



# NIAS Area Studies EUROPE MONITOR

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## EU DIGITAL SERVICES ACT | FAILURE OF THE BLACK SEA GRAIN INITIATIVE | THREE SEAS INITIATIVE



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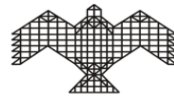
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Three Seas Initiative (3SI) Summit. Image Source: 3 Seas Initiative, Adobe Stock, IR Global

**EM COMMENTS**

**EU Digital Services Act: Three implications**

*By Sreeja JS*

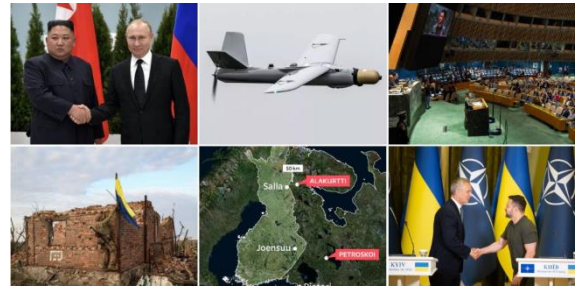
**Ukraine: The failure of the Black Sea Grain Initiative**

*By Padmashree Anandhan*

**Three Seas Initiative: Uplifting Eastern and Central Europe**

*By Rishika Yadav*

**WAR IN UKRAINE: DAILY UPDATES**



Source: Kremlin.ru, WB GROUP, President.gov.ua, Ilkka Kempainen/Yle, Alex Babenko/AP, Aphostrophe.ua

War in Ukraine section covers the everyday developments from Day 583 to Day 554 in four dimensions. First, The War on the Ground. Second, The Moscow View: Claims by Russia. Third, The West View: Responses from the US and Europe. Fourth, The Global Fallouts: Implications of the Ukraine war.  
*By Sreeja JS, Rishika Yadav and Padmashree Anandhan*

**EM SHORT NOTES**



Source: Alberto Pezzali/AP, Nato.org, Bartek Sadowski/Bloomberg, rte.ie, MICHAEL KAPPELER/AP, Benny F. Nielsen/AP

EM Short Notes provide a brief overview of the latest developments in Europe in political, economic, security, climate and maritime. The daily developments cover from the UK, western Europe, Nordic, Baltic, Balkans to the far east Russia.

*By Rishika Yadav and Sreeja JS*

## COMMENT

### EU Digital Services Act: Three implications

By Sreeja JS

*The law aims to give users of these platforms, including minors, more rights and influence over their accounts to ensure better privacy and security.*

On 25 August, the EU's ambitious Digital Services Act (DSA) came into effect with a new set of regulations for online platforms and search engines with a large user base in the EU. DSA aims to ensure big tech companies such as Google and Facebook, take measures to create a safer and transparent digital space, moderate illegal content and prevent the promotion and proliferation of hate speech and disinformation.

#### What is the Act about?

According to the European Commission, the goal of DSA is to create a safer digital space with new rules on privacy, security and data sharing. The Digital Services Act and Digital Markets Act are part of the Digital Services Package adopted by the Council of Europe and the European Parliament in 2022. Some of the Digital Services Act provisions came into force on 16 November 2022.

On 25 April 2023, the European Commission adopted its first set of decisions on designations. Accordingly, the Commission designated 17 social media and online shopping platforms as Very Large Online Platforms (otherwise called VLOPs) and two search engines, Google and Bing, as Very Large Search Engines (otherwise called VLOSEs) with at least 45 million users in the EU. These platforms and search engines would now have to comply with a full set of obligations that came into force on 25 August. EU would require the VLOPs and VLOSEs to update their user numbers at least once every six months so that if a platform has less than 45 million users in a year they would be removed from the list. Failure to comply with the new rules would result in billions of euros (up to six per cent of their global turnover) in penalty and even an EU- wide ban. The law aims to give users of these platforms, including minors, more

rights and influence over their accounts to ensure better privacy and security.

According to the European Commission, DSA would become applicable to all entities within scope by 17 February 2024 and the member states are required to empower their Digital Services Coordinators by that time.



Image Source: Global Finance

The new set of obligations that came into force focuses on:

**1. Measures to tackle disinformation:** The large online platforms enumerated as VLOPs and VLOSEs would have to identify, analyse and mitigate an array of systemic risks. The systemic risks pertain to the dissemination of illegal content and the negative effects on fundamental rights, electoral processes and gender-based violence or mental health. They are obliged to carry out their first annual risk assessment and share the data with the European Commission.

**2. Strong protection of minors and ban on targeted advertising:** DSA also introduced two restrictions regarding data protection on targeted advertising. Firstly, it aims to ban targeted advertising of minors based on profiling. Secondly, the ban on targeted advertising using special categories of personal data such as race, gender, sexual orientation and religion.

**3. Enhancement of transparency and accountability:** The act includes provisions

for delegated regulation on data access. Thus, the large platforms would have to give vetted researchers access to its data that is publicly available. According to the European Commission, it would further specify the conditions for the sharing of data and the purposes for which the data may be used.

### **What are the implications of the Act?**

Firstly, regulations for the online platforms. Many of the big tech companies such as Google, Meta, TikTok and Snapchat enlisted in the VLOSEs and VLOPs have already outlined how they would comply with the DSA. For instance, Google reiterated that it already complies with some of the rules and regulations of DSA, including the ability to provide YouTube creators to appeal against video removals and restrictions. Further, Amazon announced that it is expanding its Ad Transparency Centre to meet the requirements of the Act. Meanwhile, Meta, the parent company of Facebook and Instagram said that it is working to expand its Ad Library. It added that soon it would start displaying and archiving all the ads targeting the EU users while including the parameters used and the users targeted by the ads. When a majority of the companies have agreed to comply with DSA, Amazon and Zalando have challenged their inclusion in the list. In July 2023, *Reuters*, reported on Amazon's legal challenge with the Luxembourg-based General Court, asking the court to annul its designation in VLOPs as its big rivals in the EU were excluded from the list. However, Amazon implemented numerous features such as a channel for users to report incorrect product information to show its compliance with the DSA. Previously, German retailer Zalando flagged a similar legal challenge against the European Commission arguing that its user base is below the 45 million threshold (June 2023).

Secondly, uniform regulations across the EU member states. According to the European Commission, DSA would provide one set of rules for all the EU member states. All the citizens of the EU, irrespective of their countries, would have a common enforcement system to safeguard the digital space. Further, DSA would apply directly and

supersede overlapping national laws of the same objective. Besides, EU member states cannot go beyond the Regulation in their national laws as DSA is a harmonization instrument. The supervision of the regulations would be shared between the European Commission and the member states. The Commission would be primarily responsible for the VLOPs and VLOSEs, while the member states would be responsible for smaller platforms or search engines in line with the state's preference.

