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## **COUNCIL OF EUROPE MEMBER STATES WILL STAND WITH UKRAINE FOR AS LONG AS IT TAKES**

— *What steps does the Representation take to engage Council of Europe member states in Ukraine's initiatives, such as the Peace Formula and the Crimea Platform?*

— The Permanent Representation's persistent work helped ensure the Council of Europe's (CoE) active support for President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's Peace Formula, as confirmed at the 4<sup>th</sup> CoE Summit in Reykjavík in May 2023. At the summit, CoE member states adopted a final document expressing 'full support to Ukraine and its people' and declared their readiness to 'stand with Ukraine for as long as it takes'. The document emphasises that 'Without accountability, there can be no lasting peace, and we support the principles for a just and lasting peace as outlined in President Zelenskyy's Peace Formula'. This summit became the first major international forum to endorse the Ukrainian peace plan officially.

Additionally, the summit established a Register of Damage caused by Russia's aggression against Ukraine, paving the way for compensation. This action reaffirms the commitment of CoE countries not only to support Ukraine but also to actively work towards a peaceful settlement of Russia's aggressive war against Ukraine, ensuring justice, and restoring violated rights.

Therefore, the CoE already plays and will continue to play a leading role in justice restoration issues (point 7 of the Peace Formula), notably through the Register of Damage, which is a first step towards creating a comprehensive compensation mechanism.

The consistent and persistent cooperation of the Permanent Representation with CoE Secretary General Marija Pejčinović Burić in supporting the activities of the International Crimea Platform is yielding results. The Secretary General personally participated in the inaugural (2021) and online in the second (2022) and third (2023) Crimea Platform summits, endorsing their final joint documents and joint statements by the participants of the International Crimea Platform on the Day of Resistance to Occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol.

Marija Pejčinović Burić addressed the participants of the Black Sea Security Conferences of the International Crimea Platform (BSSC): on 13 April 2023,

she participated in the inaugural BSSC in Bucharest (Romania), and on 15 April 2024, in the second one held in Sofia (Bulgaria).

— *Could you please outline the main projects and programmes the Council of Europe for Ukraine implemented? What areas are on the agenda?*

— The Council of Europe is successfully implementing its Resilience, Recovery and Rebuilding Action Plan for Ukraine covering 2023–26 (AP), adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (CMCE) on 14 December 2022 following consultations with the Government of Ukraine. Our country positively assesses the results of this cooperation.

The plan, with an ambitious budget of €50 million, includes 30 projects aimed at rebuilding and restoring Ukraine, strengthening the capacity of Ukrainian state institutions, supporting democratic governance, the rule of law, and protecting citizens' fundamental rights. Besides ongoing support for Ukraine's efforts to meet its obligations as a CoE member state, the AP also aims to advance the reform programme within the framework of Ukraine's European perspective, following the European Council's decision on 23 June 2022 to grant Ukraine candidate status for EU membership.

Another significant direction of the CoE's support for Ukraine involves enhancing its cooperation with the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB) — a CoE financial institution with an exclusively social mandate.

Since the onset of Russia's full-scale armed aggression against Ukraine on 24 February 2022, CEB leadership and its CoE member countries have demonstrated support for Ukraine and its people and have contributed to practical assistance. In 2022, the bank allocated €10 million to help Ukrainians fleeing the war to CEB member countries.

Following Ukraine's membership in the CEB (in June 2023), the bank's activities in Ukraine became concrete and active. In July 2023, the CEB provided its first loan of €2 million to finance a project in Ukraine. These funds went towards rebuilding homes destroyed by the war and improving living conditions for 500 households inhabited by vulnerable groups — such as single parents, the elderly, and people with disabilities. In November 2023, the CEB approved its first direct loan to Ukraine, amounting to €100 million, to co-finance (along with the World Bank) the Heal Ukraine Framework Project. This project aims to provide urgent healthcare services for vulnerable populations and restore damaged healthcare facilities. On 27 March 2024, the CEB approved another €100 million loan to implement the HOME. Compensation for Destroyed Property project, which plans to issue 2,000 housing certificates to affected individuals, including combatants, people with disabilities, and large families.

