

Address to the Italian audience

Thank New Europe Center and Istituto Affari Internazionali for having this discussion today in Italy, in one of the very important capitals for us, which has already played a very historical role in turning over the debate about the future of Ukraine. We are highly grateful to Italy for being one of the key players who supported granting the candidate status for Ukraine and contributed to mobilizing the unity over understanding that the EU will stand with Ukraine as long as it is needed; until Ukraine wins the war and also joins the EU.

In my address I would like to focus on several issues:

- **This war has not started on February 24, last year. Russia has been waging this aggression for 9 years already, since 2014, when the first Russian soldier crossed our internationally recognized borders, annexed Crimea, and launched the war in the east of Ukraine in Donetsk and Luhansk regions.** On February 24, this war of aggression just moved to another stage – to a full-scale war, to mass atrocities and war crimes, to massive attacks against civilians with drones, missiles, and ballistic rockets across the country. **There is nothing that Russia has not tried in its attempts to break us. Absolutely nothing.**
- Now the Kremlin is preparing for the next wave of mobilization, and the heavy fighting continues for every town and every inch of our soil in Eastern and Southern Ukraine. You might have heard in the news about Bakhmut and Solar, but there is so much more on the frontline, stretching for 1500 km. Every step forward is a result of the enormous efforts and heroism of the Ukrainian Army, which they show daily with support from our international partners.
- **Russian invaders are currently concentrating their forces on another offensive.** To counter this offensive, to defend our people there and the country as a whole, **we, of course, need more military support. We understand that a significant turnover in this war will take place very soon.** We should be prepared for any massive offensive operations by Russia. That's why we are absolutely grateful to all our partners who have announced packages of additional military support to make sure that Ukraine can plan counter-offensive operations to defend itself.
- **Ukraine is going to win.** There cannot be any doubts about the successful outcome of this war, which is not only the victory of Ukraine but the restoration of security in Europe and order based on international law. **But the question is, "When?"** How long the war has to last to ensure that Russia is taken out of Ukrainian borders and that Russia bears responsibility for the crimes committed? **Any hesitations and indecisiveness of our international partners cost the lives of Ukrainians.** Unfortunately, some partners didn't pay much attention to the intel and military information they have from their services, confirming just the fact that Russia is preparing for another way of massive military aggression. **We need to stay strong, and we need to be able to defeat Russia on the battlefield to make sure that we pay our way to the implementation of our peace formula and the peace talks.**
- **We also have not to forget (when we are talking about the war), that what is happening in Ukraine goes far beyond anything you can call the war.** Massive terror, genocide against the civilian population, and massive missile shelling around the territory of Ukraine, mainly in the central part of Ukraine, not so far covered by active military engagement. Hundreds and hundreds of missiles of every possible time have been shelled at Ukrainian cities, and now the strategic reserves of missiles of Russia are getting lower and lower. They are using less precise missiles which leads to growing atrocities over the civilian population. You may all have seen in the news the recently destroyed residential building in Dnipro where mothers, fathers, elderly, and small children have died because of Russian shelling. And we can confirm that it has been done deliberately.
- **I would also urge us not to forget about human suffering in the areas under occupation. You all have seen, and your leadership has been in areas near Kyiv. We all have seen pictures of dead people lying just across the streets. And now I can confirm that they were not allowed to be buried, not allowed to be collected out of the streets. They were simply killed and were lying there until the area was de-occupied. We hope that your prime minister will soon visit Ukraine and will see with her own eyes everything that has resulted from this aggression. But many people have been living under occupation for 6-8 months, just let's take the Kherson and Kharkiv regions. These people have seen all possible crimes we could not even imagine, and we only have been**

recollecting in our memories since the Second World War. Russian occupiers try to demoralize people, cutting off electricity, gas, and water supplies, leaving them without connection, and massive torturing, raping, and physically abusing women, men, children, and elderly people. This is the terror people live through every day under occupation. That goes beyond war and comprehension, and this should not be forgotten.

- **That's why when we are talking about ending up the war, accountability of Russia, it's leadership, each and every officer who has been giving the orders to kill civilians, to rape women, to torture people, and has been providing the green light to shot civilians in their heads with their hands tightly behind their backs, should be punished.**
- President Zelensky has proposed Peace Formula agenda, presented at the G20 summit in Indonesia. This is the background of further discourse on negotiations. It's an agenda for us, European and democratic leaders, finally be the ones who will make a decision when this war is over and how to make sure that no other war occurs on the territory of Ukraine or elsewhere in the world. Now we see that Russia is actively engaging not only with Belarus but also with Iran. We see the example Russia is showing to other countries, having an appetite for aggression; that is something we cannot allow.
- This war reminds us all that in 21 century, unfortunately, to preserve our values, our way of life, we have to be ready to defend them. For Ukraine, it's very important: while we are fighting on the forefront, we are also moving very fast on the path of reforms; to make sure that when the moment comes Ukraine will step up with its membership to the EU. We should be ready for this moment. We are moving forward with all the reforms on judicial and anti-corruption, aligning our legislation with the EU, making sure that all the market rules are in force when the war is over.
- Next week we'll have EU-Ukraine Summit, and then on 9-10 February, there will be an extraordinary European Council. Of course, Ukraine will be part of the discussion. We hope that the commitment of the Ukrainian people, courage of Ukrainian soldiers will also lead to the understanding that Ukraine knows how to move forward with the political and reforms agenda and that Ukraine is committed to becoming a member of the EU.
- It's also essential to understand that even in times of war, in a time of full-scale aggression, Ukraine remained in the top 20 importers of products to the EU. Our post-war recovery should be based and targeted into a full integration to the EU single market into developing Ukraine-EU connectivity. Our reconstruction should be aimed at restoring the competitiveness of our economy so Ukraine will become a robust and reliable contributor to the EU single market. And of course, as the state, that has been fighting for security in Europe, we want to sit over the table where the political future of the European project is formed.
- Our main target through the times of war as for politicians who are not fighting on the frontline with the gun - to make sure that every inch of the Ukrainian land, which will be deoccupied soon, would have opportunity to build a better future in the EU and every drop of the blood of Ukrainian civilian and soldier would not drop in vain. We need to stay strong, and we need to remain united. We understand that time is running out. It requires more efforts to mobilize, more assistance, mobilize more unity, and more sanctions. But we all have to understand that neither Ukrainians nor politicians have other choice but make sure that the victory comes asap and accountability is followed by this victory.