President of the Baltic Assembly calls on the Nordic colleagues to support Ukraine and isolate Russia

On 21-22 March 2020, the members of the Presidium of the Baltic Assembly participated in the Nordic Council theme session "War in Europe again – how can the Nordic Region best help Ukraine?" in Malmö, Sweden.

Ukrainian ambassador to Denmark Mykhailo Vydoinyk started the discussion on ways how to support Ukraine by saying that the help Ukraine is getting is not enough. "The size of the enemy we’re facing means that we need more. First and foremost, we need weapons," said Mykhailo Vydoinyk. He highlighted that now the main task is to stop the war, but not at any cause. "We need to achieve it through unity and solidarity to ensure that flames of war never burn in Europe again."

President of the Baltic Assembly Jānis Vucāns told the colleagues in the Nordic Council that the Baltic States firmly condemn Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. "For almost a month, innocent people are dying and Vladimir Putin is showing no respect for human life – first of all, Ukrainian, but also Russian," said Jānis Vucāns.

He highlighted that the Baltic history helps us understand the experiences of the Ukrainian people, but despite the devastation and sadness in our region, the Baltic people know that this is time to act. President said that the international community made some serious mistakes in 2014 when Russia invaded Crimea. "Because of that, we are today in this horrible situation. Now Ukraine is on the frontline to protect its freedom but also the rights of all of us to democracy and peace in Europe. We must not forget that!"

President of the Baltic Assembly called on the Nordic Council to support Ukraine with all
the means possible. "I invite all the Nordic EU Members States to support granting Ukraine the official status of candidate country. Such a step will be a clear sign that the European community not only supports Ukrainians in words but also is ready to take serious steps. The Baltic States have already expressed firm support and commitment to help Ukraine become a full-fledged member of the EU."

Jānis Vucāns also called on the Nordic Council to help ensure the isolation of Russia. "We have always said that diplomatic means and light economic sanctions are not going to affect the actions of Russia. The language Putin understands is power. European leaders have to be more united than ever to show Russia that invading an independent democratic state is not going to be accepted and the consequences will be severe on all levels."

In the concluding remarks, Jānis Vucāns said: "Ukraine and other countries at a similar risk have their eyes on Europe! We must remain alarmed and focused! Even if the war has become the new reality in Europe, we cannot accept it as something normal. Let us work together to stop the war in Ukraine and any future violent aggression from Russia!"

Member of the Presidium of the Baltic Assembly Inese Voika also addressed the Nordic parliamentarians. "The war in Ukraine is our war - the Baltic States understand that well and the Nordic states should understand that even more than today," said Inese Voika. She also highlighted that dictators cannot be educated - they have to be fought considering our values of democracy, rule of law and human rights.

Member of the Presidium said that there is a need to do more and for a long period of time to support Ukraine. "The wars are started by dictators but won by nations and people. It will be done by Ukraine and us together," reminded Inese Voika.

Throughout the session, the Nordic parliamentarians condemned Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and expressed their full support for Ukraine and also the Baltic States. Nordic
Council member Hans Wallmark said that there is a need to listen to Ukrainian and Baltic colleagues. He called for stronger sanctions and not just statements but also concrete actions from the Nordic countries. "Ukraine deserves our support. Their fight is ours," added Hans Wallmark. President of the Nordic Council Erkki Tuomioja concluded the debate by promising that the Nordic Region will continue to support Ukraine and that in the long run, it is also willing to provide assistance for the reconstruction of the country.

One of the other topics discussed in the theme session was the Nordic welfare model and its future. President of the Baltic Assembly Jānis Vucāns informed about the welfare systems of the Baltic States adapting to the crisis in Ukraine and refugees arriving from the country, a recent debate that took place during the meeting of the Welfare Committee of the Baltic Assembly on 4 March. He also invited the Nordic Council while discussing the welfare model in the region to consider also the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine that will affect the welfare of the whole of Europe.

*Read more about the discussions here:*


**Photos**
Nordiska rådets temasession
Malmö 21–22 mars