Excellencies,

Dear Thomas,

Dear guest speakers,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for participating at this urgent Governing Council meeting organized under these dire circumstances. Dear Thomas, thank you for facilitating the Community of Democracies immediate response to this crisis.

Since last week, we are witnessing a dark moment for one of our fellow democratic countries - Ukraine, for Europe, and for the entire international community.

The Russian Federation has chosen the completely illegal path of massive armed violence against an independent and sovereign state. Russia has responded to our efforts to maintain peace with missiles hitting Ukrainian cities. The Russian Federation has chosen the strength of tanks to the detriment of the lives of innocent citizens. By unleashing the aggression against Ukraine, Russia has broken all its international commitments, first of all the UN Charter.

These atrocious acts defy the very foundation of our rules-based international order. This is an attack on the very core values and principles of democracy.
As we speak, circumstances continue to aggravate. While military invasion in Ukraine continues, we have even seen an unprecedented nuclear threat and I reiterate Romania's firm condemnation of this inacceptable threat.

Defending and upholding fundamental values, human rights and democratic principles are the main goals of the Community of Democracies. Therefore, it is now high time that the Community of Democracies states come together to provide concrete outcomes for defending and protecting the Ukrainian young democracy. We need to also support its democratically elected representatives.

Now, more than ever, we must closely engage and cooperate to permit democracy and peace to thrive. It is critical now to prove that when they stand together democracies are stronger.

All of us must react swiftly and firmly, both to continue to sanction the aggressor, and to strongly and consistently support Ukraine.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Romania has proven its strong and unconditional support towards Ukraine both in words and in deeds, by advocating within the UN, OSCE, EU, NATO, and other fora for immediate, firm and consistent sanctions against the aggressor - the Russian Federation, and for consistent direct help for Ukraine and the brave Ukrainian people.
Romania has joined all the UN countries that voiced their call on the Russian Federation to abide by the principles set forth in the UN Charter and the Declaration on Friendly relations. Romania co-sponsored the UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly resolutions calling for condemnation of the use of force by Russia against Ukraine.
As Presidency of the Community of Democracies, Romania also supported and joined the member states of the Governing Council in condemning the Russian aggression towards Ukraine. We expressed support for the democratically elected institutions and representatives of Ukraine,

and for the democratic aspirations of the Ukrainian people. I thank all of you who joined this demarche.

Romania supported the ambitious package of rapid and extended sanctions against Russia, coordinated among international actors, including the closure of Russian propaganda machines in the EU and in Romania.

In these difficult moments, Romania and the Romanian people stand in full solidarity with Ukraine and its people facing this aggression, including through providing consistent bilateral help. Since the beginning of this crisis, we have been providing shelter for tens of thousands of Ukrainians, mostly elderly, women and children.
Between the 10th of February and the 1st of March, over 147.000 Ukrainian citizens crossed the Ukrainian - Romania border and more than 46.000 are currently in Romania. We have more than 1.200 requests for asylum.

We have also responsibly facilitated the safe transit for a large number of other foreign nationals and members of diplomatic missions from Ukraine. All these numbers are substantially increasing every day, and we are doing our best to respond to all requests.
Moreover, as part of the effort of the international community to support Ukraine, yesterday Romania decided the creation on the Romanian territory of a logistic facility, a regional hub to allow the collection and transport of international donations for humanitarian aid for Ukraine and Ukrainian people. The Romanian Government also donated to Ukraine fuel, equipment, food, medicine, worth of over 3,4 million Euro, and offered medical assistance for the Ukrainian military in our hospitals.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In these tragic times, our thoughts are with the Ukrainian people, with all Ukrainian women, men and children, forced to live in terror, or killed, innocent and collateral victims of a war they do not understand and did not want.

This seems to be the beginning of the most difficult period in generations. And this is the fight of our generation and a real test on our democracies.

The Community of Democracies must stand and uphold our values and principles. Our unity must not falter and our bonds with young and transitioning democracies around the world must be fully used.

We should continue to defend Ukraine's rights to freely choose its own foreign policy and to involve all means to stop the war.

We should also keep a very close attention to other states that are under constant pressure of the Russian Federation and are extremely vulnerable, such as the Republic of Moldova and Georgia. Parts of Western Balkans are also under pressure.
These young democracies need our support and, as Presidency of the Community of Democracies, I call all of you to fully engage in the process of protecting these states against possible pressure and aggression against democracy.

History has proven that there is no better-known path for freedom, peace and human rights than democratic systems. This new crisis should bring us, democracies, even closer, more united, more resolute to defend our values, principles, and the rules-based international order.

We must be vocal, we must be active and pro-active, and we need to act now.
We must ensure that democracy prevails over dictatorship, that truth and freedom overcome tyranny. In President's Zelensky's words – the "light will win over darkness". We must support Ukraine.

I am looking forward to your assessments and exchange on means we can further support Ukraine and democracy as we know it.

I thank you for your attention!