Thirdly, enhanced empowerment and protection for users. The important agenda of DSA is to create a safe and sound digital space and empower the users in the EU member states to freely express their ideas and opinions. It also aims to create a safe space to engage in online shopping by reducing the risks of illegal activities and dangerous products and to ensure the protection of fundamental rights. According to *Deutsche Welle*, the law coming into effect would mean providing reasons for moderation, deletion and ban of the content to the users. This is to ensure transparency. By February 2024, consumers and consumer rights groups would also have the opportunity to use various mechanisms to appeal if their content had been moderated.

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*Sreeja JS is a Research Intern at NIAS.*

## COMMENT

### Ukraine: The failure of the Black Sea Grain Initiative

By Padmashree Anandhan

*In addressing the grain deal issue over the war in Ukraine, the UN lacked diplomatic efforts*

On 04 September, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan met Russian President Vladimir Putin. Following the meeting, an agreement was finalised to make Türkiye an exporter of Russian grains to Africa. According to the agreement, Russia will export free grains of up to one million metric tons to six countries in Africa with the help of Türkiye and Qatar. Putin stated: "We will be ready to consider the possibility of reviving the grain deal. And we will do it as soon as all the agreements on lifting restrictions on Russian agricultural exports are fully implemented." Erdogan commented: "We believe that the initiative should be continued by eliminating its shortcomings...In this context, we have prepared a new proposal package in consultation with the UN. I believe that it is possible to get results."

On 31 August, UN Secretary-General António Guterres announced plans to send proposals to Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov, intended to revive Ukraine's grain export through the Black Sea.

**"Türkiye has played a role at the economic level, laying new routes for Russia to circumvent sanctions imposed by the West."**

#### Key issues

First, a profile on the Black Sea Grain Initiative. In July 2022, the deal was signed through mediation of the UN, Türkiye, Russia and Ukraine, allowing the setting up of a Joint Coordination Centre (JCC) in the city of Istanbul in Türkiye. It operated as a checkpoint for vessels to enter Ukrainian ports. The key aspect of the deal was to allow the export of Ukrainian grains and fertilisers through three Black Sea ports of Odessa, Chernomorsk and Yuzhny. The deal

has been extended twice with Ukraine exporting close to 32 million tons of wheat and corn. When the deal was subjected to a third renewal, citing the destinations of the grain export by Ukraine not being the Middle East or Africa, Russia withdrew.



Image Source: Aljazeera

Second, Russia's assertion. Moscow's objective was to lift the West's sanctions over its grains and fertilisers. It also vouched for the supply of grains to developing countries mainly in Africa. Although the EU and the US introduced exemptions, western companies refuse to trade with Russia. Besides, Russia demanded that its state agricultural bank should be reconnected to the global SWIFT payments system; its conditions not being met led to withdrawal. Despite such barriers, 60 million tons of grain were exported by Russia between July 2022 and June 2023. Russia continues to stage frequent drone strikes against Ukrainian port infrastructure in the Odessa port and thereby Ukraine's alternate shipping route has become the river Danube.

Third, Türkiye's balancing act. Türkiye has played a role at the economic level, laying new routes for Russia to circumvent sanctions imposed by the West while increasing its exports with an 86 per cent increase to Russia. In turn, the exported oil and gas from Russia are exported to the EU member states, resulting in a slow shift from its heavy debt to a 5.6 per cent growth rate as of 2022. Additionally, being a mediator between Russia and Ukraine, facilitating the grain deal through its port facilities, added revenue to its maritime industry.

Fourth, the failure of the UN to revive the grain initiative. The UN opted for a wider approach to address the food crisis proposing for the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) to form a Black Sea Corridor. However, in terms of addressing the grain deal issue over the war in Ukraine, it lacked diplomatic efforts.

#### **Impact of the withdrawal**

First, the impact on Ukraine. The deal provided Ukraine's exports a safe path through the maritime corridor and monitored the movement of the ships. Russia's withdrawal amid the divide in Europe against the accumulation of Ukrainian grains may seem untimely. However, Ukraine has subsequently prepared for this. According to the UK's Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB), 65 per cent of Ukraine's grain is being exported through the ports of Izmail

and Reni along the river Danube and Romania's port of Constanta. After which it is taken across the Black Sea. Apart from this, Ukraine has also re-routed the export through road and rail.



Image Source: Financial Times/Associated Press

Second, uncertainty over prices and food supplies. In response to Russia's withdrawal from the deal, the prices of grains and oilseeds have increased. In the case of wheat and corn, the prices have decreased by 14 and 23 per cent respectively. Apart from the prices, the global food players in the market are also beginning to step in. Brazil and the US, have reportedly increased exports of corn stocks close to 17 million tonnes.

*Padmashree Anandhan is a Research Associate at NIAS.*

## COMMENT

### Three Seas Initiative: Uplifting Eastern and Central Europe

By Rishika Yadav

*The initiative's goals are economic but has geopolitical implications.*

During 06 and 07 September, 12 EU member states situated between the Baltic, Black and Adriatic Sea and investors met in the Three Seas Initiative Business Forum held in Romania to address economic and geopolitical challenges. Marcel Ciolacu, Romania's Prime Minister, along with several Presidents and John Kerry, US Presidential Envoy for Climate, emphasised the importance of regional infrastructure investments, defence, digital sectors and support for Ukraine. Klaus Werner Iohannis, Romania's President, said: "The new 3SI Innovation Fund and a renewed version of the Investment Fund can satisfy the region's appetite for economic development."

#### Background and membership

In the 1930s, Poland attempted to form an alliance among countries in the Baltic, Black and Adriatic Seas. It was formed to protect against the Soviet Union and Germany. The alliance was initially viewed as a potential dominance by Warsaw, akin to the historic Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. France opposed it stating the initiative lacked "leadership." Whereas Lithuania and Czechoslovakia viewed it as a threat to sovereignty.

In 2015 Andrzej Duda, former Poland's President and Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic, former Croatia's President, established the Three Seas Initiative, initially conceived as an infrastructure project to bolster cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe. Following this the first summit was convened in Dubrovnik, Croatia, in 2016. The initiative comprised three groups of countries. First, the "North group" includes Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, which rely on foreign investment for security. Second, the "Visegrad Four" with the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Poland, who differ in their objectives. Third, Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia, with Croatia aiming to strengthen ties with the US and counter

China's influence. In June 2022, Ukraine attained partner-participant status. In the 2023 summit, Greece officially became the 13th member and Moldova became a partner-participant. Later the Aegean Sea was introduced.

