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ADDRESS

by Mr. Oleksandr TURCHYNOV,
Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine

Madam President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Here in the Lithuanian capital, my address is filled with special symbolism. Vilnius has - confidently and for ever - entered the history of Ukraine. The Vilnius idea - the idea of joining the European Union - has embodied the hope of millions of our fellow citizens for a profound change in the country and the consolidation of European values in Ukraine. It was the refusal to sign the Association Agreement with the EU that kick-started Euro Maidan and the decisive action of our people in the name of building a new Ukraine.

Hundreds of thousands of people took to the barricades, over one hundred lost their lives, and thousands were injured in the struggle to confirm Ukraine's commitment to European ideals.

4. And the Ukrainian people have broken the criminal core of a corrupt government. The Ukrainians have won because they protected European values which are an essential part of Ukrainian spirit. That was a fierce nationwide protest against the tyranny of evil, against the harassment of political opponents, against insatiable corruption and arrogant violation of human rights and freedoms. The malignant tumour of dictatorship oppressed the society, corroded its political system and destroyed Ukraine's economic foundations. The criminal regime pushed Ukraine towards the abyss of the bankruptcy of the whole Ukrainian statehood itself, not only its economic bankruptcy. Now, after the victory of the Ukrainian people and formation of a new government, we are back on the road to Europe.

5. Signing the political provisions of the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the European Union on 21 March 2014 was a historic milestone in the relations between Ukraine and the European Union. The agreement formally enshrined a civilisational choice made by our people. Apart from the systemic movement towards managing the Ukrainian society on the basis of European values, it will promote the elimination of a "visa wall" between our countries. We anticipate the European Union to speed up demolishing this wall. Then millions of Ukrainian citizens will have a chance to see with own eyes rather than on TV how European values work.

6. Now we possess a tool to strengthen democracy in Ukraine and to get the country closer to the European standards of social organisation. This is the road on which the new

Government of Ukraine and the new democratic majority in the Verkhovna Rada have set out from the very first day of their work.

7. We have to yet again rebuild the very basics of an independent democratic country – restore combat-prepared armed forces, transform a clan-based economy into the market economy of a democratic society, fight corruption which has corroded the framework of state authority, and establish the constitutional and legal guarantees so that the country should not revert to the times of dictatorship.

8. We thank all the member states of the European Union for their firm support to Ukraine. You stood with us on Euro Mайдan. You were with us in the most tragic days of the conflict; you saved many of our citizens who had shed blood for the future of a new Ukraine.

In victory, Ukraine is facing a new challenge. Contrary to all the norms of international law and its own treaty obligations, Russia has annexed a part of Ukraine's territory. Today in Crimea, Russia uses force to "convert" Ukrainians into Russian Federation citizens, intimidates dissenters and persecutes national minority activists.

9. Ukraine will never recognise the annexation of our land that took place under the conditions of harsh Russian occupation. The Crimean Peninsula has been and will remain an integral part of Ukraine. This is recognized by the entire civilised international community.

All the subsequent steps, which were taken by Russia following the occupation of Crimea, aim to destabilise the situation in the south-eastern regions of Ukraine. In these actions, we see a meticulously elaborated long-term strategy to deliberately undermine the Ukrainian statehood and an attempt to restore a post-Soviet empire

10. The armed forces of the Russian Federation openly manoeuvre close to the borders of Ukraine. Political pressure and the economic and information warfare against the new course in Ukraine have taken on all the trappings of Russia's state policy. Under these conditions, we reckon that there is a high probability of preparing a large-scale military invasion by the Russian Federation into Ukraine.

So the case of Ukraine is not just about an act of aggression against one European country in contravention of all the norms of international law. In the second decade of the twenty-first century and in the heart of Europe, the international community has witnessed a brutal assault on the integrity of the entire system of global security. In front of our eyes there has emerged a direct challenge to a well-established and stable world order when the position of the whole world community is blatantly ignored. In other words, the Kremlin has spurned the universally acknowledged, fundamental agreed provisions of the Final Act of the 1975 Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe and thus questioned the whole legal system guaranteeing the state sovereignty of UN Member States.

11. Ukraine's territorial integrity and the inviolability of its borders is guaranteed by a number of international legal instruments, in particular, by Ukraine's accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons – the so called Budapest Memorandum - and bilateral Ukrainian - Russian treaties.

It is so hard to believe that in modern Europe, which has experienced the worst horrors of human history in the Second World War, such a medieval savagery takes place - an attack on a peaceful neighbouring country just because it has proclaimed its desire to integrate into a united Europe. One cannot but recall the historical analogy of 1938 and the erroneous appeasement policy which pushed millions of Europeans into the horrible fire of war. The tragic experience of the most dreadful war in the 20th century reminds us that the aggressor's appeasement cannot protect the world from the peril of war, bloodshed and boundary redrawing.

We thank all the States that have strongly condemned Russia's actions both in the framework of international organisations and in bilateral contacts.

12. We owe special gratitude to the Lithuanian leadership, the Seimas of Lithuania and the Lithuanian people because in the period of our historic ordeal, they have stood and continue to stand by the Ukrainian people. It was Lithuania that on the last day of her Presidency in the UN Security Council promptly initiated the consideration of the issue about the military aggression of Russia against Ukraine.

The recent approval by an overwhelming majority of the UN General Assembly of the Resolution on "The Territorial Integrity of Ukraine" has clearly demonstrated the inadmissibility of actions aimed at the partial or complete violation of the national unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine and the threat or use of force against it.

We look forward to receiving further effective support from our international partners.

14. In conclusion, a few words about the next most important step to reorganise the domestic political system within the Ukrainian society.

A landmark event to restore the legitimate chain of government authority in our country will be the early presidential elections in Ukraine on 25 May 2014. As Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, I would like to thank the EU Member States that have declared their readiness to send observers to the elections as part of the OSCE mission.

I would also like to urge you to support the widest possible participation of MPs from your respective countries in the observation missions of the European Parliament, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

I also urge the entire European and international community to continue to demonstrate solidarity with the Ukrainian people and help us stand firmly against the aggressor, which is part and parcel of ensuring peace and stability in Europe and throughout the world.

Thank you.