51st SESSION

Intensifying attacks of the Russian Federation against Ukraine

Declaration 15 (2026)[1]

1. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe ("the Congress") refers to its Declaration 5 (2022) "The Russian Federation's war against Ukraine", Declaration 6 (2023) "The anniversary of Russia's war against Ukraine", Declaration 8 (2024) "The second anniversary of the Russian Federation's war against Ukraine", Declaration 9 (2024) "The destruction of cultural heritage in Ukraine", Declaration 11 (2025) "Recovery and reconstruction in Ukraine", Declaration 13 (2025) "Ukraine: Towards a Just Peace" and Resolution 519 (2026) "A strategic approach to supporting the recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine at local and regional levels".

2. It reiterates its condemnation, in the strongest terms, of the ongoing war of aggression being waged by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, in breach of international law and the Statute of the Council of Europe. At a time when geopolitical assumptions are being challenged and multilateralism is under threat, the Congress reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders.

3. For more than four and a half years, Ukrainians have defended their country with strength and courage against the Russian Federation's ongoing brutal, illegal, unprovoked and unjustified full-scale military invasion.

4. The Congress utterly deplores and condemns once again the fact that the Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine continues to cause the mass loss of innocent lives and human suffering, as well as the targeted destruction of cultural heritage and of vital infrastructure, which represent human rights violations unprecedented in recent European history. Millions of people, the majority of whom are children, continue to be displaced from their homes. Furthermore, thousands of Ukrainians are still in captivity and subject to violence, inhuman treatment and torture. The Congress stresses the urgent need for long-term psychological, social and educational rehabilitation of children affected by the war, including children of veterans, of fallen defenders and of persons who are missing or held in captivity, and underlines the key role of local and regional authorities in providing such support.

5. The Congress expresses its deep concern at the increasingly intensive and continuous missile and drone attacks launched by the Russian Federation against Ukraine in recent months, targeting Ukrainian cities, communities, critical infrastructure and civilian facilities. It deeply deplores the growing number of civilian victims of these attacks.

6. The Congress commends the work of Ukraine's local and regional authorities to ensure the provision of emergency support and the functioning of public services in the most difficult of circumstances, and commends the support subnational authorities from other member states have provided for this. Now, as another harsh winter approaches and energy infrastructures are again placed under strain, the resilience of Ukraine's local and regional authorities, as well as their capacity to ensure essential services for citizens under constant security threats, remains a matter of urgent concern. The Congress draws particular attention to the situation of Ukraine's frontline regions and communities adjacent to the line of contact or to the state border with the Russian Federation, which are subjected to systematic artillery shelling, missile and drone attacks, forcing local and regional authorities to perform their functions and to deliver essential humanitarian, educational and health services under a daily threat to life.

[1] Debated and adopted by the Congress on 28 October 2026 (see document CG(2026)51-26), co-rapporteurs: Cecilia DALMAN EEK, Sweden (R, SOC/G/PD) and Mihkel JUHKAMI, Estonia (L, EPP/CCE).

7. Recalling the principles of distinction and proportionality under international humanitarian law and Article 9 of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, the Congress calls on member States, the Council of Europe Development Bank and other international partners to address the specific needs of frontline regions and communities in recovery and reconstruction programming. This should be done in co-ordination with the national authorities and in line with the principles of multilevel governance set out in Resolution 519 (2026).

8. Such an approach requires funding that is predictable, multi-annual and reaches regional and local authorities. It also requires investment in the protection and energy resilience of basic public services, and the involvement of these authorities in recovery planning as part of the follow-up to the Ukraine Recovery Conference (Gdansk, June 2026).

9. The Congress also invites local and regional authorities of member States to develop direct partnerships with Ukraine's frontline regions and communities through existing formats, including the Cities4Cities platform established under the patronage of the Congress, the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for the Reconstruction of Ukraine, the Assembly of European Regions, and region-to-region co-operation agreements.

10. The Congress strongly supports efforts to bring an end to the Russian Federation’s war of aggression, in the understanding that only a comprehensive, just and lasting peace, based on the UN Charter and respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within internationally recognised borders extending to its territorial waters, can be a sustainable peace whereby Ukraine’s territory and communities can prosper in safety and security.

