Thank you dear President, dear colleagues, dear friends,

The invasion of the Russian army on 24th February was a shock for every Ukrainian and for the whole world. I just came back from the Olympic Winter Games Beijing 2022, I was actually in Kiev when on 24th February at 5am the first bombs landed around Kiev. I immediately contacted the IOC leadership from 6am onwards and, at the same time, I was in touch with the office of President Zelensky and we discussed the position of Ukraine in sport.

We wanted Ukrainian athletes to continue to participate and represent Ukraine on the international level of competition. On that very day, the IOC immediately condemned the breach of the Olympic Truce and the start of the war by the Russian army, supported by Belarus.

The IOC reaction was very strong and immediate. It was already at 10am - I remember every hour, every minute, every second of what happened that day – that the IOC put out the statement and showed strong support and a strong position. This was followed by the two further communiques by the IOC Executive Board, which included protective measures in the form of recommendations to the International Federations and sanctions against those responsible for the war.

We, the National Olympic Committee (NOC) of Ukraine, strongly support the IOC Executive Board decisions and guidance for the International Federations and can see that the sports movement reacted very, very strongly and showed firm unity. We are thankful to the IOC and the global Olympic community.
At the end of February, the IOC Executive Board decided to establish a solidarity fund to help the Olympic community in Ukraine. The IOC contributed USD 500,000, Olympic Solidarity put in a portion of USD 500,000 and European Olympic Committees also gave USD 500,000 to the fund.

In the meantime, thanks to the help of all of you, the members of the global Olympic community, the fund has grown to about USD 2.4 million today. When the fund was established, President Bach strongly requested me to come to Lausanne to lead and coordinate, together with the Olympic Solidarity team, the support of the Olympic Movement for the Olympic community of Ukraine.

We established coordination in the NOC office in Ukraine and we worked very closely with the Ministry of Youth and Sport, with International Federations, with NOCs, and as already mentioned, with the strong support of the Olympic Solidarity team behind us. At the same time, we are in touch with National Federations and Ukrainian athletes directly who have left the country. They are everywhere in Europe and in many other parts of the world. We are working as a very strong and united team together.

I can tell you that in the beginning everyone was in shock. It was not so easy to engage them and to bring them to understand that they need to continue to train and compete and, of course, they need to join this effort to represent the country.

Just recently, I went back to Ukraine and some other counties in Europe, to visit alongside with our Sports Minister Vadym Guttsait, to see the athletes, to understand how our support works and President Bach clearly put us in the task to understand better what we can do more. After Ukraine, we also visited our athletes in Italy and afterwards together with President Bach, we visited our athletes in Switzerland.

At the same time, it was an opportunity to show the support of the united Olympic community to sport in Ukraine and to keep athletes motivated in this difficult time when
the war destroys our country and also destroys our minds. We are losing the lives of Ukrainian people. Among them, already 51 athletes have lost their lives.

Together with our political leadership, we strongly believe we must continue to present and represent our country in international events. The first time when I discussed with the Prime Minister about the importance of participation in international events, the Prime Minister Office of President Zelensky strongly supported this and helped a lot and there also I would like to say that they appreciate our support through the Olympic solidarity fund.

Today we have approximately 3,000 athletes who stay in different parts of the world, athletes and coaches and we continue to support them. For this moment we already finance through the Olympic Solidarity fund 65 individual projects. In the meetings with the IOC President, our Minister of Sports said:

“I would like to express my gratitude for the solidarity and the efforts of the IOC and the international sport community to support Ukrainian people and Ukrainian athletes. We welcome the rapid decisions taken by the IOC with regard to Russia and Belarus, which have sent a clear and strong signal to the entire sport community that the IOC stands with Ukraine in this difficult time. I also want to thank the Olympic Movement for the solidarity fund set up to support our community.”

Minister Guttsait informed the IOC President about the Ukrainian proposal to all stakeholders in the sporting sector that they become sponsors of the re-birth of sport clubs and sport infrastructures in Ukraine after the war is over. The IOC President declared his full support. He said he is very confident that the big wave of solidarity with Ukraine involving many stakeholders of the Movement will not end.

The Minister mentioned that this a continuation of the strong and fruitful cooperation between the IOC and Ukraine over the last years. Just last September, the IOC President visited Ukraine and celebrated together with us the 30th anniversary of the NOC of
Ukraine. On this occasion, the IOC President also met Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and received the Order of Prince Yaroslav the Wise.

The IOC President, Minister Guttsait and I have also discussed calls for further sanctions in the sports sector. The IOC President made it clear that the IOC supports sanctions against anybody in the Olympic community who is in support of the war and continues to monitor the situation as indicated in the “Give Peace a Chance” message of 11 March 2022.

I would like to say I always grew up with Olympic values and solidarity is our key and very important message. But when I see this solidarity today - I can say this is another level.

Thank you very much.