#### What has it achieved so far?

The Dubrovnik Declaration of 2016 established the objectives of the initiative, followed by the establishment of the Three Seas Initiative Investment Fund in 2019. It features substantial support from the US. The initiative has identified a total of 91 interconnection projects. Notable among these projects are the Via Carpathia, a vital north-south highway spanning from Lithuania to Greece, liquefied natural gas (LNG) infrastructure, the Baltic-Adriatic Corridor, Via Baltica Road, Rail Baltica and the Amber Rail Freight Corridor. The IMF has endorsed investments in transportation and digital infrastructure to stimulate economic stability and growth. The initiative has shown progress in advancing energy security and promoting climate-friendly energy transitions. It emphasises the importance of digital transformation and cybersecurity, promoting responsible development and regulations. Lastly, following Russia's invasion, Poland, Slovakia and Czechia provided substantial military equipment along with economic assistance.



Image Source: Three Seas One Initiative



**What does the initiative aim at?**

Croatia and Poland do not view it primarily as a geopolitical tool; rather to modernize and advance the infrastructure of member states. The initiative's formation was the growing concern of reliance on Russia's energy supplies. It aims to reduce the reliance on Russia's gas imports by capitalizing on liquified natural gas terminals in Poland, Lithuania and a potential terminal in Croatia. However, recent escalations in the Black Sea region by Russia, have heightened security concerns among countries. The focus advanced to security issues rather than just economic issues. This rooted back to Soviet Union, which delayed their transition to market-based economies and left a legacy of underdeveloped energy and transport infrastructure.

Through cooperative projects and investments, the initiative intends to create "north-south" energy and infrastructure corridor, rectifying the dominance of east-west connections. As Zbigniew Brzezinski, former National Security Advisor of the US and David Koranyi, Hungary's Senior Fellow for Energy Diplomacy, wrote, "For more than half a century after the end of World War II, infrastructure interconnections on the continent focused on the development of the East-West axis. During the Cold War, pipelines that delivered Soviet oil and gas to Central and Eastern Europe also served as tools of submission and control."

The initiative addresses economic

disparities and infrastructure deficits. It fosters collaboration in areas such as power engineering, logistics, transport and IT. Additionally, it supports connecting regional energy networks to pipelines like the Trans Adriatic Pipeline and tapping into Black Sea gas reserves. This initiative also seeks to ensure that it complements rather than competes with the EU. Speaking at the 2018 Bucharest Summit, Kitarović said that the initiative would "make Central Europe the backbone of European resilience."

**What are the challenges?**

First, concerns on priority on gas over renewable energy. The initiative's gas promotion contradicts EU's climate goals and also clashes with the International Energy Agency's recommendations. The initiative can shift its focus towards supporting renewable energy infrastructure, especially given the EU's 'Fit for 55' package.

Second, skepticism on Hungary's role. Hungary has adopted a more cautious stance in supporting Ukraine, citing its energy dependence on Russia. This is leading to factions and non-compliance within the member states.

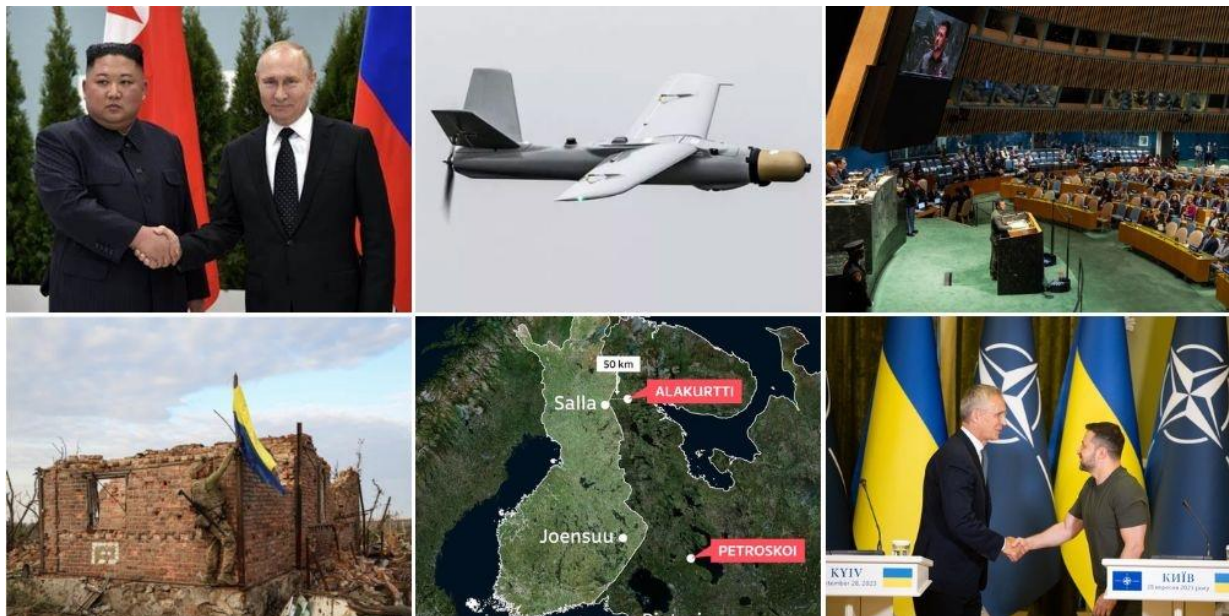
Third, an Central and Eastern European states have an opportunity to establish a new European economic security framework as Russian-German influence wanes. However, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) seeks influence through initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative and economic ties.

## War in Ukraine: Daily Updates\*

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\* War in Ukraine section covers the everyday developments from four dimensions. First, The War on the Ground: Second, The Moscow View: Third, Claims by Russia. Third, The West View: Responses from the US and Europe. Fourth, The Global Fallout: Implications of the Ukraine war. Visit <https://globalpolitics.in/europe/> to read them every day.

By Sreeja JS, Rishika Yadav and Padmashree Anandhan



Source: Kremlin.ru, WB GROUP, President.gov.ua, Ilkka Kempainen/Yle, Alex Babenko/AP, Aphostrophe.ua

## **War in Ukraine: Day 583**

### **War on the Ground:**

On 29 September, according to *Ukrinform*, the Ukraine's Air Force issued a warning. It was regarding the launch of groups of Shahed one-way attack drones. The attacks were from Crimea's Chauda training ground, which is currently under Russia's occupation. The message advised citizens to remain vigilant and seek shelter immediately when an air raid alert was sounded. This warning comes after Russia's drones targeted areas in the Dnipropetrovsk region.

On 29 September, Russian forces conducted an airstrike on Kherson. It was confirmed by Roman Mrochko, the head of the Kherson city military administration. The attack targeted the Dniproviskyi district and details regarding casualties and damage are currently being assessed. On 28 September, Russia's troops shelled the Kherson region extensively, resulting in three fatalities and five injuries.

