

**62-th session of the Working Group on Strategies and Review
of the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution
(4 September 2023, Geneva)**

Statement by Ukraine

After the adoption of the agenda of the meeting

Dear Chair,

Distinguished delegates,

Five hundred fifty-eight (558). This is the number of days Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has been raging.

Three thousand four hundred eighty three (3483). This figure reflects the days of Russia's occupation of Ukraine's territories since 2014.

These numbers also reflect how long our country has been faced with the toxic legacy of war, among which there are water and land pollution, degradation of ecosystems and, first of all, war-related air pollution.

Despite the significant success of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in liberating the territories temporarily occupied by Russian military forces, the level of the environmental damage is not falling.

In revenge for its military losses on the ground, Russia continues terrorizing Ukrainian civilian and industrial facilities and civilian population. The Russian officials openly state that Ukraine must fulfil Kremlin's demands, otherwise civilians will continue suffering. So will our environment.

The abhorrent Russian terrorist attack of June, 6, 2023 – the blowing up of the Kakhovka dam – is the biggest environmental disaster Europe has seen in the last few decades and it should be a turning point of how the world recognizes ecocide.

Some more figures – almost two thousand five hundred (2,500) cases of environmental damage have already been recorded, with the Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine investigating nearly 200 cases of ecological war crimes.

Russian aggression turned the world's most fertile chernozem soil into a huge minefield. Two hundred fifty thousand (250,000) square kilometers

of Ukraine's territory are contaminated with mines and munitions. This is comparable to the territories of many UNECE Members States.

On the territories liberated by the Armed Forces of Ukraine the huge damage can already be seen as extensive territories (approximately 3 million hectares) have been burned down and dug up with trenches. This is roughly three-quarters of the territory of Switzerland. And it will take decades to recover.

We all know that polluted air has no borders. As a result of explosions, toxic gases in the amount of seven hundred and eight thousand (708 000) tons are released into the atmosphere and ultimately have global consequences. The magnitude of damage inflicted on Ukraine's and region's environment should be a matter of greatest concern for the UNECE Members.

While Ukraine reaffirms its commitments to the implementation of the Air Convention, we would like to stress that our priority to protect the environment should be the restoration of peace in the region, which would be possible only when Russia withdraws its troops from the territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

The Ukrainian Government is doing its utmost to mitigate negative consequences of Russia's ongoing aggression for the population and environment, taking unprecedented steps today to provide assistance to the people who have suffered losses due to the war. However, nature, being a silent victim of this war, cannot file a claim for its destroyed home. "Ecological Safety" is also one of the aspects of the 10 Point Peace Formula of President Zelenskyy, aimed at the restoration of a just and lasting peace. We should remember that nature can ruthlessly punish all of humanity for its inability to stop an aggressor who disrespects its laws.

Dear Chair,

Across the UNECE region and beyond, the war has led to increased level of air pollution, which must be properly considered and addressed by the Convention and related UN bodies, that should provide an adequate response to this threat. We call on all distinguished delegations present at this assembly to take joint actions towards the restoration of a safe environment for all.

We encourage the international conventional bodies to contribute to the implementation of the Peace Formula in order to ensure environmental security and address the environmental causes of Russia's war.

We would like this statement to be included in the report of the meeting.

Thank you.