

Speech by M. Emmanuel Macron, President of the Republic, at the Munich Security Conference

Munich, 17 February 2023

(Check against delivery)

Heads of State and government,

Ministers,

Directors and directors-general of international organizations,

Secretary-General,

Ladies and gentlemen, in your various ranks and capacities – because I won't recognize everyone, either in the hall or on the stairways, and I know there are also a lot of members of parliament and CEOs – thank you for being here.

Cher Christoph Heusgen, Chairman of the conference,

Dear friends,

I am pleased to be back with you today in this place where, for nearly 60 years, many debates have been held which have been formative for our world and have fed into this transatlantic community's field of thought. But today – as we have just seen with President Zelenskyy and Chancellor Scholz, who preceded me and whose earlier speeches I commend – is obviously a time of gravity. In a few days it will be one year since the start of the disastrous war of aggression waged by Russia against Ukraine. And even though now is not the time for conclusions, it is already time for an assessment and, I believe, for a few common expectations that we can give ourselves.

So I am obviously going to focus my remarks on the war started by Russia in Ukraine. But I want to say that, for all that, we have not forgotten the wars in the Caucasus, the Middle East and Africa, the fight against terrorism, the nuclear security issues also posed in other regions, etc. But it is indeed Ukraine that we are going to talk about today.

Now, one year on, the toll of a disastrous and unjustified conflict is considerable. And basically I would like to stress one point, namely that this war, contrary to what I read too often, is not merely a Europeans' war. It affects the whole planet, first of all because it is an aggression with no justification whatsoever and which I would describe – as I did on the rostrum of the United Nations General Assembly a few months ago – as neo-colonialist and imperialist. This is indeed the world vision that dominates this aggression, which denies a neighbour's identity, sees part of its territory or indeed its whole territory as capable of being captured without respect, and arrogates to itself a form of guardianship over another people. And to accept this, look away, close one's eyes, is to regard neo-colonialism and imperial power as legitimate anywhere else in the world.

The second thing is that in the name of this world vision, all taboos have been broken: not only the violation of the Charter of the United Nations, itself accepted by a power that is a

permanent member of the Security Council, but murders, rapes, war crimes, the systematic destruction of civilian infrastructure, and therefore a systematization of war crimes against the Ukrainian people, but also nuclear threats. And here I want to pay tribute to the tireless work done from the outset by the IAEA and its Director General, Mr Grossi – in Ukraine as in Iran, because this subject remains on our minds.

Finally, this aggression is having disastrous effects on the world, and Russia bears full responsibility for them: the food crisis, the unprecedented rise in the price of raw materials despite the solidarity measures we are taking with the most vulnerable countries. And I know some of our partners in the world say, “it’s a European matter”, “there are wrongs on both sides”. I ask them to leave behind this relativism. There is indeed an aggressor and an aggressee, and above all there are principles underlying this aggression which are clear and which we cannot allow to win if we want a stable international order and lasting peace.

The second major point I would like to make is that the Russian aggression has already been marked – crowned, as it were – by four clear failures. The first failure is on the ground. The basic theory was that the attack would be swift, that Ukraine would not resist and that it was a matter of a few days or weeks. The extraordinary courage of Ukraine’s armed forces and people, of its leaders and all its political forces – and here I pay tribute to all the friends I can see in this hall and the President, whom we saw on the screen earlier – thwarted that terrible plan, and the resistance in Kyiv [thwarted] the recapture of the north. What was also done in Kherson, Kharkhiv and so many places showed a failure of Russia’s initial military plan.

The second failure is very clearly that of the colonial mentality. There was a discourse which sought to create confusion between a zone of influence and a zone of coercion and explain that there was some legitimacy to this conflict. One year on, this has not succeeded. I want to say clearly that it is the duty of us all to continue this work of explaining and spelling out the fact that Russia today is an unbalancing power, a power of disorder, not only in Ukraine but also in the Caucasus, the Middle East and Africa, through Wagner, because this war has also enabled the ambiguity and indeed hypocrisy we have seen in recent years to be spelt out.

