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European Union

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From: General Secretariat of the Council

To: Delegations

Subject: Joint statement to the World Customs Organization on the aggression
against Ukraine

The Council approved on 29 April 2022, the Joint statement to the World Customs Organization on the aggression against Ukraine, as set out in the Annex.

Joint statement to the World Customs Organization on the aggression against Ukraine

We stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine and are united in condemning in the strongest possible terms the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine with the involvement of the Republic of Belarus. We confirm the relevance of the UN resolution ES-11.1 of 2 March 2022 in the domain of Customs cooperation, and consider that the Russian leadership's actions are an unprovoked and unjustifiable attack against a sovereign democratic state, and an egregious violation of international law, the UN Charter, and fundamental principles of international peace and security, including respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence of Ukraine. This invasion calls into serious question the Russian Federation's respect for all international institutions, disciplines, and norms.

Together, we insist that the Russian leadership urgently stop its military action and immediately withdraw its troops. The Russian Federation must be held accountable and stop undermining democracy, global stability and international law. For as long as the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus do not reverse course and abide by the terms of Resolutions ES-11/1 and HRC 49/1, the principles of the UN Charter and their international obligations, "business as usual" with these two countries at World Customs Organization is no longer an option.

The World Customs Organization was created to promote cooperation among its Members in Customs matters, and aims at bringing Customs together for a safer and more prosperous world. The Russian Federation's aggression, with the active support of the Republic of Belarus, towards another Member of the World Customs Organization, in addition to inexcusable violence inflicted on the civilian population and infrastructure, has also extended to the Customs facilities and operations of a World Customs Organization's Member, including among other things the destruction by Russian forces of all border crossing points between Ukraine and the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus. This, together with the disruption resulting from the border crossing of several million refugees and the need to fight against trafficking in arms, human beings and goods of illegal origin, has caused major challenges and slowdowns to Ukraine's customs activities and amounts to serious evidence of the damage caused by the invasion of Ukraine to the peaceful action of the World Customs Organization. Such actions are fundamentally incompatible with the principle of customs cooperation and the trust on which the World Custom Organization is based and an attack on the security that Customs guarantee for their citizens. It would therefore be inappropriate for the World Customs Organization to remain neutral and ignore this aggression of an unprecedented scale in modern times from one of its Members towards another.

Accordingly, we will use all available means to limit, restrict or otherwise effectively suspend the participation of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus in the work of the World Customs Organization. These actions could include the replacement of any Russian or Belarusian Chairs and Vice Chairs of World Customs Organization working bodies, including the Policy Commission, Finance Committee and Audit Committee. We consider that, for security reasons and to enable Members to continue working on the basis of cooperation and trust, the participation of representatives of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus in all World Customs Organization's working bodies and their access to the World Customs Organization premises and activities would be inappropriate while the Russian Federation's war continues. We also call for a suspension of all World Customs Organization's-supported funding programmes for the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus to ensure that their implementation or continuation will not contribute, even in an indirect way, to the financing of military aggression against Ukraine. These actions may be adapted and expanded as necessary depending on the evolving situation.

It would also be inappropriate to continue providing access to information on enforcement or terrorism to the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus. We call for the World Customs Organization to do its utmost to assist Ukrainian Customs carry out their activities in face of this aggression.

We will continue to call on the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus to live up to their responsibilities to maintain international peace and security.