Since February 2022, the CEB has approved a total of €4.1 billion in loans, with nearly a third (€1.3 billion) allocated to Ukraine-related projects, primarily in CEB member countries that have welcomed people fleeing the war. As

of late 2023, the total grants allocated by the bank to Ukraine's neighbouring states to cover the urgent needs of vulnerable persons — victims of russia's war — amounted to €9.6 million.

In addition to grants, the CEB aims to contribute to Ukraine's post-war recovery, reconstruction, and long-term social development. Cooperation with Ukraine is a primary goal of the CEB's Strategic Plan for 2023–27, focusing on Ukraine's urgent needs in healthcare and housing. According to this strategic plan, the bank's overall operational portfolio in Ukraine will be around €1.2–€1.3 billion.

Currently, the CEB is considering implementing the new projects in Ukraine and preparing to open an office in Kyiv, which would enhance coordination and alignment of efforts with the CoE, particularly under the Resilience, Recovery and Rebuilding Action Plan for Ukraine (2023–26).

— *What progress has the Council of Europe made in implementing its Action Plan titled Resilience, Recovery and Rebuilding for Ukraine (2023–26)?*

— Since 1 January 2023, a total of 30 projects have been developed and implemented under the AP, adhering to CoE standards, through cooperation between the CoE, the CoE Office in Kyiv, and relevant partners in Ukraine (at their request). These projects address the following areas:

- Strengthening the implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and other related issues during the war;
- Supporting the enforcement of European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) decisions;
- Ensuring the collection of facts, documentation, and effective investigation of war crimes and gross human rights violations during the war, with a focus on the requirements and guarantees of the ECHR;
- Creating a national legal framework for compensation for property destroyed or damaged due to russian aggression, with legal expertise support from the CoE;
- Improving the protection of the rights of IDPs and war victims, including the development of a State Policy Strategy on Internal Displacement for the period up to 2025 and an operational plan for its implementation, with expert assistance from the CoE;
- Maintaining the functioning of the judicial system and measures aimed at implementing the Comprehensive Strategic Plan for Reforming Law Enforcement Agencies as part of Ukraine's security and defence sector for 2023–27, approved by the President of Ukraine;
- Combating discrimination, promoting equality and dignity, preventing gender-based violence, and enhancing the effectiveness of relevant institutional mechanisms and interagency coordination at national and local levels;
- Protecting children's rights, considering the special war-induced risks for displaced children, children deprived of parental care, unaccompanied children, and child victims or witnesses of violence;

- Strengthening democratic governance, including a gender perspective, for better decentralisation and local government reform;
- Ensuring media freedom and enhancing ethics, safety, and protection of journalists according to CoE standards and ECtHR case law;
- Providing CoE expert support for optimising national legislation in combating money laundering, financing terrorism, sanctions, and financial crime investigations.

In response to numerous requests from national authorities, the CoE has launched or planned additional projects for 2024 under the AP in such areas: combating cybercrime and handling electronic evidence in war-related criminal proceedings; reforming the penitentiary system; protecting the rights, including social rights, rights of veterans, military personnel, and their families; strengthening constitutional justice; fighting corruption; preserving and enhancing culture and cultural heritage.

As of early May 2024, contributors have already funded more than half of the AP, with over €34 million received from 27 contributors, the largest among which are Finland, Germany, the European Union, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Ireland, Poland, and the United Kingdom. Moreover, this amount includes an additional €6 million allocated from the CoE's regular budget.

— *What measures are the Council of Europe and its bodies taking to assist Ukrainian children, particularly those illegally brought to russia?*

— The abduction, illegal deportation, or transfer of Ukrainian children constitutes elements of the crime of genocide against the Ukrainian people and war crimes committed by the russian federation.

