

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I had many ideas for today's speech. One by one I discarded them. Here is why.

We live in turbulent times. After a short break from History some that of us enjoyed, it has again caught up with us all. In times like these, when the world seems out of joint, when the old seems to be dying but the new cannot yet be born – what we need is a return to basics. To questions about what's right and what's wrong, what's true and what's false, what's actually happened and what's just a figment of propaganda. Almost exactly three years ago, on March 2<sup>nd</sup> 2022, nations of the world gathered here in a special session faced with a straight question – whether to condemn, applaud or ignore Russia's invasion on Ukraine. Their answer was clear.

The measure condemning Vladimir Putin's actions was adopted by a vote of 141 in favor with 35 abstentions – an unequivocal reaffirmation of our commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity. Only 5 countries voted against – among them Russia, Belarus, North Korea and representatives of the now deposed Syrian regime. Quite a company.

According to Kremlin's propaganda what started three years ago was a justified reaction to western imperialism allegedly threatening Russia's security. In fact, we have seen a modern-day colonial war against Ukrainian people who want a better life and realize they can never achieve this goal by going back to subjugation to Russia. That is what they are being punished for – an effort to free themselves from under the control of a former metropolis. Many countries represented here, know the experience. Kremlin aggression is a manifestation of a failing empire's desperate struggle to restore its sphere of influence. We all knew it back then.

Fast forward three years and the same group is no longer so sure. What happened? Basic facts have not changed. Russia invaded a sovereign nation, violating its rights to existence and self-determination. During the course of war Russian forces killed thousands of people. They indiscriminately bombed both military and civilian infrastructure – apartments, hospitals, schools, kindergartens. You've seen it all. War crimes have been committed. Thousands of Ukrainian children were kidnapped and

sent to Russia to strip them of their national identity. Vladimir Putin does not only want to destroy Ukraine's presence. He wants to steal its future too.

We all knew it back then. We still actually know it.

Opinions in this body began to shift not because of the facts. They changed because of self-interests. Some of our member-states now seem to believe that ending the war at any cost and restoring business as usual with Russia will be beneficial.

As a representative of the only country in the world neighboring both Russia and Ukraine I can tell you – it will not.

By normalizing relations with Moscow you would be entrusting your security and economic stability to an autocrat and a war criminal, in an international environment much more unstable than it was a decade or two ago.

Russian victory - may it never come - would not create a more just global order. It wouldn't benefit countries dissatisfied with where things stand now. It wouldn't even bring about a more just and prosperous Russia. Suffice to say there are now more political prisoners in Russia than there were in the 1980's when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. There are many more casualties as well.

Repercussions of an appeasement would also not be limited to Russia's immediate neighborhood. Kremlin's "green men" well-known from Donbas are already present in African, Latin American and Asian countries operating under different names. Let Putin win in Ukraine and their activities will only intensify.

Moscow's disruptive actions in Africa echo its actions in Europe: undermining stability, supporting illiberal regimes, discrediting the West. Thousands of mercenaries from the so-called Wagner Group – now charmingly re-named "Africa Corps" – are employed by local warlords and rewarded with access to precious metal and mineral mines. Stripping Africa yet again of its wealth.

If Ukraine is abandoned today, who will be next tomorrow? Another country in Eastern Europe? Why not a Middle-Eastern or African state, targeted to serve as a Russian military base, replacing Syria where a regime propped by Kremlin recently collapsed?

Ladies and gentlemen,

We've just heard another performance by the Russian ambassador consisting of lies, propaganda and hypocrisy. He referred to Ukraine as a project – Ukraine is not a project. Ukraine is a country with a longer history than Russia. Ukraine is a member of this body for far longer than the Russian Federation. Ukraine has a history, language and identity and aspirations, all of its own. With borders confirmed several times, in treaties by the Russian Federation. The mission of this body from its foundation has been to decolonize, not to recolonize.

International community cannot appease aggression, because violence reproduces by indifference.

Basic facts that prompted our strong, unified reaction three years ago, have remained unchanged. And when the facts don't change, we should stick to our guns.

Poland of course supports peace, but peace that is stable and with justice for the victim of aggression.

Thank you.