I myself was in Russia a year ago to try and argue for peace. And President Putin said to me, with a confidence I thought was relative but which I nevertheless believed in: “Those Wagner people are not ours. They pose problems for us in Russia too.” They have now officially confirmed that Wagner was an explicit, direct, diplomatic-military, mafia-style conduit for Russia worldwide and is going to basically extend the international network of crime and disorder. We have defeated it in relative terms, but we must see the job through.

Russia’s third failure is a misreading of the future. The concrete result is the consolidation of Ukraine and its strength, and the decision by Finland and Sweden to join NATO, and I want to tell the leaders how much we are with them on this path. It also means increased international dependence, a loss of prestige at every level, a deeply-rooted suspicion and a legitimate mistrust that many in the region may have. How can we believe that the challenges in the Caucasus will be resolved by the neo-colonial Russia I have described? And I say this to my friend Prime Minister Pachinyan, by whose side we continue to stand and will continue to act.

And the fourth failure, probably the most disturbing one, is President Putin’s current failure to give back to Russia what he promised, namely its authority in the world, because

ultimately how can Russia make do with being a producer of raw materials rather than a creative economy, make do with a mediocre gross domestic product despite having the strengths of a global power, and now make do with widespread suspicion from all its neighbours?

So having said all that, I can easily repeat what I argued on this very rostrum two years ago: none of us will change Russia's geography, it will always be on European soil. And none of us will be able to avert what is today an inevitability. But our dilemma is that there will be no full and lasting peace on our continent unless we can tackle the Russia question, but in a clear-sighted way, without complacency, and this is a reality. And it is really in this spirit that we must continue to move forward, without taking any easy route. This has also driven my words and deeds since this conflict began and before: no easy routes, no naivety, genuine determination, strength when we need it, but also the courage to re-engage in dialogue to find lasting solutions. But today is very clearly not the time for dialogue, because we have a Russia which has chosen war, chosen to intensify the war and chosen to go as far as war crimes and attacking civilian infrastructure.

So the short-term conclusion we must draw from this pattern is simple: Russia cannot and must not win this war, and the Russian aggression must fail, because we cannot allow the illegal use of force to become the norm, otherwise European security as a whole and, more generally, global stability would be called into question. This is why we, together with our European and American partners and several others, have been at the forefront of this security and support. Sanctions: 10 sanctions packages adopted by the Europeans on Russia since the beginning of the war, and military, economic and humanitarian support for Ukraine and its people, with support conferences on civilian infrastructure, equipment transferred, finance, and constant mobilization. And thank you, Secretary-General, for all the work done.

Each time, France has prioritized sectors with greater added value, taking Ukraine's expectations into account: artillery, anti-aircraft defence in particular, and a training programme for thousands of soldiers. This is why we have simultaneously agreed to strengthen our share of the defence of NATO's eastern flank, especially in Romania, Estonia and in Europe's skies, while also increasing our presence in the Mediterranean, where our carrier battle group is helping to provide reassurance.

This is the strategy adopted since the first days of the conflict, because we turned this reinforcement into actions on the ground, for example on Romanian soil, as early as the end of February 2022. And we are going to continue and step this up because, as I speak, I am convinced that we absolutely must intensify our support and our effort to assist the resistance by the Ukrainian people and army and enable them to conduct the counter-offensive, which is the only way of bringing about credible negotiations under conditions chosen by Ukraine, its authorities and its people. And so while we wait, as it were, to be surprised by peace, we are ready to step things up today, because the coming weeks and months are decisive and we are ready for a prolonged conflict.

Saying this does not mean I wish for it, but above all, if we do not wish for it, we must be credible collectively in our ability to make this long-term effort. And this is how France is part of it. This is our state of mind, our determination, our desire today standing alongside Ukraine, because it is the only way to get Russia back to the discussion table in an acceptable way and build a lasting peace: in other words, at the time and under the conditions that are chosen by the Ukrainians.

Having said that, I wanted to make a few appeals now to my European friends, building on and continuing the few convictions I have just shared.