International efforts focus on countering such crimes by the aggressor, finding tools to stop illegal deportations, and establishing the best possible mechanisms and conditions for returning our children to their families and official guardians, ensuring the protection of all their rights and freedoms.

The issue of protecting the rights of Ukrainian children is a subject of discussion in the CoE at all levels.

Notably, the following points emphasise the need to release and return all deported and displaced civilians, especially children: the decisions of the 4<sup>th</sup> Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe; the resolutions and recommendations of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE); the decisions and recommendations of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (CMCE); the declarations of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe; statements of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights in support of Ukraine.

On 16–17 May 2023, the 4<sup>th</sup> Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe took place in Iceland. The significant decisions of this summit

included a declaration specifically addressing Ukrainian children whom the aggressor unlawfully transported to russia or temporarily occupied Ukrainian territories, urging their immediate return and accountability for those responsible. The Heads of State and Government of the CoE member countries reaffirmed their commitment to work with the international community and support the Ukrainian authorities in ensuring the urgent return of children whom the aggressor unlawfully transferred and deported.

All adopted CoE documents emphasise that the repatriation of children, their rehabilitation, and the creation of conditions for family reunification to preserve the identity of Ukrainian children must become a priority for CoE member states.

Furthermore, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights has emphasised the urgent need to search for and implement specific solutions and mechanisms that facilitate the reunification of children displaced from Ukraine to russia or Ukrainian territories under russian de facto control. Key actions include identifying and registering unaccompanied and separated children and supporting family tracing and reunification procedures.

In April 2023, an urgent debate took place within the Parliamentary Assembly with the participation of Olena Zelenska, First Lady of Ukraine, on the topic 'Deportations and forcible transfers of Ukrainian children and other civilians to russian federation or Ukrainian territories temporarily occupied: create conditions for their safe return, stop these crimes and punish the perpetrators'. As a result, the Assembly adopted a resolution and recommendations emphasising that the forcible transfer of children from one group to another group, with the intention to destroy, totally or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group is considered as a crime of genocide under Article 2, paragraph (e), of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Genocide Convention, 1948). These actions align with documented evidence of deportations and forcible transfer of Ukrainian children to the russian federation or Ukrainian territories under russian de facto control.

In January 2024, the PACE, with Olena Zelenska's participation, held a debate under the urgent procedure 'Situation of the children of Ukraine', leading to the Assembly's resolution and recommendation approval. The resolution strongly condemns russia's aggressive war and massive violations of Ukrainian children's rights, highlighting that 'children should never be used as means of exerting pressure or as war trophies'. It acknowledges European countries' efforts in accepting Ukrainian children and Ukraine's initiatives, for instance, the Bring Kids Back UA action plan aimed at repatriating deported children. The Assembly expresses deep concern about the fate of children forcibly transferred to territories under russia's control, identifying that these practices constitute war crimes and possible genocide. The Assembly calls on russia and belarus to immediately cease deportations and forced transfers of children and encourages international

cooperation in their search, repatriation, and reintegration. It is noteworthy that PACE is currently implementing the initiative to establish a Network on the situation of the children of Ukraine as part of implementing the aforementioned resolution.

In its adopted recommendation, the Parliamentary Assembly calls for the CMCE to establish a mandate of Special Rapporteur on the situation and return of Ukrainian children deported and forcibly transferred by the Russian Federation and Belarus. The expectation is that the Special Rapporteur will play a crucial role in ensuring the return of all children to Ukraine, considering their best interests. The focus primarily concerns orphans and children who have lost parental care, as well as all unaccompanied minors whom the Russian Federation currently controls.

In March 2024, the 46<sup>th</sup> session of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe addressed the agenda item ‘Russian Federation’s war of aggression against Ukraine’ and the debate on ‘Protecting the Rights of Ukrainian Children’.

The discussion resulted in adopting a Declaration on the second anniversary of Russian Federation’s war against Ukraine, which strongly condemned Russia’s ongoing aggression and related severe violations of human rights and international law, particularly concerning children.

