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Statement by

**H.E. Ms Tanja Fajon,**

**Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs**

at the

**Extraordinary Special Session of the General Assembly on Ukraine**

New York, 22 February 2023

President of the General Assembly,

Secretary-General,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In 1945, the United Nations were created “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.” The UN Charter reflected our collective vow to refrain from the use of armed force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state.

Aggression, violation of territorial integrity and illegal annexation of sovereign territories should have no place in the world order of the 21st century. Yet, the principles enshrined in the UN Charter are being blatantly violated and all those who hoped for a peaceful, just and prosperous world almost eight decades ago, would have been deeply disappointed.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A year ago, Ukraine, a sovereign country, was attacked by its neighbour, the Russian federation. Sadly, despite the wide international condemnation and calls for the immediate withdrawal, the war still continues, along with its devastating consequences, especially for the civilian population.

I commend the bravery and courage of the Ukrainian people. Slovenia knows from its own historical experience, what it means to fight for your land. We know what is at stake when somebody uses force to deny your independence and sovereignty.

And although we, Slovenians are deeply concerned about the wider security, political and economic consequences of the Russian aggression, we also remain committed to assisting Ukraine and its people.

We stand in solidarity with the women, men and children whose lives have been changed forever by this unjustified war. We are deeply concerned about growing numbers of civilian casualties and the gruesome testimonies of sexual and gender-based violence used as a weapon of war.

Especially heartbreaking are the accounts from children: millions are displaced, many of them at risk of human trafficking, exploitation, conflict-related sexual violence and forced deportations. They are deeply traumatised by the war and the violence. Their childhood is over, forever.

The deliberate attacks of the Russian army on civilian population and critical infrastructure constitute most serious crimes that should not go unpunished. All those responsible must be held to account.

Slovenia supports all efforts to end impunity for the perpetrators of international law violations, especially the most serious ones. The principle of accountability must be upheld, since it is the only foundation for the life when the war and its atrocities end.

It is the only foundation of justice, the only foundation for reconciliation, the only foundation which enables the victims to move forward.

Excellencies,

Our strong support goes to the efforts by the UN Secretary-General as well as the member states that promote a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine. We need to redouble our diplomatic efforts to de-escalate the current situation and end the fighting through political dialogue, negotiation and other peaceful means.

All peace efforts, which take into the account who is the aggressor and who is its victim, deserve our support.

Slovenia would like to stress that international law, peaceful settlement of disputes and the respect for the decisions of international tribunals, as well as their full implementation, are the building blocks of a world that is peaceful, stable and prosperous.

Mr President,

This war reminds us all just how globally connected and interdependent we are. Its consequences are felt all over the world. And I would like to state this very clearly – these are not consequences of our support for Ukraine, nor consequences of our reaction to the illegal aggression.

These are the consequences of the aggression itself, they are the sole and full responsibility of the aggressor.

With the staggering rise in food and energy prices and the looming inflation, millions of people are faced with severe challenges. Disruptions to food supply chains, energy and finance systems around the globe affect us all, but the least developed and low-income countries suffer the most. We all must do better.

I would like to reassure our friends and partners worldwide that reacting to the Russian aggression on Ukraine does not mean that the other conflicts, crises or challenges are forgotten.

Our humanitarian response to other situations of need is not being diminished, our solidarity and responsibility remain firm.

We applaud Ukraine for launching the initiative 'Grain from Ukraine'. Despite the war, Ukraine extended its hand across the sea to the people in need and those facing food insecurity. To facilitate the grain exports, Slovenia has joined efforts to help and support this important initiative with its own contribution.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me conclude by saying it once more – any unprovoked invasion of any sovereign country is unacceptable. Violations of the international legal order that we have worked so hard to build cannot and must not become our new normal.

With that, Slovenia gives its strong support for today's resolution on principles underlying a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine in line with the UN Charter.

Thank you.