### **The Moscow View:**

#### **Claims by Russia**

On 29 September, the *TASS* reported on Vladimir Putin, Russia's President, meeting at the Kremlin. The meeting was held with

Colonel General Yunus-Bek Yevkurov, Russia's Deputy Defence Minister and Andrey Troshev, a retired Colonel who was a senior fighter in the Wagner Group. He discussed the establishment of volunteer units for various combat tasks, particularly in the special military operation zone. Putin mentioned Troshev's experience in such units and assigned him to organise this military effort effectively.

On 29 September, *Zawya* reported on Ukraine's drone attack on a substation in Belaya, Russia's village near the border. Roman Starovoyt, Kursk's regional governor, said: "It disrupted power to a hospital." Previously, Russia reported destroying two of Ukraine's drones over the Belgorod region.

### **The West View:**

#### **Responses from the US and Europe**

On 29 September, Jens Stoltenberg, NATO Secretary General, expressed confidence in Poland and Slovakia. He emphasised that both countries would maintain their support for Ukraine after their upcoming elections. Despite recent tensions, particularly over arms deliveries and grain imports, he believes both countries will continue their military assistance to Ukraine. Slovakia, in

particular, has been a steadfast ally, but potential changes in government leadership may affect this support.

On 29 September, Norway's Government Security and Service Organisation announced that it would ban Russia's registered passenger cars from entering the country. The ban will exclude diplomatic vehicles and cars owned by Norway's citizens. It will also exclude Russia's resident family members, as well as those needed for humanitarian reasons. The measures will commence on 02 October, impacting Russia's passenger cars with nine or fewer seats. Anniken Huitfeldt, Norway's Foreign Minister, said that Norway shares a border with Russia in the Arctic region and stands with its allies in reacting to Russia's aggression. The ban is mirroring the EU's sanctions against Moscow due to the war in Ukraine.

On 29 September, the UK imposed new sanctions on Russia's officials involved in recent sham elections in Ukraine's regions and Crimea. It was announced by James Cleverly, the UK's Foreign Minister. This move comes one year after Russia's illegal attempt to annex Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk and Luhansk through falsified referendums. Cleverly said that the UK will not recognise Russia's claims to Ukraine's territory. He emphasised that these regions are part of Ukraine. The sanctions target the Central Election Commission of Russia and senior officials responsible for organising the sham elections.

On 29 September, Germany's football officials defended UEFA's decision to allow Russia's under-17 team to participate in international competitions. This comes despite boycott threats from several countries. The decision has been made to let children participate without national symbols, as they are seen as innocent victims of the war. However, senior teams remain banned as long as the invasion continues. England, Poland and several other countries have declared they would not play against Russia's players, while Ukraine's football association has criticised UEFA's decision.

On 29 September, the UK's Ministry of Defence gave its update on Ukraine. According to it, in recent weeks, possibly hundreds of former Wagner Group fighters have likely redeployed to Ukraine. These redeployed individuals may have joined Russia's Ministry of Defence forces or other private groups. Reports suggest a concentration of Wagner veterans in the Bakhmut region. Their experience is valuable given their knowledge of Ukraine's tactics and terrain.

On 29 September, the IAEA reported that the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) in Ukraine is preparing to resume using reactor unit 4 after repairs. The unit had been out of action for several weeks due to a water leak. Ukraine's national regulator had ordered all six units to be in a cold shutdown state. Furthermore, the IAEA had urged ZNPP to find an alternative source of steam generation. The IAEA is awaiting approval for access to turbine halls and rooftops of reactor buildings for monitoring compliance with safety principles. ZNPP has also completed drilling groundwater wells to secure water supplies for safety functions.

### **The Global Fallouts: Implications of the War**

On 29 September, the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) voted against a full ban on Russia. Russia's athletes will be able to compete as neutrals at the 2024 Paris Paralympics. The decision allows Russia's athletes to participate without national emblems, flags, or anthems. Russia's and Belarus's athletes must also adhere to the IPC Code of Conduct and not express support for the war in Ukraine. The IPC members voted 74-65 against fully suspending National Paralympic Committee (NPC) Russia for constitutional breaches. The International Olympic Committee will also discuss Russia and Belarus' participation in the Paris Olympics.

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## **War in Ukraine: Day 582**

### **War on Ground:**

On 28 September, Jens Stoltenberg, NATO Secretary General visited Kyiv. He reaffirmed NATO's strong support for Ukraine. He commended the leadership of Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President and Ukraine's progress in its counteroffensive. Stoltenberg highlighted NATO's commitment to Ukraine's membership and three key decisions to enhance cooperation. He emphasised the NATO's collective efforts in providing military support and joint procurement initiatives. Stoltenberg welcomed Ukraine's peace plan and stated, "Ukraine's future is in NATO." He paid

respects at the Wall of Remembrance for Ukraine's fallen heroes and reaffirmed the NATO's unwavering solidarity.

On 28 September, Russian forces attacked using multiple drone groups against Ukraine. Ukraine's anti-aircraft defences successfully downed over 30 drones during the massive assault. The operational situation in southern Ukraine remains tense as Russian forces continue their relentless attacks and explore new tactics. Air defence responses were active across various regions and air raid warnings were issued in southeastern Ukraine. It was due to the threat of Shahed drones.

### **The Moscow View: Claims by Russia**

On 28 September, the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation announced a 70 per cent increase in defence spending for 2024. It will allocate resources to its ongoing Ukraine offensive. Moscow describes the conflict as a "hybrid war" instigated by the West. Amid concerns over a prolonged conflict, Russia's economic policy now emphasises defence capacity.

### **The West View: Responses from the US and Europe**

On 28 September, Germany's Federal Cartel Office approved the establishment of a joint venture. It is between Rheinmetall Landsysteme GmbH and Ukraine's state-owned Ukrainian Defence Industry Group (UDI) in Kyiv. The joint venture will focus on service and maintenance, assembly, production and development of military vehicles. It will initially operate exclusively in Ukraine. Cooperation aims to strengthen Ukraine's defence sector, including technology transfers and local value added. It is to gain the potential for joint production and development of military systems. On 28 September, the UK's Ministry of Defence gave its intelligence update on Ukraine. According to it, Russia's Aerospace Forces (VKS) have lost around 90 fixed-wing aircraft in combat since February 2022. It came with intensive wartime use, potentially shortening aircraft lifespans. Maintenance challenges arise due to spare part shortages, driven by increased demand and international sanctions. While the VKS can

surge sortie rates, prolonged conflict could diminish long-term tactical airpower due to airframe wear and tear.