Moreover, the CoE is implementing several projects under the AP, specifically the project titled Protecting the Rights of Children in the war and a post-war context, which aims to assist Ukrainian children.

It is worth noting the CoE’s role in ensuring the best interests of children living in its member states. On 30 November 2023, the Council of Europe Consultation Group on the Children of Ukraine (CGU) came into existence for this purpose.

— *What are the prospects for consideration of Ukraine and Ukrainian citizens’ cases against the Russian Federation in the European Court of Human Rights considering Russia’s exclusion from the Council of Europe?*

— The year 2023 has been undeniably dynamic, with intensified efforts in cases against Russia. Notably, the inter-state case *Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia* involves claims directly related to crimes in the temporarily occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions and gross human rights violations. The case comprises four proceedings:

1. *Ukraine v. Russia (re Crimea)*, application No. 20958/14 and 38334/18;
2. *Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia*, application No. 8019/16, 43800/14, 28525/20 and 11055/22 — related to events in the temporarily occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions and human rights violations during Russia’s full-scale invasion;
3. *Ukraine v. Russia (VIII)*, application No. 55855/18 — concerning captured sailors;

4. *Ukraine v. Russia (IX)*, application No. 10691/21 — regarding the murders of russian federation opponents.

Following the start of hearings on 26 January 2022, the ECtHR, by its judgment of 25 January 2023, declared partially admissible the inter-state case *Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia* under applications No. 8019/16, No. 43800/14 and No. 28525/20, proceeding to the merits. The Court declared admissible complaints about administrative practices:

- unlawful attacks on civilians and the shooting down of an aircraft, violating Article 2;
- torture of civilians and Ukrainian soldiers in captivity and other treatment contrary to the convention, violating Article 3;
- forced labour, violating Article 4;
- abduction, unlawful detention, and arrests, violating Article 5;
- intimidation and attacks on religious groups, violating Article 9;
- persecution of independent journalists and blocking Ukrainian broadcasters, violating Article 10;
- destruction and unlawful appropriation of private property, violating Article 1 of Protocol No. 1;
- prohibition of education in the Ukrainian language, violating Article 2 of Protocol No. 1;
- persecution of civilians by virtue of their ethnicity and citizens supporting Ukraine's territorial integrity, violating Article 14.

On 17 February 2023, the ECtHR merged two inter-state cases — *Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia* (No. 8019/16, 43800/14, 28525/20) and *Ukraine v. Russia (X)* (No. 11055/22) — into one proceeding under *Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia* (No. 8019/16, 43800/14, 28525/20, and 11055/22).

The ECtHR also dismissed all claims in the case *Russia v. Ukraine* (No. 36958/21).

Efforts focus on intensifying and optimising work on cases unrelated to russian aggression, such as coordinating the implementation of ECtHR judgments — a number of cases on structural and systemic problems — remain a priority. Other ECtHR judgments remain at the forefront of attention as well.

Work on implementing these decisions is ongoing, and despite the challenges of war, the CMCE continues to note Ukraine's progress, namely:

- adoption of the Counter-torture Strategy in the Criminal Justice System and the action plan for its implementation; amendments to Article 127 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine to align the definition of torture with international standards; institutional and capacity-building measures to prevent and eradicate torture (group of cases *Kaverzin / Afanasyev / Belousov v. Ukraine* — counteracting torture and ill-treatment by law enforcement agencies);
- significant reforms in the National Police and the legislation regulating its functioning, along with the introduction of rules for planning and conducting

police operations (within the case of *Yukhymovych v. Ukraine* — the killing of a person during an ambush due to unjustified use of force by the police);

