



## **Statement by Ambassador Kristín A. Árnadóttir, Permanent Representative of Iceland, at the 1372<sup>nd</sup> Permanent Council Meeting, Vienna, 5 May 2022**

While Iceland fully aligns with the statement delivered by the European Union, allow me also to make additional remarks in my national capacity.

Iceland strongly condemns the war of aggression waged by the Russian Federation against Ukraine. This premeditated invasion by Russia has caused incomprehensible harm and suffering for the Ukrainian people, a humanitarian catastrophe, and has forced over 5.5 million people to flee Ukraine and left close to 8 million people internally displaced. It has undermined the international rule of law and endangered security on a global scale.

Russia has attempted to justify its breach of the prohibition on the use of force enshrined in the UN Charter through distortion of truth, propaganda, and a full-blown disinformation campaign – including in this very room.

Let us be clear that the international community sees through the lies. We have witnessed Russia's aggression, the unspeakable atrocities committed in Ukrainian cities and towns, and continued grave violations of international humanitarian and human rights law by the Russian Federation, such as indiscriminate targeting, indications of the use of rape as a weapon of war and environmental destruction.

We have witnessed unspeakable monstrosities none of us would have ever been able to anticipate.

Iceland fully support the full use of all available international mechanisms, means and measures, including the immediate investigation of war crimes in Ukraine, to ensure accountability for the brutal crimes and violations of international humanitarian law committed during Russia's unjustifiable invasion of Ukraine. Through the Moscow Mechanism we were able to compile evidence, document valuable data, and establish unequivocally important facts.

Russia will be held accountable.

We commend the work of all actors who are engaged in the incredibly important and sometimes dangerous work of documenting, investigating, and reporting on what is happening in Ukraine, including journalists and media workers.

Media freedom is inseparable from the right of everyone to freedom of opinion and expression. This right is at the heart of democratic societies and is protected by our core human rights documents and expressed in OSCE documents. As the Secretary General of the UN, Antonio Guterres said on World Press Freedom Day: “Without freedom of the press, there is no freedom.”

The Russian Federation has suspended access to information within its borders and is thus restricting the ability of citizens to receive information on the war its government is waging against Ukraine. To quote Reporters Without Borders: “Since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, almost all independent media have been banned, blocked and/or declared “foreign agents”. All others are subject to military censorship.“

We express our grave concern over the immense restriction of freedom of expression and safety threats journalists face within the Russian Federation. Russian journalists could face 15 years in prison for reporting on the truth of what Russian armed forces are committing in their name.

This is unacceptable. The situation Russia has created within and outside its borders is unacceptable.

Again, let us also reiterate the important role of women. One of the key findings of UN Women’s Rapid Gender Analysis, published on 4 May, of the situation in Ukraine is that women are playing a crucial role in the humanitarian response but are not fully involved in decision making. And we reiterate and I quote Secretary General Guterres: „ Women must be included in decision-making processes related to humanitarian efforts, peace-making and other areas that directly impact their lives.“

We urge Russia to withdraw its troops, stop waging this war, and to fully abide by its international commitments. This cannot and may not escalate any further.

Mr. Chair, I ask that my statement be attached to the journal of the day.

And I thank you Mr Chair.