



**Statement by the Presidency of COMECE
in support of Ukraine and its people
amid deepening geopolitical complexities and uncertainties**

As the geopolitical landscape remains fraught with instability and uncertainty, the Presidency of COMECE wishes to reaffirm EU Bishops' continued closeness and heartfelt solidarity with the people of Ukraine, who have been suffering from Russia's unjustifiable full-scale invasion for more than three years.

We remember in prayer all those who have lost their lives, those who have been wounded, those who have had to flee their homes in fear, those who continue to defend their homeland.

We wish to express our gratitude to EU decision-makers for providing unprecedented humanitarian, political, economic, financial as well as military support to Ukraine and its people over the past years. We also deeply cherish the tireless efforts of civil society organisations, including many faith-based actors, and of ordinary citizens in showing concrete gestures of solidarity with the people suffering from the consequences of the war.

Ukraine's struggle for peace and the defence of its territorial integrity is not only a fight for its own future. Its outcome will also be decisive for the fate of the entire European continent and of a free and democratic world.

The war has now entered a new chapter. Amid deepening geopolitical complexities and the unpredictability of actions taken by some members of the international community, we call on the European Union and its Member States to remain united in their commitment to supporting Ukraine and its people.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine is a blatant violation of international law. The use of force to alter national borders and the atrocious acts committed against the civilian population are not only unjustifiable, but demand a consequent pursuit of justice and accountability.

A comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine can only be achieved through negotiations. Any credible and sincere dialogue effort should be supported by continued strong transatlantic and global solidarity and it must involve the victim of

the aggression: Ukraine. We firmly reject any attempts to distort the reality of this aggression.

In order to be sustainable and just, a future peace accord must fully respect international law and be underpinned by effective security guarantees to prevent the conflict from re-erupting. The peace agreement must establish the necessary conditions to ensure that Ukrainian families can reunite again and live a life in dignity, security and freedom in their sovereign and independent homeland.

Moreover, in view of restoring Ukraine's social fabric, strengthening its social cohesion and embarking on the long-term path of reconciliation, it will be equally important that the rights of all communities, including the Russian-speaking minority, are upheld and protected.

The international community should continue to assist Ukraine in the reconstruction of the destroyed infrastructure. Russia, the aggressor, must adequately participate in this effort.

In response to Ukraine's quest for a future within the European Union and to its pertinent reform endeavours, we call on the EU to advance with the enlargement process in a timely and fair manner alongside other candidate countries.

Moreover, as the contours of a new global security architecture are currently being redrawn, it is our profound hope that the European Union will remain faithful to its vocation to be a promise of peace and an anchor of stability to its neighbourhood and to the world.

As Christians prepare to embark on the journey of Lent, a time of repentance and conversion leading to Easter, the feast of hope and new life, we continue to entrust Ukraine and Europe to our Lord Jesus Christ, through the intercession of Mary, the Queen of Peace.