- approval of the Strategy for the Penitentiary System Reform until 2026 (case *Sukachov v. Ukraine* — on conditions of detention);
- updating the National Strategy for Solving the Problem of Non-Execution of Court Decisions by state bodies or state enterprises, institutions, organisations until 2025 and the action plan for its implementation (group of cases *Burmych and Others v. Ukraine*);
- positive trends in national judicial practice regarding the expression of political views; reform in the field of administrative offences (case *Shvydka v. Ukraine* — prosecution for expressing opinions);
- judicial reform and legislative, institutional, and practical measures to improve the efficiency and reduce the length of civil and criminal proceedings (group of cases *Merit / Naumenko v. Ukraine*);
- restoration of the work of the High Council of Justice and measures to ensure the full functioning of the High Qualification Commission of Judges of Ukraine (case *Oleksandr Volkov v. Ukraine*);
- introduction of a mechanism for reviewing whole-life sentences (*Petukhov v. Ukraine*);
- reintroduction and restoration of the full operation of prosecutorial self-government and disciplinary bodies (group of cases *Lutsenko / Tymoshenko v. Ukraine*);
- elimination of the legislative gap regarding pre-trial detention during the period between the end of the investigation and the start of the trial, and a positive trend in reducing the number of court decisions sanctioning detention (group of cases *Chanyev / Ignatov v. Ukraine*).

In 2023, the CMCE concluded its supervision of 75 judgements (closed), including 10 landmark cases that influence other cases. Additionally, the CMCE moved the group of cases *Polyakh and Others v. Ukraine* (concerning lustration checks) from enhanced to standard supervision. For the first time since 2005, it removed three individual cases in the Kaverzin / Afanasyev / Belousov group from supervision.

There is reason to believe this practice will likely continue in 2024. This is the result of significant daily efforts of Ukraine's state bodies, primarily — the Ministry of Justice and the Government Agent of Ukraine before the ECtHR. Notably, following the 1492<sup>nd</sup> CMCE meeting in March 2024, which focused on supervising the implementation of ECtHR decisions, the Committee of Ministers recognised the individual measures taken in the cases *Kulykov and Others v. Ukraine* and *Gumenyuk and Others v. Ukraine*. These measures included several actions: repealing Article 375 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine; enacting legislation to transfer judges from the old Supreme Court of Ukraine to the newly established



court following the 2016 constitutional changes; fully reinstating the operational and disciplinary functions of the High Council of Justice; and revitalising the High Qualification Commission of Judges.

Moreover, the CMCE ended its supervision of the execution of the judgment in the case *Gumenyuk and Others v. Ukraine* after the state authorities restored the applicants' violated rights and took general measures to prevent such violations in the future.

— *During the Council of Europe Summit in Reykjavík in May 2023, members approved the creation of a Register of Damage for Ukraine, which is a step towards introducing an international compensation mechanism. Please tell us about its functioning. What other initiatives are under consideration that could contribute to the creation of a compensation mechanism?*

— The Register of Damage caused by the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine (Register of Damage for Ukraine) — is an international database that records evidence and claims for losses, damages, or injuries caused to all interested individuals and legal entities, as well as the state of Ukraine, by Russia's internationally unlawful actions in or against Ukraine. The CoE established it in May 2023.

The Register is open for accession to all CoE member and non-member states that have expressed support for Ukraine. As of March 2024, 40 CoE member states, Canada, Japan, the United States, and the European Union have joined the Register.

The headquarters of the Register of Damage is in The Hague (the Netherlands), housing an international team of CoE experts who operate with funding from member states' contributions.

The Register serves two primary purposes:

1. To become a centralised repository for evidence and information on the damage the Russian Federation inflicted on Ukraine.
2. To serve as the basis for developing a comprehensive compensation mechanism for victims of Russian aggression.

The Register itself does not provide compensation. However, the information it contains will support Ukraine's efforts to seek compensation from Russia and document the scale and consequences of Russian aggression.

The Register represents the first step towards establishing an international comprehensive compensation mechanism for victims of a Russian aggression. In the Reykjavík Declaration, adopted following the 4<sup>th</sup> Summit of Heads of State and Government, leaders of CoE member states agreed to cooperate with the international community in further developing such a mechanism. **This mechanism will operate under a separate international instrument and consist of a commission for reviewing claims and a compensation fund.** At the same time, they emphasised Russia's obligation to pay damages caused by its aggressive war.