### **The Global Fallouts: Implications of the War**

On 28 September, Israel and Germany signed a EUR four billion deal for the Arrow 3 long-range air defence system. It is Israel's largest-ever defence contract. This purchase aims to bolster Germany's missile shield amid concerns of a new cold war with Russia. Arrow 3 batteries are primarily manufactured by Israel Aerospace Industries. It will begin arriving in Germany by late 2025. Germany has allocated EUR five billion for the Arrow system from a special fund created to enhance defence spending due to Russia's invasion. The deal supports the European Sky Shield Initiative and aims to integrate Arrow into the NATO's comprehensive defensive shield.

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### **War in Ukraine: Day 581**

#### **War on Ground:**

On 27 September, Harold Hongju Koh, Ukraine's representative at ICJ, called on the court to dismiss Russia's objections. He asked to proceed with a full consideration of

Ukraine's claims regarding the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide. He also urged to reject Russia's claim that the court lacks jurisdiction. Ukraine had filed a lawsuit against Russia in February 2022.

On 27 September, *RBC Ukraine* reported about the fighters from the "Wagner" private military company. They have been observed within the Eastern Group of Forces' territory in Ukraine. Some mercenaries are renegotiating contracts with Russia's Ministry of Defence, while others return to Ukraine from Belarus. About 500 individuals are expected to participate in the conflict on Russia's side. This development is viewed as compensation for personnel shortages in Russia's army.

On 27 September, according to *Ukrainska Pravda*, the Ukrainian Association of Football (UAF) strongly criticised the decision by the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) to permit Russia's U-17 teams to participate in international competitions. The UAF declared that Ukraine will boycott tournaments featuring Russia's teams.

On 27 September, Yevgen Myronenko, deputy head of Zaporizhzhia, announced that they successfully evacuated all children and their families in the Zaporizhzhia region. The evacuations were prompted by a challenging security situation, with Ukrainian forces encountering strong resistance in the region.

#### **The Moscow View: Claims by Russia**

On 27 September, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation claimed that US and UK intelligence agencies supported Ukraine in the attack on Sevastopol. They alleged the involvement of western surveillance assets, the NATO satellite equipment and spy planes. Moscow reported a missile strike on Russia's Black Sea Fleet headquarters with interceptions by Russia's air defences. Maria Zakharova, the ministry's spokesperson, accused Kyiv of targeting Russia's regions with missiles and shells supplied by the NATO states. She cited several similar incidents, stating that Ukraine aims to divert attention from its

military's failed counteroffensive.

### **The West View: Responses from the US and Europe**

On 27 September, according to *Deutsche Welle*, uncertainty surrounds the fate of Viktor Sokolov, Russia's Admiral. He is claimed to be allegedly killed in Ukraine's airstrikes. Ukraine is reviewing the claim following Russia's release of footage suggesting Sokolov is alive. Mark Galeotti, Military analyst, stated that the authenticity of the footage remains unclear. However, the strikes highlight Ukraine's long-range attack capabilities, regardless of Sokolov's status.

On 27 September, according to UK's Ministry of Defence update on Ukraine, Russia's new 25th Combined Arms Army (25 CAA) saw its first action since September 2023. It had units from the 67th Motor Rifle Division and 164th Separate Motor Rifle Brigade fighting in Ukraine. Rather than maintaining a sizable uncommitted force, Russia is deploying 25 CAA components incrementally. It is making a major new offensive less likely in the near term.

On 27 September, Robert Telus, Poland's agriculture minister, confirmed that talks with Ukraine to resolve the grain import dispute were progressing positively. Ukraine proposed an export licensing procedure and further talks are planned. Poland seeks Ukraine's withdrawal of its WTO complaint over the bans. On the other hand, Ukraine looks for guarantees against future restrictions on grain imports.

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### **War in Ukraine: Day 580**

#### **War on Ground:**

On 26 September, a cargo vessel departed from Ukraine's Black Sea port but remained nearby. It followed Kyiv's establishment of a "humanitarian corridor" along the coastline. Three cargo ships are heading to Black Sea ports for food and steel exports. Moscow's blockage of deep-sea ports has significantly reduced Ukraine's grain exports, down 51 per cent in September.

On 26 September, Russian forces targeted Odesa Oblast's port infrastructure. It damaged buildings, warehouses and trucks, resulting in injuries to two drivers. The attack, involving drones, lasted for two hours, with most UAVs shot down by air defence forces.

#### **The Moscow View: Claims by Russia**

On 26 September, Dmitry Medvedev, Deputy Chairman of Russia's Security Council, confirmed that he visited troops in Ukraine's Donetsk region. It follows orders from Vladimir Putin, Russia's President. Several high-ranking Russia's officials have visited occupied Ukraine's territories since the start of Moscow's offensive.

On 26 September, a video was released by the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation showed Viktor Sokolov, Russia's Black Sea Fleet Commander, participating in a Defence Ministry board meeting. He was refuting earlier claims by Ukraine's media and Telegram channels that he had been killed in an attack on the fleet's headquarters in Sevastopol. On 22 September, a missile strike on Sevastopol damaged the Black Sea Fleet headquarters.

On 26 September, Vyacheslav Gladkov, Belgorod's governor, informed that Russia's air defences successfully intercepted a fixed-wing drone as it approached Belgorod. Preliminary information indicates no casualties or damage resulting from the incident.

### **The West View: Responses from the US and Europe**

On 26 September, Switzerland's Council of States, the upper chamber of its parliament, approved the decommissioning of 25 Leopard 2 tanks. It allows them to be resold to Germany. Switzerland has a total of 96 decommissioned Leopard 2 tanks. The details of the sellback to Rheinmetall, the tanks' German manufacturer, will be decided by the Swiss government. Germany requested the tanks to replace those supplied to Ukraine, with assurances they would not be transferred to Kyiv.

On 26 September, *Rzeczpospolita*, Poland's news agency, reported about its investigation in Przewodow. Polish experts have determined Ukraine's air defence missile was behind the rocket explosion in Przewodow. Despite a lack of cooperation from Ukraine in providing materials, the investigators reached a confident conclusion. It ruled out the possibility of the missile coming from Russia. The missile, identified as an S-300 5-W-55 anti-missile missile of Russia's production, was fired from Ukraine's air defence. The missile was supposed to self-destruct at a certain height, but it failed to do so for unknown reasons. Experts ruled out Russia's involvement due to the missile's range and positioning. Ukraine's officials initially wanted to participate in the investigation but were blocked from accessing the site. Zelenskyy denied Ukraine's involvement.

On 26 September, in its intelligence update, UK's Ministry of Defence reported that Russia's Black Sea Fleet (BSF) facing significant attacks. The attacks took place notably on its headquarters on 20 and 22 September. These strikes, more coordinated and damaging than previous ones, have localized physical damage. The BSF can still perform core wartime duties, but regional

patrols and port asset defence may be compromised. A dynamic battle in the Black Sea shows Ukraine's ability to challenge Russia's strategic power projection from Sevastopol, its occupied warm water port.