The first appeal is to reinvest massively in our defence. If we Europeans want peace, we must give ourselves the resources for it. France is playing its part, following a National Strategic Review which I set out last November, and the Government has just submitted to the nation's elected representatives a military estimates bill that will bring our budget over the period 2024-2030 to €400 billion, i.e. €100 billion more than the previous period. This is a considerable increase, and Europeans need to make this effort. But rearming also means strengthening the Defence Technological and Industrial Base, keeping alive and extending all the mechanisms we have recently developed, particularly through the so-called Versailles agenda nearly a year ago. Many States that would like to help arm Ukraine today sometimes depend on decisions by non-European countries and many non-European manufacturers. And if Europe wants to be able to defend Europe, it must also arm itself, take advantage of NATO's interoperability and speed up its ability to produce on European soil.

So before the summer I would like us to adopt an ambitious European programme of investment in defence and, in the immediate future, make the most of the European Defence Fund.

We must also look again at our speed; together as Europeans we must look at how to produce more and faster, and this war economy which, since the spring, we have wanted to strengthen in France – we must go even further, move to more standardization, more simplification, and do so as Europeans.

The second appeal is to take into account the nuclear factor in this crisis. Everyone, over the past year, has gained an idea of the importance of one of the unspoken things in this conflict, or, dare I say it, one of the things sometimes spoken about too much in this conflict: nuclear weapons.

The Russian aggression has been waged in the shadow of deterrence, and deterrence has been a significant factor, on the other side, in the allies' protection. This situation is a reminder of the importance of the role nuclear weapons play and must continue to play in the European Union and NATO.

France's deterrent capability, along with that of the United Kingdom, plays a specific role here, enabling Europe to help strengthen NATO's overall security. Obviously, our American allies also play a crucial role in this regard. I would like to see us reaffirm NATO's nuclear status and draw the appropriate consequences of this status in all international forums. I also want to repeat the offer I made at the Ecole de Guerre in February 2020, i.e., to hold a dialogue with those European partners who wish to discuss France's nuclear deterrent and how Europe fits in with France's vital interests.

My third appeal is to rethink our security doctrine in order to guarantee Europe's participation in all future arms control talks. One example I find especially striking relates to intermediate-range missiles. At a NATO summit in late 2019, as Olaf no doubt remembers, I highlighted the grotesque situation that we found ourselves in. The United States, under a different administration, had decided to pull out of certain treaties that the Russians hadn't abided by for years; they related to our territory and yet we were not involved in those decisions.

We must put an end to this situation, in which we Europeans are a sort of geopolitical minority. Europe's security is at stake. It is we who must conceive of this doctrine, produce it, negotiate it and guarantee it, in partnership with our NATO allies and as Europeans. Intermediate-range weapons, as I was saying, were governed by the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. France was not a party to that treaty. We abided by its provisions and then we realized that a treaty dealing with this risk no longer existed. There are lessons to be learned here – reviving negotiations on this issue would represent a real contribution to Europe's system of protection.

When these kinds of instruments are negotiated in the future, Europe must have a seat at the table. This relates to the broader issue so rightly raised by Chancellor Scholz concerning the continent's air defences. It is a good topic for discussion. That is why I would like to hold a conference in Paris on Europe's air defences that includes our German, Italian and British partners, and all those in Europe who wish to join us. It will allow us to approach the issue from an industrial perspective, joined by all European manufacturers who have solutions to offer, as well as from a strategic perspective, with an in-depth look at the questions of deterrence and strike capabilities.

It is by mentally and physically re-equipping ourselves that we will enable Europe to fully play its role in future security arrangements.

My fourth appeal to you is to imagine what types of mechanisms will allow us over the long term to avoid the cycles of aggression that our continent has experienced in recent decades. We will need a framework for the future which restores transparency and predictability on the continent and which must respect basic principles: the inviolability of borders and national sovereignty. Which reaffirms the stabilizing role of deterrence in Europe. Which reestablishes a credible arms-control architecture that steadily restores the balance of forces at the lowest possible level. And which establishes a framework for resolving extended conflicts and crises on the continent, based on existing structures such as the OSCE.

