

President

To all members of the Conference of INGOs

Strasbourg, 08.04.2022

Dear colleagues and friends,

First, I would like to thank all of you who participated in the April General Assembly of our INGO Conference. It was a remarkable event and those who were present will never forget the testimonies from the Ukraine, from refugees, citizens, civil society representatives in the room and online from receiving countries and from the war zone itself – including the statement of the Mayor of Lviv.

I have sent a letter to the Permanent Representations of all member States of the Council of Europe asking for support for the Ukraine and the Ukrainian people. It follows the debate in the Standing Committee on Monday morning, the questions asked during our open meeting on Monday afternoon, the messages we received from the Ukraine on Tuesday and our discussion on the best way to react in a visible way with as much impact as possible.

I had a meeting with the Ambassador of the Ukraine on Thursday in which he expressed a clear message: we do not need any more empty signs of solidarity, but clear action. In correspondence with the decision taken by the EU Parliament at the same time to request from the EU Commission and the member states of the EU to stop buying Russian gas and oil our letter comes just at the right moment and was appreciated as a valuable contribution to help swing the mind of those states that are still dithering.

You can find the letter also on our webpage:

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/ingo/-/open-letter-from-the-president-of-the-conference-of-ingo-on-the-war-against-ukraine>

As it is an open letter you can distribute the letters attached in English and French as you wish, as well of course publicise the link in your own communications. Please spread the message!

As proposed, this letter will be followed by a second one dedicated to a plea for aid for the Russian human rights and civil rights defenders. I have drafted this letter and it is in the process of being finalised to be sent early next week.

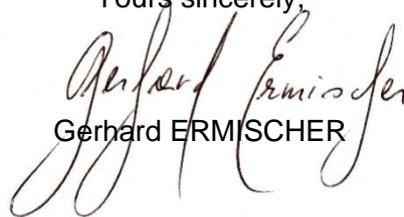
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We are also working on a resolution concerning the war against the Ukraine. Such a document is mainly directed to the Council of Europe itself and normally follows a special form that is not easy to read for any outsider. I am collecting suggestions now, and we will send out the draft to you all very soon. I guess we will need to accompany it with a less formal and gripping text to disseminate for the press, media, social media and general use for the public, which I will send to you together with the formal resolution for written adoption.

Further I would like to inform you that the concept note for the World Forum for Democracy has just gone online. As we have fought hard to get a Forum dedicated in a strong way to bridging the gaps and building a resilient democratic society in Europe I invite you all to stay tuned and to react to the call for proposals: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/world-forum-democracy>

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gerhard Ermischer', written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned above the printed name.

Gerhard ERMISCHER