

Statement of the Group of Friends of Ukraine regarding the situation in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine)

Dear Members of the Executive Board, dear colleagues,

It has been more than nine years since the first Crimea decision was adopted. And yet, as the most recent report to this session of the Executive Board has underlined, we have seen no progress towards resolving the many serious issues raised by UNESCO, OHCHR, OSCE, ICOMOS and Amnesty International.

Once again, the report includes numerous detailed examples of abuses across all areas of UNESCO's mandate: including systematic repressive policies against freedom of expression, including media freedom and artistic freedom, the safety of journalists and media workers, access to religious institutions, as well as the impact of ongoing militarization on educational, scientific, and cultural institutions. We encourage everyone to read the report's findings, which represent a sobering picture of Russia's overt and grave actions.

While all Crimean residents endure the consequences of this repression, of particular concern is the impact of these policies on the Crimean Tatar communities and among Ukrainian speakers, who have been consistently singled out for harsh treatment.

Despite the order by the International Court of Justice for the Russian Federation to "refrain from maintaining or imposing limitations on the ability of the Crimean Tatar community to conserve its representative institutions, including the Mejlis", this key traditional structure and highest executive body of the Crimean Tatar populations remains banned. Moreover, none of the seven Ukrainian schools remain operational and most Ukrainian classes have been disbanded.

These and other actions outlined in the report, can be seen as intentionally replacing the historical role and cultural contributions of Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar communities in Crimea. This concern has been amplified by the severely curtailed access of partner organizations to temporarily occupied

Crimea, in defiance of UN General Assembly resolutions. We call on the Russian Federation to ensure that all international human rights observers and monitoring mechanisms are granted full, free and unrestricted access to Crimea. Moreover, we reiterate our calls on the Russian Federation to end its war of aggression against Ukraine, and completely withdraw its military forces from the territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders, including the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.

This statement is delivered on behalf of the following countries: Afghanistan, Albania, Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, the Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America. (47)