Expectedly, a comprehensive compensation mechanism will focus on the principle of international responsibility. The latter means that Russia will be responsible for the damage caused to Ukraine and its citizens. The mechanism will compensate for a wide range of losses, including physical and moral harm and economic damages.

The Board is one of the governing bodies of the Register of Damage for Ukraine. It proposes the rules and regulations governing its operation. Additionally, the Board holds the highest authority to determine the eligibility of claims for entry into the register, which a future compensation commission will review. The Board will meet as often as necessary, but at least once a quarter.

At the inaugural meeting (11–15 December 2023), the Board of the Register of Damage for Ukraine elected its Chair and Vice-Chair and approved the rules and procedures for its operation. It also discussed, as one of the most pressing issues, the categories of compensation claims eligible for submission to the register.

The Board elected Robert Spano — Partner at Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher law firm and former President of the ECtHR — as its Chair and Dr Chiara Giorgetti — Professor at Richmond Law School — as Vice-Chair.

In addition to the Chair and Vice-Chair, the Board members are Veijo Heiskanen (Finland), Yuliia Kyrpa (Ukraine), Aleksandra Mężykowska (Poland), Lucy Reed (USA) and Norbert Wühler (Germany).

On 1 March 2024, the Board of the Register of Damage adopted the first set of rules and regulations of the register necessary to enable the submission of claims. It contains the rules for submitting, processing, and entering claims, as well as the categories of claims eligible for inclusion in the register (published on the official website).

**On 22 March 2024, the Register of Damage for Ukraine opened a satellite office in Kyiv during the visit of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to Ukraine.**

On 2 April 2024, the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of Participants of the Register of Damage for Ukraine took place, announcing the **launch of the register for claim submission**.

As of May 2024, one category of claims is open for submission: damaged or destroyed residential property. It is possible to submit a claim only electronically through the Ukrainian Diia platform, either via its mobile app or web portal.

— *What achievements have we reached in forming a special tribunal to hold those responsible for Russia's aggression against Ukraine?*

— The CoE is actively promoting the idea of establishing a special tribunal for the crime of aggression against Ukraine — both at the level of the Committee of Ministers and the PACE.

The PACE broadly supports the establishment of a special tribunal, as evidenced by a series of adopted resolutions and recommendations:

1. **Resolutions 2433 and 2436 and recommendations 2228 and 2231 (April 2022)** call for the setting up of an international criminal tribunal with its **headquarters in Strasbourg**.

2. **Resolution 2463 (October 2022)** calls for speeding up the process of establishing a tribunal and a compensation mechanism for reparations.

3. **Recommendation 2245 (January 2023)** invites the participants of the Summit in Reykjavik to support the setting up of a tribunal and ensure that the Russian Federation remains accountable for its aggression against Ukraine.

4. **Resolution 2482 (January 2023)** supports the creation of a special international tribunal and the extension of its jurisdiction to include aggression started by the Russian Federation as early as February 2014.

5. **Resolution 2506 (June 2023)** calls for the prompt establishment of a special tribunal for the crime of aggression against Ukraine.

In June 2024, the Assembly will review a report titled ‘Legal and human rights aspects of the Russian Federation’s aggression against Ukraine’, which will focus on the legal aspects of establishing a special tribunal.

On 15 September 2022, the CMCE reaffirmed for the first time the need to ensure a comprehensive accountability system for severe violations of international law resulting from Russian aggression against Ukraine and expressed interest in Ukrainian proposals to create a special tribunal.

In May 2023, its formation issue received support at the Reykjavik Summit of Heads of State and Government, demonstrating their serious intentions to ensure accountability for the aggression.

Currently, the CoE is intensively developing a model to establish the special tribunal based on an agreement between the CoE and the Government of Ukraine. Experts consider this model promising due to its speed and simplicity of implementation.

