



**Statement on behalf of the Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania)
at the United Nations General Assembly Emergency Special Session on Ukraine**

**Suspension on the rights of membership of the Russian Federation in the Human Rights
Council**

New York, 7 April 2022

Mr. President,

I have the honor to speak on behalf of the three Baltic States: Estonia, Latvia, and my own country Lithuania. We align with the statement [to be] delivered on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

We welcome the adoption of the General Assembly resolution on the Suspension on the rights of membership of the Russian Federation in the Human Rights Council. We are proud to have presented the draft resolution together with a cross-regional group of states.

With this step, we the international community, honorably follow our words with action, as we continue to stand together in defense of the international law, peace and security, the Charter of the United Nations, human rights - and of the humanity itself.

We thus preserve the moral integrity of this UN body, together confirming that gross and systematic violations and abuses of human rights, committed by Russia in Ukraine, will not be left unanswered. A timely response to human rights violations and abuses is also an essential priority of Lithuania's current membership in the UN Human Rights Council.

There is no place for the aggressor state in the UN body whose mission is to promote and protect human rights around the world. As there is no place for savagery of the unprovoked military attack of Russia against Ukraine in an appalling violation of the Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, as well as the international law and the principles of the Charter.

The reports and images of the massacre in Bucha and other areas of utter devastation brought forth by Russia all across Ukraine shock us to our core. The mounting statistics tell a heart-rending – yet, unfortunately, incomplete, story. According to the OHCHR, at least 1,480 civilians have been killed and at least 2,195 injured between 24 February and 4 April 2022, with the OHCHR believing that the actual figures are considerably higher. Bodies of hundreds of civilians have been recovered so far in the Bucha area alone, and more are uncovered each day.

Gruesome verified reports by the UN officials, civil society and journalists speak volumes of gross and revolting violations of human rights: mass graves, bodies on the street burned beyond recognition, mounting evidence of sexual and gender based violence, including rape, extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, abductions, enforced disappearances, as well as mass deportations of civilians to the Russian territory. The Russian aggression has also led to attacks against journalists and media workers who have a critical role in providing information during a conflict, including Mantas Kvedaravičius, filmmaker from Lithuania, and Ukrainian documentary maker and photographer Maksim Levin, who were documenting Russian atrocities in Ukraine.

OHCHR also documented Russia's use of cluster munitions in populated areas at least 24 times, the arbitrary detention and possible enforced disappearance of 22 journalists and civil society members in Kyiv, Kherson, Luhansk, and Zaporizhzhia regions. 24 local officials have also been detained in regions under Russian control.

Russia bears full responsibility for this large-scale, unprovoked, unlawful and unjustified war of aggression. Those directly responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity, violations of human rights and international humanitarian law on Ukrainian soil must and will be held accountable.

We stand united in full solidarity with the Ukrainian people who are defending their country, their cities, their homes, their families, and their lives. There will be no impunity. There will be accountability for this horror, and international justice will be done. Victims will have access to remedy and justice.

The Baltic States will continue to support all efforts to ensure there are independent and effective investigations into crimes committed by Russia in Ukraine, and to ensure justice and accountability.

Russia must comply with the 16 March order of the International Court of Justice, which has binding effect to the parties, and immediately suspend the military operations in the territory of Ukraine. We welcome the establishment of the Commission of Inquiry by the UN Human Rights Council as well as the work under the OSCE Moscow Mechanism. We continue our support to the office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court in his investigation concerning alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Situation in Ukraine. The swiftness with which 41 States Parties referred the situation to the ICC and opening investigation by the Prosecutor sends an important message that there will be no impunity for core international crimes. Investigation will in turn benefit the fact-finding and evidence-gathering that forms the cornerstone to fighting impunity. We will contribute to all efforts on the exchange of information to facilitate investigations into war crimes, crimes against humanity and other atrocity crimes.

The international system based on international law, including the UN Charter, cannot tolerate, nor see the Russian war crimes and crimes against humanity we have witnessed in Ukraine going unpunished. Together, we will make sure that names of the war criminals and the perpetrators of crimes against humanity - and their regimes - will go down in the ash heap of history, alongside the worst of the absolute worst.