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### **War in Ukraine: Days 577 & 578 Ukraine forces successfully breaching in Verbove**

#### **War on the Ground:**

On 23 September, according to Oleksandr Tarnavskiy, the general leading Ukraine's counteroffensive, Ukraine's army breached Russia's lines in southern Ukraine. Kyiv launched this effort in June to reclaim territory from Russian forces. Progress has been slow due to the heavily mined terrain. However, recent weeks have seen strategic advances in the Zaporizhzhia region, with the recapture of the village of Robotyne. The next objective is retaking the city of Tokmak for further advances toward occupied Melitopol and annexed Crimea.

On 23 September, in Avdiivka, Russia's army



targeted the area, potentially utilizing Grad multiple-launch rocket systems. Information sourced from Medvedeva speaking to Suspilne Donbas.

On 23 September, according to *Ukrainska Pravda*, Tarnavskiy informed about Ukraine's troops successfully breaching Russia's defences in Verbove, Zaporizhzhia Oblast. Leading the southern front's counteroffensive, Tarnavskiy anticipates further breakthroughs. Media analysis of open-source videos supports claims of Ukraine's units crossing a crucial line in Russia's defences near Verbove.

On 24 September, Roman Mrochko, the Head of Kherson City Military Administration, reported the two strikes on Kherson and two on Antonivka. Russian forces launched another airstrike on Kherson, targeting the city with guided aerial bombs. Antonivka also faced the attacks. Details on casualties and damage are currently being verified. Moreover, Russia's invaders targeted the industrial zone in Dniprovskiy district and civilian infrastructure in the Korabelnyi district of Kherson.

On 24 September, the bulk carrier Aroyat, carrying 17,600 tonnes of Ukraine's wheat, arrived in Turkey via the Black Sea's temporary corridor. This marks the second vessel to utilize the new routes announced by Kyiv on 10 August. The routes are for merchant ships travelling to and from Ukraine's Black Sea ports. Departing from Chornomorsk on 22 September, the Palau-flagged Aroyat was en route to Egypt.

### **The Moscow View: Claims by Russia**

On 24 September, according to the TASS, Sergey Lavrov, Russia's Foreign Minister, stated that Russia is open to talks on Ukraine. However, it will not consider ceasefire proposals due to past deception. Lavrov made these remarks during the 78th UNGA. Lavrov referred to previous negotiations in March and April 2022 that were followed by the events in Bucha. Lavrov also claimed that the West had prohibited Kyiv from negotiating with Moscow. He argued that the longer Kyiv delays talks, the harder they will become. He

called for the abolition of the decree of Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President, against dialogue with Moscow. Lavrov criticised the US and its European allies as an "empire of lies," accusing them of making commitments they do not fulfil. He asserted that a new world order is emerging amid a global struggle for fairer wealth distribution and diversity, contrasting it with the dominance of a few employing neo-colonial tactics.

On 22 September, the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation reported that the Kyiv regime initiated a missile attack on Sevastopol. It damaged the historic headquarters of the Black Sea Fleet. Russia's Air Defence troops successfully intercepted and downed five missiles. Mikhail Razvozhayev, Sevastopol's Governor, confirmed the missile strike on the Black Sea Fleet's headquarters. The headquarters is situated in Sevastopol's historical centre. One missile fragment fell near the Lunacharsky, Russia's Drama Theater, in Sevastopol.

On 24 September, Roman Starovoyt, Governor of Kursk Oblast, reported that Kyiv targeted Russia's cities, including Kursk. It is located approximately 90 kilometres from the Ukraine's border. The strike hit an administrative building in Kursk's central district, causing minor roof damage.

On 24 September, Vladimir Kara-Murza, a Kremlin critic, was imprisoned for opposing Russia's actions in Ukraine. He has been moved to a maximum-security Siberian prison and placed in solitary confinement. Sentenced to 25 years for treason, Kara-Murza arrived at the IK-6 prison in Omsk after a three-week journey. Vadim Prokhorov, his lawyer, expressed concern, referencing Kara-Murza's previous poisonings. He noted that he was monitored by the same Federal Security Service unit that tracked Alexey Navalny before his 2020 poisoning. Prokhorov himself left Russia shortly before Kara-Murza's sentencing to avoid criminal prosecution.

### **The West View: Responses from the US and Europe**

On 24 September, according to a German

News Agency, DPA, around 3,500 Russia's men of conscription age sought asylum in Germany. It was during Russia's invasion of Ukraine, but only 90 have been granted asylum. The German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) has processed over 1,500 applications. Many fall under the EU's Dublin Regulation, which assigns responsibility for asylum applications. Deserters and those refusing military service can receive international protection, according to Germany's current decision-making practice. The opposition criticised the government's implementation of human rights commitments, highlighting a gap between promises and action.

On 23 September, the UK's Ministry of Defence gave its intelligence update on Ukraine. It reported that since February 2022, the 247th Guards Air Assault Landing Regiment, a prestigious Russia's unit, has witnessed three consecutive commanders. They are either resigning or being killed. Colonel Vasily Popov, the latest commander, likely met his end in the fiercely contested Orikhiv sector in early September 2023. His predecessor, Colonel Pytor Popov, seemingly resigned in August 2023, reportedly in protest over the military's handling of Russia's casualties. Earlier in the invasion, Colonel Konstantin Zizevsky, the then-commander of the 247th, was killed near Mykolaiv.

On 24 September, in its intelligence update, the UK's Ministry of Defence reported that Russia's customers have likely faced localized petrol and diesel shortages recently. It is likely due to various factors, such as increased demand from the agricultural sector, seasonal refinery maintenance and favourable export prices. It is regardless of the war's direct impact. On 21 September, Russia suspended most diesel and petrol exports to stabilize its domestic markets, potentially exacerbating global fuel supply constraints, particularly for nations reliant on Russia's fuel.

On 24 September, according to Andrzej Duda, Poland's President, Poland established transit corridors for Ukraine's grain, allowing it to be exported to areas in need. This initiative aims to assist Ukraine and

other countries requiring grain. A dispute arose when Poland extended its ban on Ukraine's grain product imports beyond the EU's specified deadline. Duda expressed support for the ban while emphasising the importance of facilitating grain transit. He noted Poland's self-sufficiency in grain and underscored the need to ensure surplus harvests reach countries in need during the conflict. He emphasised that the grain issue should not jeopardize Polish-Ukraine relations.

