

**Remarks by ambassador Ole Egberg Mikkelsen at the opening of the Summer School on International Humanitarian Law, Kyiv 17 June 2024**

Madam deputy Prime Minister, dear friends

Let me first of all thank the Ukrainian Red Cross for inviting me to address you this morning on the occasion of the opening of the summer school on International Humanitarian law. I am very pleased that Denmark is supporting the summer school via the Danish Red Cross and I am happy that I can be here with you for the opening of the summer school.

I have been Denmark's ambassador to Ukraine since 2020 so I have been here since the full scale Russian attack. I have travelled all over Ukraine. I have been to Chernihiv, Bucha, Irpin, Borydianka Izium, Kherson, Kharkiv and Uman. I have seen with my own eyes the horrible consequences of Russia's indiscriminate attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure, including humanitarian actors.

However, in the midst of the horrors that Russia has brought to Ukraine I have also seen true humanitarian spirit, compassion and care for your fellow human beings. Let me take this opportunity to salute all Red Cross staff and all humanitarian workers in Ukraine for their bravery and courage saving lives and alleviating the consequences of Russia's brutal aggression.

Let me also greet the ICRC Delegation present here this morning and thank you and the entire ICRC team for your tireless work to protect and assist the victims of the Russian aggression and to ensure respect for their rights. Including by reminding authorities and others of their legal obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

But what does the ambassador of Denmark have to do with international humanitarian law and why is Denmark supporting a summer school on international humanitarian law? How does that fit into what Denmark is doing to support Ukraine's resilience and fighting power?

Denmark is one of Ukraine's closest partners and in per capita terms Denmark is among the top donors. Weapons and defense equipment is the bulk of our support. It is more than 90 percent if you calculate our support in monetary terms.

There is a very simple reason for this: Without weapons Ukraine will not be able prevail on the battlefield.

But there are also important civilian components in our support. Denmark is implementing the European Anti-corruption Initiative on behalf of the European Union, supporting the independent anti-corruption institutions. The fight against corruption is crucially important for Ukraine's European path and for the transformation of Ukrainian society that the people of Ukraine demanded in 2014 during the Revolution of Dignity. Denmark is proud to be your partner in this struggle.

Denmark has also assumed the patronage for the rebuilding and recovery of the city and the oblast of Mykolaiv. Work has been ongoing since 2022. We hold the view that rebuilding and recovery cannot wait until there is peace. We have to start now - even in a frontline city as Mykolaiv. This is what we demonstrate in the Denmark-Mykolaiv partnership.

I am often being asked why Denmark is so engaged in supporting Ukraine and why the support is so unwavering. The answer is very simple. Danes know that Ukraine's freedom is also our freedom.

However, the Danish-Ukrainian partnership is not only about official government-to-government contacts. It is just as much about people to people contacts and civic society contacts. This is where you come into the picture.

The Danish Red Cross is working closely with the Ukrainian Red Cross in providing humanitarian assistance, but also in promoting humanitarian values, including those enshrined in International Humanitarian law.

Just a couple of days ago Denmark was elected to a non-permanent seat on the United Nations' Security council in 2025-2026. One of the top priorities is to defend international law, including international humanitarian and human rights law. We will do so with a special focus on the protection of civilians and humanitarian access and advancing accountability for violations.

So what Danish and Ukrainian Red Cross are doing in terms of promoting international humanitarian law fits well into what Denmark is doing as nation internationally.

So it makes a lot of sense for Denmark to support this summer school and for me to be present at its opening.

I wish you a productive summer school and I wish to thank all those who have made it possible.