

Statement by Ukraine
at the meeting of the Working group on Integrated Water Resources management
under the Water Convention
(19-21 June 2023)

Good afternoon.

Thank you for giving me the floor at this stage.

Dear Chair, distinguished delegates,

Ukrainian delegation would like to use this opportunity to draw your attention to the biggest ecological and humanitarian disaster in Europe in decades, which happened at the territory of Ukraine as one more result of Russian aggression started almost 16 months ago.

On 6 June, the Russian occupiers blew up the dam at the Kakhovska Hydroelectric Power Plant, which was under full control of Russian militaries since February 2022.

The zone of influence of this tragedy covers at least 5 thousand square km that were flooded or drained.

The scale of the negative consequences of this terrorist act by Russia is difficult to overestimate, just to name a few of them:

- dozens of settlements were flooded, thousands of people were evacuated, and for the moment it's still not possible to calculate the number of those who drown;
- approximately 880,000 people have lost access to centralized water supply, hundreds of thousands of people remain without or with a very limited drinking water supply, which poses a direct threat to their lives and health;
- more than 55,000 hectares of forests have been flooded;
- unique protected lands, along with many animals and birds, including red-listed species, have been destroyed. 30% of the nature reserve fund of the Kherson Region is at risk of disappearing.
- the fuel storage facilities, warehouses with chemicals and fertilizers, animal burial grounds, were flooded; sewage got into the water, which all leads to a deterioration in water quality, accumulation and spread of toxin;
- the destruction of the Kakhovskaya HPP dam poses a great danger as a toxic flow entered the Black Sea, which will irreversibly affect the entire ecosystem, lead to the mass death of representatives of the Black Sea flora and fauna.

This man-made ecological disaster will have far-reaching and long-term consequences, not only for Ukraine but for many countries of the world for decades, if not longer. Vast agricultural areas in southern regions of Ukraine – *around 10,000 hectares of fertile Ukrainian land* - will not be suitable for food production for a long time, leading to even greater shortage of food across the globe.

Damage caused by Russia's destruction of the Kakhovska HPP dam to Ukraine's irrigation systems has already exceeded 4 bln USD.

The Government of Ukraine has allocated almost 2.5 bln UAH to provide the South of Ukraine with water and started developing a compensation mechanism for people affected by this catastrophe.

We are grateful to our international partners for their help in eliminating the consequences of this disaster and call on others to join these efforts.

The detonation of the Kakhovska HPP dam by the Russian occupiers was another heinous war crime of ecocide, an environmental weapon of mass destruction.

The explosion of the Kakhovska HPP dam shows that the Russian aggressors will commit any crime.

The issue is not that they should be stopped and deprived of the opportunity to commit evil. The challenge is to do it as soon as possible. The challenge before the whole civilized world.

We call on international environmental community to strongly condemn Russian aggression against Ukraine and destruction of Ukraine's environment and to support Ukraine in bringing Russia to justice for all its crimes against humanity and environment.

To conclude, I would like to request the Secretariat to include the present statement in the report of this meeting.