

Crimean Platform

Brussels, 23 July 2022

Alexander De Croo
Prime Minister

Firstly, I would like to congratulate President Volodymyr Zelensky for the organisation of this Summit which is a success.

Personally, I see our meeting today as a way of not forgetting – of reminding ourselves why we are fighting.

Even if we are consumed by what is happening every day – the daily bombings that you are subjected to in Ukraine, the international concerns about the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, the indirect consequences of the war that we are facing in Belgium and neighbouring countries, notably in terms of energy supplies this winter – we need to strive to keep in mind.

To keep in mind that it is not normal that an atrocious war – which robs innocent people of their lives every day – is happening in the heart of Europe.

To not forget that it did not begin yesterday, but long before, in Crimea.

The war in Ukraine and our joint endeavour in favour of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine started with the first region of your country that became a victim of present-day Russian expansionism: **Crimea**.

That's a fact.

And Belgium remains very clear on the fact that **the annexation of Crimea by Russia was illegal in 2014 and still is illegal 8 years later**.

As we meet, the persecution of dissident voices in Crimea and the violation of the basic human rights of the Crimean Tatar community and of its leaders and activists continues unabated. This is unacceptable and goes against all international law.

We are gathering here today not only to confirm our principled position that **Crimea is an unalienable part of Ukraine** but also to reaffirm our message to Vladimir Putin: everyone who violates international and human rights will be held accountable for the consequences of their actions.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my profoundest respect and **support for all activists and citizens in the peninsula who are courageously standing up for their beliefs and for their rights and those of their community.**

We support you. We, Belgians, support you.

We support Ukraine, its leadership and its people, who have been forced by a brutal aggressor to wage an existential struggle for survival.

All of us around the table have **unequivocally and forcefully condemned** the unprovoked, unjustified and illegal Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The EU has never been more united, and solidarity within the EU has rarely been as strong as it is today.

We stand by your side.

And we will continue to do so.

Even though we unfortunately have to **prepare for a protracted conflict.**

Even though the aggression is turning into a war of attrition.

Some people are mentioning 'Ukraine fatigue'.

Let me assure you, there is no 'Ukraine fatigue' in my country.

My government and our population stand united behind Ukraine and will continue to stand united behind Ukraine, its leadership and its population.

Our multi-faceted **support to Ukraine will therefore continue** unwaveringly.

Within the EU, we have already adopted 7 packages of sanctions and we are **working on an 8th package.**

With our partners we are increasing our political support to Ukraine. We are working together with the international community on economic, financial, military and humanitarian assistance.

And we are looking at **Ukraine's post-war future**, launching the process of firmly anchoring the country to and in the EU, and setting up the necessary instruments **to contribute strongly to the country's reconstruction**.

Volodymyr, **you can count on us**.

Ukraine can count on us.

Belgium will continue to support you in your **fight for freedom**.