### **The Global Fallout: Implications of the War**

On 23 September, Zelenskyy met General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, Sudan's Sovereign Council leader, in Ireland's Shannon airport. They discussed Russia's support for illegal armed groups, emphasising Sudan's consistent support for Ukraine's sovereignty. While Sudan confirmed the meeting, no details were provided. Sudan has faced internal clashes between the army and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) paramilitary group. It caused thousands of casualties and displacement of over 5.25 million people. Reports suggest Russia's support for RSF, while claims of Ukraine's military support were denied by both Sudan's army and RSF.

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## **War in Ukraine: Day 575**

### **Poland to stop supply of weapons to Ukraine**

#### **War on the Ground:**

On 21 September, Ukraine's Ministry of Agrarian Policy and Food announced the upcoming talks between Ukraine and Poland over Ukraine's grain exports. Ukraine and Poland have agreed to discuss solutions in the coming days. Ukraine has filed a lawsuit against Poland, Slovakia and Hungary over the bans on Ukraine's grain in WTO. Poland continues to impose embargo on Ukraine's grain exports citing the impact on local grain market and protection of its farmers

On 21 September, General Staff of Ukraine's Armed Forces reported on successful interception of 38 cruise missiles out of 44 launched by Russia. The attack included six S-300 anti-air guided missiles, which targeted various regions. Russia's strike focused on energy and industrial infrastructure across multiple oblasts. It included Kyiv, Cherkasy, Kharkiv, Lviv, Rivne and Kherson.

On 21 September, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President, met with Joe Biden, US President, at the White House. Discussions covered defence support, strategic decisions, a new aid package

for Ukraine and cooperation on various fronts, reinforcing the alliance between the two countries. Zelenskyy discussed air defence and bolstering Ukraine's position in the face of Russia's aggression. Zelenskyy expressed gratitude for US support and called the talks powerful and significant.

#### **The Moscow View: Claims by Russia**

On 21 September, Russia's Ministry of Defence announced the downing of 19 Ukraine's drones over the Black Sea and Crimea. Russia's officials initially denied reports of drone destruction in Sevastopol. They later confirmed air defence systems were active in Crimea. Additionally, three drone attacks were reportedly "thwarted" in western Russia's Kursk, Belgorod and Oryol regions.

#### **The West View: Responses from the US and Europe**

On 21 September, Biden held a meeting with Zelenskyy at the White House. He reaffirmed commitment to Ukraine's defence and long-term security. Biden announced a substantial aid package for Ukraine, emphasising mutual efforts in defence, trade and peace initiatives.

On 21 September, Biden urged Congress to back Ukraine aid. He emphasised the necessity for the US Congress to support additional military aid for Ukraine. Amid concerns that Republican lawmakers might block the aid package, Biden expressed confidence in Congress' "good judgement" during his meeting with Zelenskyy.

On 21 September, the *BBC* reported that five individuals are to be charged with espionage from Russia. The UK plans to charge five Bulgaria's nationals, Orlin Roussev, Bizer Dzhabazov, Katrin Ivanova, Ivan Stoyanov and Vanya Gaberova, for conducting espionage. They are accused of operating in a Russia's spy cell and conducting surveillance on targets in the UK and Europe while gathering information for Russia's state. Search revealed fake passports and identity documents for multiple countries. The defendants, including Roussev, who has a history of business dealings in Russia, are to appear in

Westminster Magistrates' Court on 26 September.

On 21 September, the *BBC* reported that Poland stopped supplying weapons to Ukraine amid a grain dispute. Mateusz Morawiecki, Poland's Prime Minister, stated that only new Polish weapons would not be sent. While weapons transfers have stopped, previously agreed deliveries will proceed and grain transport through the countries continues. According to Morawiecki, Poland will begin to focus on strengthening its defence.

On 20 September, Olaf Scholz, Germany's Chancellor, announced that Germany will host an international conference on the reconstruction of Ukraine on 11 June 2024, in Berlin. The aim is to support Ukraine's economy and long-term infrastructure rebuilding efforts. Scholz reaffirmed Germany's commitment during his meeting with Zelenskyy at the UNGA.

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### **War in Ukraine: Day 574**

#### **War on the Ground:**

On 20 September, Verkhovna Rada, Ukraine's parliament, passed a law, reinstating public access to top officials' asset declarations. The move is seen as

crucial for EU integration. Earlier, the law was suspended due to difficulties arising from Russia's invasion. Civil society and Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President, pushed for transparency, resulting in the legislation.

On 20 September, a cargo ship's crew evacuated after Black Sea explosion. The ship experienced an explosion in the Black Sea near the Ukraine's border. ARSVOM, Romania's maritime search and rescue organisation, conducted the evacuation. All 12 crew members were rescued and are receiving medical attention. The cause of the explosion, suspected to be a mine, is under investigation by the Tulcea Port Authority.

On 20 September, according to *Ukrainska Pravda*, Olena Zelenska, Ukraine's First Lady, appealed to the UN for help. She urged António Guterres, UN Secretary-General and the UN to assist in the return of children abducted from Ukraine's occupied territories by Russia. Zelenska stated that over 19,500 Ukraine's children have been forcibly taken by Russia. She also highlighted the cases of sexual violence by Russia's military. She called for international efforts to stop child assimilation and obtain data on abducted children, emphasising the need to rescue Ukraine's children and bring war criminals to justice.

#### **The Moscow View: Claims by Russia**

On 20 September, a fire broke out at a fuel depot in Sochi, in southern Russia. It is located near the city's international airport. Authorities are investigating the cause of the fire, while some reports suggest it could be a drone strike. No casualties have been reported and the blaze has been extinguished.

On 20 September, Russia's Defence Ministry claimed to down four of Ukraine's drones. The Ministry stated it had successfully thwarted and destroyed four of Ukraine's drones in two western regions, Oryol and Belgorod. The Ministry did not provide details on potential damage or casualties.

On 20 September, Dmitry Peskov, Press Secretary for Russian president Vladimir

Putin, expressed readiness to seek a diplomatic resolution to the Ukraine conflict. However, he stated that no basis for talks currently exists. He said: "The word 'negotiations' is being heard more and more often."

On 20 September, Sergey Lavrov, Russia's Foreign Minister, accused the West of failing to address the root causes of the Ukraine crisis. He emphasised that the west is instead using slogans like 'invasion' and 'aggression' to blame Moscow. He alleged that the West has supported a Nazi regime in Ukraine, rewriting history and avoiding substantive discussions. Lavrov cited the 2014 coup in Kyiv and Zelenskyy's decree against negotiating with Putin as obstacles to peace talks.

#### **The West View: Responses from the US And Europe**

On 20 September, Mateusz Morawiecki, Poland's Prime Minister, announced that the country has stopped supplying weapons to Ukraine. He cited the need for self-defence but assured that this move would not compromise Ukraine's security. This development occurs amid a dispute over Ukraine's grain exports to the EU. It led to tensions between Kyiv and the EU, particularly Poland, Hungary and Slovakia. The three countries imposed unilateral bans on Ukraine's grain imports. It came in response to the European Commission's decision to permit such sales across the EU. Ukraine countered with WTO lawsuits against them.

