

Intervento del Sottosegretario di Stato Benedetto della Vedova alla riunione straordinaria sull'Ucraina del Governing Council della "Community of Democracies".

Dear Secretary General, dear members of the Community of democracies

- Italy condemns in the strongest possible terms the Russian Federation's unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine.
- This is a blatant and outrageous violation of the most basic principles of international law, of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine and of fundamental humanitarian rules and principles. This unacceptable aggression is an attack against our fundamental values.
- Allow me to recall that last Friday, Italy, as current Chair of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, presided over the decision taken by the Committee to suspend the Russian Federation from its rights of representation in the Council of Europe. The decision was taken in response to Russia's violations of its obligations towards an organization devoted to democracy, rule of law and human rights.
- We demand that Russia immediately ceases its hostilities, unconditionally withdraws all forces and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine and fully respects Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence within its internationally recognized borders and territorial waters. Russia must respect international humanitarian law.
- The concept of "spheres of influence" or "limited sovereignty" has no place in the 21st century. Ukraine's security is our own security, and that of Europe as a whole.
- We also strongly condemn the involvement of Belarus in this aggression against Ukraine and reiterate our call on it to refrain from such action and to abide by its international obligations.
- We are proud of the firm and unified response of the European Union together with other partners, with the adoption of timely, decisive and far-reaching sanctions in response to Russian aggression, targeting a wide range of sectors (financial, export control, visa policy), entities and individuals.

- Deploring the tragic loss of life and human suffering, Italy stands in solidarity with all people whose lives have been affected by the war waged by the Russian Federation. Their rights must be upheld at all times, and accountability for any violation or abuse of these rights guaranteed.
- The conflict is already causing a humanitarian catastrophe. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has confirmed that more than five hundred civilians have been killed since the beginning of the hostilities. According to UNHCR, seven hundred thousand (700.000) have already fled the war in Ukraine seeking refuge in neighboring countries, and more than a hundred thousand are ISPs (internally displaced people). Sadly, the numbers are due to increase as the folly of this war continues.
- This is the moment when democratic communities have to stand up and show their strong solidarity to all women, men and children who are suffering because of this unacceptable aggression. Italy is playing and will continue playing its part for a strong and united humanitarian initiative.
- We should not forget that this is not the Russian peoples' war. Anti-war protests are being held in many cities across Russia. In total, more than 6,500 people have been detained at various anti-war protests since February 24, in 53 Russian cities. Our solidarity must go also to these brave Russians and to their aspiration to peace and democracy.
- Italy reiterates its resolute support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized border, and it will continue to stand by the people of Ukraine and its democratically elected institutions and representatives.