— *Please tell us about the public diplomacy projects organised by the Permanent Representation to cover Russia’s war against Ukraine.*

— The Permanent Representation of Ukraine to the Council of Europe (PRU to CoE) implements public diplomacy projects to disseminate the facts of the realities of the war Russia has waged against Ukraine on an international scale and to underscore the importance of partners’ support during this period of large-scale Russian aggression.

During the period 2022–24, the PRU to CoE initiated and supported numerous events highlighting Ukraine’s cultural richness, societal and political challenges, and the heroism of its people during the war. A significant part of its activities focused on drawing the international community’s attention to the humanitarian and legal issues concerning Ukraine.

In April 2022, the exhibition *Stand with Ukraine* featured photos and videos highlighting the courage of Ukrainians in their fight against Russia’s full-scale

aggression. In June of the same year, the photo exhibition *#OntheFrontlineOfTruth* highlighted the work of journalists at the frontline. In October, the side event *Crimea in the Darkness* and the art event *Hope for Ukraine* reinforced attention to human rights violations in occupied Crimea and received high acclaim.

The Permanent Representation actively started its work in 2023 by organising an event dedicated to establishing a special international tribunal to punish the crime of aggression. In April, a performance by the Zernyatko Children Folk Ensemble called for support of resolutions to protect children's rights. In June, the event *Bring The Band Home* emphasised the need to protect Ukrainian prisoners of war. In October, a cultural event highlighted the role of Ukrainian women in the war through a *vyshyvanka* fashion show. November featured the project *Culture vs War*, reflecting Ukraine's cultural resilience.

Similar to 2022, the year 2023 concluded with a charity Christmas fair that brought together representatives of 23 countries to support Ukraine. In January 2024, the PRU to CoE initiated the opening of two exhibitions — *War Diaries: Unheard Voices of Ukrainian Children* and *Beyond Borders: Ukraine's Untold Stories* — as well as a Ukrainian side event that underscored the importance of international sanctions for global peace.

On 19 February 2024, the CoE opened the exhibition *Dawn, Children of Ukraine* by French artist of Ukrainian origin Yurii Bilak, dedicated to Ukrainian children whose childhood the Russian aggressor stole through the full-scale invasion — forcing them to wake up one day at dawn as adults.

On 23 February 2024, the CoE presented the painting of a French conceptual artist Jean Pierre Raynaud — *Guernica-Ukraine* — as evidence that the world remains attentive to the heroic people of Ukraine, who have resisted Russia's full-scale military aggression for two years.

The Permanent Representation, in cooperation with Ukrainian-French NGOs and associations, such as MIST, Support Action Ukraine, PromoUkraine, organises screenings of feature films and documentaries about the war in Ukraine. These films not only depict events at the frontline but also explore the profound inner world and emotions of those experiencing the war. These films allow audiences to see the war as an absolute tragedy affecting millions of lives.

For instance, on 21 March 2024, the Council of Europe in Strasbourg premiered the full-length documentary film *Culture vs War*.

Cultural diplomacy is a powerful yet accessible tool for presenting reality to a broad audience and the international community. It helps people better understand important issues, maintain solidarity with a country undergoing trials, and deepen empathy for the tragedy, mobilising international aid and support.

An example of such an event is the symphonic concert *Les Enfances Volées*, organised with the assistance of the PRU to CoE on 28 March 2024. The event featured the Ukrainian Youth Symphony Orchestra, Vohnyk, and Dzvinochok

children's choirs, conducted by the renowned Ukrainian conductor Oksana Lyniv. Significant events included the screening of Mstyslav Chernov's documentary film *20 Days in Mariupol* at a Strasbourg cinema, which won the Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature in 2024, and a concert by Heorhii Maiboroda National Honoured Bandura Choir of Ukraine.

Moreover, the Permanent Representation strives to maintain close ties with the Ukrainian community in Strasbourg. To this end, we organise evenings of Ukrainian poetry readings, which serve as a platform for presenting Ukraine's creativity and cultural heritage. These events strengthen interaction between Ukrainians living in Strasbourg and local citizens while also promoting Ukrainian culture to an international audience.