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**Exhibition “the Veteran’s Theatre”,
Strasbourg, 29 September 2026**

Speech by Ms Petra Bayr

President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Dear colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Art takes many forms. It confronts us with the truth. It helps us remember. It helps us heal. The Veterans’ Theatre does all three.

I am proud that the very first exhibition about this theatre is here, in our Assembly.

This is the Assembly that expelled Russia after its full-scale invasion of Ukraine. And as President of this Assembly, I say it clearly: we continue to stand firmly with the Ukrainian people.

Ukrainians stand on the front line of their country’s defence. Their resilience is extraordinary. For those wounded in this war, survival is only the beginning. They must find their way in a world that all too often lets vulnerable people down.

The Veterans’ Theatre gives them a place to belong. And a way to move forward.

On stage, they can express what they have lived through. They can give voice to their emotions. They can reconnect with others. And their performances show all of us the human cost of this war. Beyond denial. Beyond disinformation.

But solidarity must not end with applause. This Assembly will stand with Ukraine's veterans for as long as it takes.

My warm thanks go to the theatre's director, Olha Semoshkina, for bringing this idea to life. And to photographer Serhiy Mechalchuk, for helping us see the people behind the performances.

I hope many more people will hear your stories.

And I hope that one day the Veterans' Theatre will tell the stories of a Ukraine full of peace. With all the joy that peace will bring.