11. The Congress underlines that free and fair elections are a cornerstone of representative democracy and require genuine political pluralism, freedom of expression, association and assembly, access to independent information and meaningful political competition. It unequivocally condemns the illegal organisation by the Russian Federation of so-called “elections” in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. Such processes, conducted under occupation and coercion, have no legitimacy or legal effect, cannot constitute a free expression of political will and must not be recognised. No purported mandate arising from them can alter the legal status of the occupied territories or affect Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.

12. Recognising that accountability will be required for a just peace, the Congress remains committed to its role in supporting local and regional authorities in Ukraine to contribute, within their competencies, to the work of the Register of Damage caused by the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, which records evidence of damage, loss and injury on the ground.

13. The Congress also emphasises that a Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine will provide a crucial path to justice for holding accountable those responsible for deciding to invade its territory. Following the signature by the President of Ukraine and the Secretary General of the Council of Europe on 25 June 2025 of a bilateral agreement on establishing that tribunal, including its Statute, the Congress welcomes the expression, by 36 States and the European Union on 15 May 2026, of their intention to join the Enlarged Partial Agreement on the Management Committee of the Special Tribunal. These are important steps towards ending impunity for those responsible for the crimes that have caused loss, damage and destruction in so many communities across Ukraine.

14. The Congress welcomes the ongoing work of the Special Envoy of the Secretary General on the situation of children of Ukraine and stands ready to provide what support it can to Ukrainian local and regional authorities in this field, as well as in supporting the provision of tailored assistance to veterans and IDPs.

15. The Congress expresses particular concern at the situation of IDPs and refugees who have now been displaced for long periods, often without adequate measures to support their long-term integration in the place where they have been living for many years. It also condemns acts of violence committed against Ukrainian refugees in Europe. It underlines the important work being carried out on these matters in its Committee on Social Inclusion and Human Dignity.

16. The Congress welcomes the launch of the Carpathian Integration Initiative at the Summit held in Ukraine on 18-19 September 2026 as a new platform for strengthening regional and transfrontier co-

operation, democratic resilience and sustainable development. Recalling its Resolution 315 (2010) and Recommendation 296 (2010) “Sustainable development of mountain regions and the experience of the Carpathian Mountains”, the Congress encourages local and regional authorities of the participating countries to actively engage in this Initiative, building on existing co-operation frameworks, including the Carpathian Convention and the Carpathian Euroregion. It underlines the importance of ensuring that local and regional authorities play a central role in developing practical cross-border partnerships, strengthening territorial cohesion and contributing to the resilience and recovery of Ukrainian communities.

17. The Congress notes that the macro-regional strategies of the European Union have proven to be an effective cohesion policy instrument: they bring together authorities at all levels of governance around the shared challenges of functional territories, promote policy coherence and enable a more efficient use of financial resources. By involving EU candidate countries on an equal footing, in particular Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, within the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, they also serve as a practical instrument of the enlargement process, integrating the local and regional communities of these countries into EU policies before accession. It recalls that, as early as 4 December 2019, the European Committee of the Regions, in its opinion “Macro-regional strategy for the Carpathian region” (CDR 3425/2019), called on the European Commission to support the development of a dedicated macro-regional strategy for the Carpathians as the second EU strategy for a mountain region. It welcomes the fact that these calls have gained fresh impetus through the Carpathian Integration Initiative and stands ready to support further integration efforts in the Carpathian region.

18. The Congress reiterates its firm commitment to supporting work on the recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine as well as work on decentralisation reforms, through its Centre of Expertise for Multilevel Governance and its project launched in April 2025 on “Strengthening multilevel governance and local democracy to support Ukraine’s recovery”, as part of its contribution to the Council of Europe’s Action Plan on Resilience, Recovery and Reconstruction for Ukraine. It emphasises the importance of financial support, targeted capacity-building and training programmes, together with a sustainable development approach, in this context.

19. At a time of uncertainty, but with the hope that a meaningful peace process to end Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine might be possible, the Congress reaffirms its solidarity with the Ukrainian people and authorities and its commitment to a common, democratic future based on respect for international law and a comprehensive, just and lasting peace.