

February 25th

A brief overview of the situation

1. The invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation continues. During the second day of fighting Russian armed forces and equipment have been deployed around three of Ukraine's key cities—Kyiv, Kharkiv and Sumy. At present, only reconnaissance missions have entered these cities and there have not been large troop deployment yet. At the moment, Ukraine's civilian population is still able to leave the cities moderately unhindered, although some routes are no longer suitable for movement due to the destruction of highway infrastructure (for example, the route from Kyiv to Irpin).
2. Ukraine is under threat of losing control of the region of Kherson. A part of the Kherson region was already taken yesterday after advances by Russian forces (albeit the Kherson city hasn't been seized). Some towns and conurbations are now under the control of Russian forces, or have otherwise suffered damage during the assaults. The Ukrainian air defence system continues to intercept missiles, despite expectations that it had been neutralised already on the 24th February. On 25th February, several Kalibr cruise missiles and one Iskander missile were reported as being intercepted over the capital city, Kyiv. The front-line north of Kyiv, manned by Ukraine's Joint Forces Operation, remains stable—due to strong reinforcements and greater combat experience. Ukraine and Russia are currently reporting significantly diverging figures on military and civilian casualties, therefore it is impossible to reasonably establish the real human impact of the conflict so far.
3. The prolonged encirclement of larger cities and the breaking of civilian supply chains may result in a variety of humanitarian problems, stemming from the lack of essential goods, foodstuffs, medicines, and access to fresh water, *inter alia*. Several humanitarian organizations, including notably the ICRC, have already started dispatching humanitarian aid to Ukraine. However, at present there are problems with delivering it to the front-line cities. This is due to the lack of humanitarian corridors, such as is the case in Shchastya in the Luhansk region. To enable the civilian evacuation temporary ceasefires and the establishment of humanitarian corridors are urgently needed.
4. A high risk of an environmental catastrophe remains as the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant has been taken over by the Russian military, and is now implicate in the theatre of conflict and may therefore be at risk of sabotage or damage as a result of fighting. On February 25th, the risk of shelling in the vicinity of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant resulted in two of the six power units from the power system being disconnected.
5. The threat to Ukraines coastal cities continues. Following Kherson, the forces of the Russian Federation started operations with the aim of encircling Melitopol and Berdiansk. They have also reportedly landed in Mykolayiv. According to Russian officials, the launch of the North-Crimean Canal will be possible in a few weeks after repair works begin.
6. Today, the presidents of Ukraine and the Russian Federation have expressed their support for the negotiations. President Putin has already stated his readiness to hold talks at a high (not presidential) level in Minsk, but under the condition that Ukraine recognizes the annexation of Crimea and CADLR, as well as gives a guarantee of demilitarization and maintains the non-

aligned status. Ukrainians perceive these conditions as tantamount to capitulation. Should the Ukrainian authorities take this step, it could lead to the polarization of society which is highly mobilised. A large part of society is against a settlement and does not even support the holding of negotiations with the Russian Federation. In a context where automatic weapons are being distributed to the population, polarization poses a threat of armed civil confrontation, which will inevitably complicate disarmament, demobilization and reintegration efforts. In the case of rapid capitulation, the risk exists that the weapons may be turned against the authorities (or against the new authorities if the Russian side forms an alternative government). Due to the volatility of the situation it is necessary to develop multiple evidence-based scenarios of the possible negotiation processes. The scenarios will depend on the further development of the armed conflict.

7. On 24th February the skies above Ukraine has been closed for civil aviation. Aircraft are also not currently flying over the south of Russia, Belarus and eastern border regions of the EU countries. Some European airlines refused to fly to Russia and banned Russian aircraft from using their airspace. Currently, no ban on military flights over Ukraine is being planned, which gives great advantages to the Russian side in the conflict.
8. The armed aggression against Ukraine has also been accompanied by cyber-attacks. Meanwhile Russian official sites have themselves been attacked by global hacker groups. The Anonymous group has declared war on Russian official sites and Russia Today. Cyber-attacks and blocking the Russian propaganda sites in social networks are steps which may contribute significantly to the fight against Russian propaganda, along with economic sanctions.
9. Ukrainian civil society actors, politicians and ordinary people are asking to support Ukraine calling EU Member States and other partners to act immediately and take following steps: take Russia out of SWIFT; supplying Ukraine with more military equipment to defend itself; cut diplomatic ties with Russia; shelter Ukrainian airspace.