltering those who are fleeing Russian missiles and bombs.

We stand by your side, and we will remain by your side.

From the beginning, Belgium was a fierce advocate of sanctions that bite. We see sanctions are working - and let there be no mistake - they're here to stay for a long time.

We will continue working with our allies around the world to tighten the loopholes and ensuring strict application. Just as we will continue with our humanitarian and military support.

As we speak, new aid from Belgium is on the way.

During the last NATO summit and European Council, you asked for additional military support.

I can inform you that the Belgian army has ordered new weapons for Ukraine.

And we will continue our support as long as needed, as long as your country is under assault.

*(in Dutch)*

Mr. President,

Belgium is on your side, on the side of the Ukrainians, because you are part of the European people. We are one European family!

You share our values of freedom and democracy. Of an open society and human progress.

It would be a fundamental failure of Europe to keep Ukraine waiting for the formal process of accession to the European Union.

EU membership is a long and demanding process - for good reasons.

That's why should work towards a swifter and more direct solution. A faster economic integration of Ukraine and Europe. To trade with each other, invest, to grow towards each other. A right also for Ukrainians to become truly European and to participate in programmes such as Erasmus.

It is as you told me last year when we sat together in Brussels: you did not want to discuss the pending war, you wanted to talk economy and investments.

Because Vladimir Putin also wants to kill Ukraine's economic power. Your 'can do' mentality. Your creativity.

We cannot let this happen.

*(in French)*

Europe will be at the forefront of Ukraine's reconstruction. With a European Marshall plan for Ukraine. But for that to happen, this barbarism needs to stop as soon as possible... and it *is* possible.

We see that in the current peace talks.

In contrast with Russia's shadiness and ambiguity, you show the world honesty, sincerity and a real determination to end this illegal and unjust war.

Whatever Putin's plans, he will never own Ukraine.

Volodymyr,  
Mr. President,

It is hard to find the right words given the dramatic circumstances.  
But do know, all Belgians admire your courage and coolheadedness.  
We admire the bravery of the Ukrainian people.  
And above all, we admire your dignity in the face of so much inhumanity.

Ukraine will win and freedom will prevail.  
Keep the faith.  
*Slava Ukraini! (Glory to Ukraine!)*  
*Heroyam Slava! (Glory to the heroes!)*

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