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emmaüs

EUROPE

Ms Roberta METSOLA

President of the European Parliament

Ms Ursula VON DER LEYEN

President of the European Commission

Montreuil, 2 March 2022

Dear Presidents,

Emmaüs' Europe is broader than the actual European Union. Our 350 groups are active in 20 countries from Georgia to Bosnia and our first group in Ukraine was created 20 years ago to help homeless people in the Lviv region. They built a community of mutual aid and developed circular economy activities.

We are therefore all very pleased that the European institutions have acted so quickly to strongly condemn the invasion launched by Mr Putin in Ukraine.

All our groups are also mobilised to bring help and support to Ukrainians on the spot through our two groups in the Lviv region and to exiles fleeing Ukraine in our border groups in Poland and Romania.

In other European countries financial aid is sent from the Emmaüs groups and their doors are open to welcome those who will have to go further into exile.

We would like to call on you on two points:

- The dignified reception of people who have fled their country and risked their lives to come to Europe whether they come from Ukraine or elsewhere.

We fully support your proposal to activate the directive "temporary protection" for Ukrainians and ask you to apply it to all foreign nationals living in Ukraine for them to be able to run away from the war.

The Emmaüs groups have as a principle the unconditional reception of any person in difficulty. In recent years we have had to take in people who have found themselves on the streets after risking their lives to come to Europe as refugees. This situation was the result of a European reception policy that was inadequate to allow them to work and rebuild their lives and inadequate to protect human rights.

The fantastic solidarity of the European peoples in welcoming the Ukrainians today reminds us that Europeans are welcoming and supportive.

We call on you to remember this in the ongoing work on the Migration and Asylum Pact to ensure a dignified reception of all people in need of European asylum.

- The importance of building a Europe of peace and of supporting democrats and pacifists in Europe and in every neighbouring country, such as those who are mobilising today in Russia and Belarus.

We ask you to put in place in the coming months important European means to support all actions that can avoid armed conflicts in the future. The escalation of arms is always a dangerous game, and we must do everything to encourage dialogue, inter-knowledge, and democracy instead. In this sense, Europe must strongly condemn the rejection of the other and false information.

Finally, we also wanted to express our fear that this conflict will be followed by another. We are particularly concerned about the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the aggressive attitude of Mr Dodik in the Serbian Republic. We hope that the European Union can succeed in relaunching discussions on the future of this country with the various parties involved. We hope this could avoid a resumption of the conflict and give hope to the Bosnians who have been suffering for years from the complicated mechanism of the Dayton Agreement. Many of them are already starting to go into exile.

Yours sincerely,



Carina AALTONEN
Chair of Emmaus Europe