

## **Statement by Ukraine**

*After the adoption of the agenda of the meeting*

**Dear Chair,**

**Distinguished delegates,**

*Thank you for giving me the floor now, as what I would like to highlight is related to each of the agenda items of this meeting and many other international fora in the field of environmental protection.*

For an enduring span of 1 year, 9 month, and 15 days, Russia has relentlessly unleashed an unprovoked large-scale war of aggression, which largely hits the civilian population of Ukraine, civilian infrastructure and the environment of the region.

Throughout more than 9 years of Russian aggression 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.

The war has a devastating impact on the environment. Almost three thousand (3000) cases of environmental damage have already been recorded. Air, soil and water is polluted as a result the fighting. The magnitude of damage inflicted on Ukraine's and region's environment should be a matter of greatest concern for the UNECE Members. The war damaged almost a third of Ukrainian forests, we became the most mined country in the world, ahead of Afghanistan and Syria, the destruction of water bodies led to a significant reduction in water reserves, which can cause the loss of 4 million tons of grain. The fires destroyed 64,000 hectares of land.

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, ultimately having global consequences.

Another environmental disaster was the Russian attack on the Kakhovka dam in June of this year – long-lasting consequences of which are already challenging to predict. We believe that this terrorist attack should have been a turning point in how the world recognizes ecocide.

How many more war-related environmental disasters must occur before the international community responds firmly to the aggressors?

The assessment of consequences is required: constant and long-term monitoring of the state of air, water, soil, fauna, and ecosystems. This work is ongoing, and we are grateful to everyone who helps us: a team of international legal advisers, forensic experts and environmental scientists, specialists from various fields who advise prosecutors and investigators and work directly at crime scenes.

We strive to achieve justice, which means punishing russia as a state and receiving compensation, as well as bringing to justice those involved in crimes against the environment - both from the command and control staff and the executors.

Russian aggression challenges not only Ukraine, but also the entire system of international law and global security. The best answer to this challenge is to prove that we are not just declaring our values, but also ready to defend them.

Our message is clear: in the face of challenges, we find the true measure of our capabilities.

Across the UNECE region and beyond, the increased level of air pollution caused by aggression 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 unite in actions toward restoring a safe environment for all. As a step toward this goal, your engagement in implementing our Peace Formula, ensuring environmental security and addressing the consequences of Russia's war is crucial. We appreciate the support and cooperation shown by many of the parties in facing these challenges.

**Dear Chair, Distinguished Delegates, Colleagues,**

Reaffirming our commitment to working for a comprehensive, just, and lasting peace, not only in Ukraine but in the UNECE region, we reiterate our demand for the Russian Federation to cease its aggression and withdraw its troops from the entire territory of Ukraine, thus restoring Ukraine's ability to protect and restore the environment within its internationally recognized borders.

*We kindly request the inclusion of this statement in the meeting report.*

**Thank you.**