

The address by the Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic, Ms. Markéta Pekarová Adamová, at the Plenary Session of the Second Parliamentary Summit of the International Crimea Platform

Dear Chairman Stefanchuk, dear Ruslan,

Dear President Vystrčil, dear Miloš,

Dear Prime Minister Fiala, dear Petr,

Dear Minister Lipavský, dear Jan,

Dear Speakers of Parliament,

Dear Deputy Speakers and representatives of national parliaments and parliamentary assemblies,

Dear ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great and utmost honor that I welcome you here in Prague at the Second Parliamentary Summit of the International Crimea Platform. Thank you all for participating in this important event.

Let me start by thanking my dear colleague and friend Ruslan, who accepted our offer to host this gathering here in Prague. You have become the example of a parliamentary leader in a time of national crisis. Thank you for your leadership and for your active involvement in the preparations of this Summit.

I also have to thank my Czech colleagues – President Petr Pavel, Prime Minister Petr Fiala, President of the Senate Miloš Vystrčil, and Foreign Minister Jan Lipavský. Your help and support were absolutely crucial.

I would like to thank our dear colleague Goran Jandrokovich, the Speaker of the Croatian Sabor, who hosted the first parliamentary summit and who supported our effort this year.

But first and foremost, I want to thank all of you for coming and for participating in this meeting. Your very presence is an important demonstration of the unity of the international community. The number of countries represented at this summit has grown since last year, which is a very

positive sign – we have more than fifty countries participating at the summit, from all continents.

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There are many important goals of the International Crimea Platform. But there is one, which I consider particularly significant. And it is combating the oblivion. It is addressing the risk that the issue of Crimea will start fading away. Only several months from now, we will commemorate the tragic 10th anniversary of the illegal Russian annexation of the Crimean Peninsula.

And we might tend to forget!

Forget that the illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014 was the first direct and deliberate use of military force by a state, with the aim of seizing territory of another state, since the dissolution of the Soviet Empire.

We tend to forget that even this stunning fact did not wake us up from our dreams of the end of history. And that the lack of adequate reaction by the international community, including our own countries, was seen in the Kremlin as a sign of our weakness. Weakness, that aggressors always see as an invitation to attack.

We tend to forget that Crimea was the first place from which the Russian invaders began to illegally abduct the Ukrainian children. According to reliable sources, over four thousand Ukrainian Children from Crimea were transferred to the Russian territory or to Belarus, and their traces are lost at this moment. Later on, Crimea became a destination for the children who under different pretexts had been separated from their families. It is worth noting, that it was due to the unlawful deportation and transfer of children, that Vladimir Putin has been charged by the International Criminal Court. There is no doubt that it is only a beginning of a lengthy process, but it is also a clear sign that international justice can, and should, play an important role.

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One of the goals of the International Crimea Platform is to prepare for the future. The time, when we will focus on the reconstruction and renewal. As a symbol of renewal, you have received seeds of Linden Tree. Linden is a tree that has a high symbolic value for Ukrainians as well as for Czechs. Please keep them and hopefully, we will be soon able to sow them together in Crimea. But planning for the future must not make us forget about the past!

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In the context of our gathering today, let me bring your attention to the warning signs, that the notion of using force for political purposes is becoming acceptable. These signals have very different levels of intensity but all of them are alarming, whether they come from the Taiwan Strait, the Caucasus, or from the Western Balkans. Unprecedented in its scale and brutality was the recent terrorist and barbaric attack against Israel.

In response, the international community must more than ever stick to the basic principles that we all share – the principles of human rights and democracy and the principles of international relations based on rules and the exclusion of the use of force.

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Before I conclude, let me mention the role of parliaments. We can help tremendously in keeping the issue of Crimea and the unacceptability of its illegal occupation in the public space. For this sake, I would like to encourage you to establish Crimea Platform Support Groups in your respective parliaments. I am glad that I can inform you that such a group is being established within the Chamber of Deputies (under the chairmanship of Mr. Pavel Žáček).

Dear colleagues, let me thank you one more time for coming and contributing to our collective effort to uphold the territorial integrity of Ukraine. The liberation of Crimea will be the ultimate victory not only for the Ukrainians, but for the whole world and a system based on peaceful cooperation.

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Dear colleagues, I will now pass the floor to Mr. Miloš Vystrčil, the President of the Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic.