

**Conference of Participants of the Register of
Damage caused by the Aggression of the
Russian Federation against Ukraine**

5th meeting, 11/10/2023, 10:00

Speaking notes for the President of the Parliamentary
Assembly, Mr Theodoros Rousopoulos

Dear Mr. Secretary General,

Dear Mr. Secretary General of the

Congress of Local and Regional Authorities,

Dear Chair of the Conference of Participants

Distinguished national delegations and participants,

Ladies and gentlemen,

In June 2023, my predecessor, Mr. Tiny Kox,

had the privilege of addressing the first meeting

of the Conference of Participants

of the Register of Damage.

Today, I am honoured to address you.

The war continues with the destruction

escalating each day,

putting a heavy toll
on Ukraine's civilian population,
economy, and infrastructure.

The total cost of rebuilding Ukraine's devastated cities,
railways, highways, and factories
is still being assessed.

The conflict has plunged
the nation's finances into a critical state,
with economic and social policies in disarray.

Over 10 million people have been displaced,
and nearly 60% of small
and medium-sized businesses
have either closed or suspended operations.

Homes, hospitals, and schools now lie in ruins.

In 2021, Ukraine had a major project
to improve its road infrastructure.

Today, according to estimates made in 2023, the country spends €3 billion per month on military expenses alone.

In addition to the vast material losses and the damaged economic system, we must also consider the moral suffering of those affected by injuries, sexual violence, torture, and the grief caused by the death, disappearance or wounding of their loved ones.

"War is decided by some but endured by others."

Even though the prospects of a swift end to the war may remain clouded by pessimism, today we speak of hope - the hope born from multilateralism.

I am aware that during the last meeting of the Committee of Ministers, many delegates reaffirmed their commitment to the idea of multilateralism as a means of navigating today's geopolitical storms. The Register of Damage is a prominent example of such a successful international cooperation. 43 States and the EU have already joined the Enlarged Partial Agreement on the Register, either as participants or as associate members. More than ten thousand claims have already been submitted since the Register started operating earlier this year. In such a short time, tremendous progress has been made in preparing the establishment of a comprehensive claims mechanism, which initially seemed like a Herculean task.

The Register of Damage is the first and cornerstone element of a mechanism that continues to take shape and solidify.

I would like to welcome the cooperation between governments and international institutions that has made, and continues to make, this work possible.

More than 50 countries, as well as the Council of Europe and other international organisations, have come together to map out the future work of the Claims Commission, which is the next step to be taken as soon as possible.

The key principles for the Claims Commission's future work have been agreed upon, and the draft of the founding instrument has undergone its first reading. This affirms, in a very practical way, the condemnation of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and the violations of international law it has committed on Ukrainian territory. I invite the Council of Europe to actively engage in bringing the Claims Commission to fruition and ensuring its proper functioning.

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,
funding is a pre-condition of the viability of any project.

I welcome the macro-financial assistance to Ukraine,
approved this week
by the Council of the European Union,
which consists in a loan secured
and if necessary paid back
using future revenues stemming from
the Russian state assets
frozen since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.
Apart from this,
the establishment of a trust fund,
as called for by the Assembly
in its resolution
“Support of the reconstruction of Ukraine”,
is crucial to ensure the sustainability
of the overall compensation mechanism.

Another important initiative,
again stemming from an Assembly resolution
adopted only two months after the launch
of the full-scale invasion,
also fully reflects
the strength of international cooperation
among democratic countries.

I am speaking of the ongoing work
on the creation of a special tribunal
for the crime of aggression.

When, in February 2023,
Ukraine called for support for a Special Tribunal,
more than 40 countries responded positively.
This shows that holding Russia's leadership
to account for the war of aggression,
the crime without which all atrocities
we hear about every day would not happen,
is a priority for the global coalition of states,
including countries from the Global South.

The “Core Group” of supporters of the Special Tribunal is set to meet in November to further refine and chose among the different proposals that are on the table, including one in which the Council of Europe would once again play an important role.

This is very encouraging.

The Assembly believes that the creation of this tribunal through a bilateral agreement between the Council of Europe and Ukraine has emerged as the best feasible option, both in terms of legal basis and political legitimacy.

Dear participants,

I want to assure you of the Assembly’s unequivocal support for the Register of Damage and its operation, including your goal, Mr. Secretary General, of securing the accession of countries outside of Europe to the Register.

The Assembly has also called on all member States to join the Register of Damage if they have not yet done so.

Regarding the establishment of the Claims Commission, I invite the Council of Europe to actively engage and even take the lead in finalising this project.

It is important for me to emphasise the significance of a fund. I hope that the work on the trust fund may begin soon to secure the third step of the compensation mechanism, after the establishment of the Register of Damages and the Claims Commission: namely the actual payment of the duly registered and adjudicated claims.

Finally, I invite all member states
and international organisations
of the core group on the establishment
of the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression
to give political momentum
to the technical work already carried out.

Dear Alain, you said earlier that
this task might be technical
but political as well, and I agree.

We need to find the right political forum
to finalise, in practical terms,
this proposal that will bring more justice to our world.
And I trust that the Council of Europe,
committed to the ideas of multilateralism
and justice in Europe and throughout the world,
will be that political forum.

In accordance with our Statute,
there cannot be peace without justice
and international co-operation.

I am certain that if we stand united with Ukraine, we will deliver the promises made in Reykjavik, not least through this crucial Register.

We will help deliver justice to Ukrainians and accountability for the Russian Federation's multiple violations of international law, including of human rights law and international humanitarian law.

Thank you, and I wish you a fruitful meeting.