Obviously, Europe must be at the heart of this. And as you know, I'm not dogmatic when it comes to Europe. In addition to the EU, we must think about a broader Europe: the Europe we have begun to forge through the European Political Community, which will have a special role to play in this regard – which will include nations that may have chosen to leave the EU but remain anchored in Europe's geopolitical interests. Nations that never joined the EU but which partner with us on security and energy and so many other issues. And nations that may aspire to join the EU, and which I hope will join us, but are currently outside its borders. From Norway to our British friends, from the Western Balkans to Moldova and Ukraine. This European Political Community is a geopolitical framework that will help prevent crises, and we must think about its framework and architecture. In this regard, I want to express our full support for Moldovan President Maia Sandu, who will host the next meeting of the European Political Community and who is facing so many challenges.

We need to build a new cooperation area on our continent and NATO has a key role to play in this regard. I believe that these past few months have allowed us to show that everyone who thought that a stronger Defence Europe – that strengthening European defence policy – constituted a threat to NATO now clearly understands that this only serves to strengthen our transatlantic alliance because all our efforts have been carried out in concert with our American and Canadian partners, among others, and we have demonstrated our willingness to share common strategic objectives.

Lastly, I would like to issue two very quick final appeals to all our European partners. Today, my fifth appeal, outside of this conflict, is for us to continue taking action together on other forms of conflict that are already impacting us and may threaten us. There is a risk that we all must face. By this I mean that we will – we must – help Ukraine, step up our efforts and face certain major geopolitical challenges in the coming weeks and months. At the same time, we must also face new forms of conflict in new areas.

Let's not forget about cyber, space and maritime risks, as well as our democracies' vulnerability to disinformation and destabilization. Those risks and those spaces will be used by Russia or perhaps by other authoritarian powers that, given the current context, will seek to destabilize us. Therefore, we must boost our cooperation and our investments, as well as our ability to work together in these fields in the near term. My last comment – my last appeal – to all the Europeans and to the Americans too is for us to start laying the groundwork for peace as well.

In the near term, we must be strong. We must show that we are strong and determined in our backing of Ukraine and that we are prepared to keep this up over the long term. However, we must begin preparing the terms for peace right away. It's our responsibility. Not in a compromising spirit but rather, in a spirit of responsibility. This peace will be all the more possible and credible if we stand strong today and manage to stay strong over the long term. But we must prepare the terms. That means reengaging those in Asia, the Pacific, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America who, at present, aren't thinking along the lines of the terms that I just outlined. Despite what I said at the outset of my speech, they continue saying, "There are double standards. You keep spending massive amounts on Ukraine, yet you still don't spend anything on us. You are fighting against this war with all your might but you don't do enough to fight poverty in our countries. We've been living with war for decades and you've done practically nothing about it!" We need to hear them out. Therefore, we need to use diplomacy to re-engage all these countries in order to convince them to join us in pressuring Russia and laying the groundwork for peace. It's our responsibility. In particular, we must do this by countering this narrative of a double standard that is taking root.

That is why, as we make all these investments, I call on the Europeans, the Americans, all the G7 and members and even the G20 members to help us rebuild a North-South partnership. That will allow us to rethink the terms of international solidarity and invest heavily in countries that need these funds for their healthcare and education systems, as well as their fight against food insecurity. More specifically, this will lend new credibility to all the wealthy nations that need to re-engage many emerging countries, middle-income countries and developing countries in this effort by showing them that while we are defending our principles and want to achieve a fair and lasting peace under the conditions set forth by the Ukrainians in Ukraine, we haven't forgotten them. We also want a fairer world that can tackle the climate challenges and their consequences, both in their countries and in other places. This is a key responsibility. Let's not forget, our response to this new geopolitical situation must include investments in the military and a firm stance. However, we must also be able to commit to achieving a credible peace and redouble our efforts when it comes to our solidarity policies.

I have gone on for too long, so I'll leave it at that. Thank you for the warm welcome and for allowing me to share these convictions with you./.