On 20 September, Latvia's Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs (PMLP) announced that it will notify Russia's citizens whose residence permits have expired. It expired due to non-submission of EU long-term resident status documents. Approximately 3,541 individuals face a 30 November deadline to leave the country. Those wishing to remain can apply for a relevant permit if eligible.

On 20 September, the UK's Ministry of Defence announced its commitment to deliver tens of thousands more artillery shells to Ukraine. It will add to the over 300,000 already provided. This support was

emphasised during the 15th meeting of the Ukraine Defence Contact Group, where the UK's unwavering commitment to Ukraine's defence was reiterated. Grant Shapps, the UK Defence Secretary, also outlined priority areas for military support, including air defence and long-range strike capabilities.

On 20 September, Olaf Scholz, Germany's Chancellor, announced that Germany will host an international conference on the reconstruction of Ukraine on 11 June 2024, in Berlin. The aim is to support Ukraine's economy and long-term infrastructure rebuilding efforts. Scholz reaffirmed Germany's commitment during his meeting with Zelenskyy at the UNGA.

### **The Global Fallouts: Implications of the War**

On 19 September, China and Russia reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening economic ties despite western criticism. Wang Wento, China's Minister of Commerce and Yevgeny Yelin, Russia's Minister of Economic Development, held discussions on deepening economic cooperation in Beijing. It coincided with the visit of Wang Yi, China's Foreign Minister, to Moscow. The two countries aim to increase cross-border connectivity, trade and investment. China's imports of Russia's goods rose by three per cent to USD 11.5 billion in August. Both countries are also enhancing their grain trade and building a grain corridor for food security.

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### **War in Ukraine: Day 573**

#### **At the UN, Zelenskyy warns against secret negotiations with Russia**

#### **War on the Ground:**

On 19 September, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President, warned against secret deals with Russia. Zelenskyy, addressing the UNGA, emphasised that "evil cannot be trusted." He cited the unfulfilled promises of Vladimir Putin, Russia's President and urged transparent unity in decision-making. He also highlighted Ukraine's commitment to preventing future global aggression post-Russia's actions. He accused Russia of weaponizing food shortages, attempting to exchange them for recognition of captured territories.

On 19 September, Russia's strikes in Ukraine left six dead. The strikes targeted Kupiansk in northeastern Ukraine, raising the day's toll to nine. Ukrainian forces have been pushing back Russia's advances in the Kharkiv region. The Ukraine's army reported shooting down 27 out of 30 Iranian-made Shahed drones launched by Russia during the night.

On 19 September, Oleksandr Kurakov, Ukraine's Infrastructure Minister, confirmed the departure of a cargo ship loaded with grain from a Black Sea port. It comes despite Russia's warnings of treating civilian vessels as military targets. Ukraine established a naval corridor to facilitate the safe passage of cargo ships. Kurakov announced the departure of the vessel Resilient Africa, carrying 3,000 tons of wheat, from the port of Chornomorsk, heading towards the Bosphorus.

#### **The Moscow View: Claims by Russia**

On 19 September, Oleh Synehubov, Governor of Kharkiv region, informed that Russia's

attack on the northeastern Ukraine's town of Kupiansk resulted in at least three fatalities. The attack involved a guided air bomb, marking another instance of ongoing conflict in the region.

On 19 September, according to the TASS, Putin called for increased production of counterbattery and air defence systems. He said this at a meeting of the Russian Defence Industry Commission. He emphasised the need to supplement delivery schedules for these systems by 2024. Putin praised defence enterprises for maintaining steady operations in the first eight months of the year.

On 19 September, Russia's troops struck an industrial facility in Lviv. It resulted in the destruction of a humanitarian aid storage point. Edvard Kava, assistant bishop of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Lviv, revealed that over 15 trucks of humanitarian aid were burned. It also included clothes, food and generators from the Vatican.

On 19 September, Putin chaired a Military-Industrial Commission meeting in Izhevsk. The meeting covered the supply schedule for weapons and equipment, discussed the draft State Armament Program for 2025–2034 and considered candidates for key positions related to weapon development and technology. He ordered to increase the military production by tenfold.

### **The West View: Responses from the US and Europe**

On 19 September, Lloyd Austin, US Defence Secretary, called on allies to enhance Ukraine's air defence capabilities. He said this during a meeting of the Ukraine Defence Contact Group at Ramstein Air Base, Germany. Austin emphasised the importance of air defence in saving lives and encouraged allies to contribute air defence munitions as Ukraine prepares for another winter of conflict.

On 19 September, Joe Biden, US President, at UNGA, emphasised the need for unity in defending Ukraine against Russia's aggression. He warned against allowing Ukraine to be carved up and called

on allies to support its air defence capabilities. Biden requested USD 24 billion in aid for Ukraine, facing opposition from isolationist elements within his own party.

On 19 September, Lloyd Austin, US Defence Secretary, announced that the US will soon deliver M1 Abrams tanks to Ukraine. It comes as a part of over USD 43 billion in security assistance pledged since Russia's invasion. The tanks will be equipped with 120-millimetre depleted uranium rounds, a controversial choice due to potential health concerns.

On 19 September, Czech Republic, Denmark and the Netherlands signed a letter of intent to provide financial support for the supply of Czech weapons to Ukraine. The initiative aims to cover various military supplies, including tanks, howitzers, small arms, air defence capabilities and electronic warfare equipment. The first project will involve donating modernized T-72EA tanks to Ukraine. Denmark will also contribute by donating 30 Leopard, one tank and 15 T-72 tanks.

### **The Global Fallouts: Implications of the War**

On 19 September, G7 foreign ministers urged China to use its influence to compel Russia to cease its aggression in Ukraine. The joint statement, released by Japan, called for the immediate withdrawal of Russia's troops without conditions. Concerns arose after a meeting between Putin and Kim Jong Un, North Korea's leader, raising fears of closer military ties between Russia and North Korea.

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## **War in Ukraine: Days 572**

### **Ukraine claims breakthrough in Bakhmut frontline**

#### **War on the Ground:**

On 18 September, *Deutsche Welle* reported on Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President, taking part in the UN General Assembly summit. During the summit, Zelenskyy is expected to hold talks with Inacio Lula, Brazil's President.

On 18 September, *The New York Times* reported on a likely strike in Ukraine from an errant missile. On 06 September, the missile strike in Kostiantynivka, Ukraine, killing 15 civilians,

was initially attributed to Russian forces. However, the evidence collected by *The New York Times* suggested it was an errant Ukraine's air defence missile. This missile was fired from a Buk launch system. Evidence includes missile fragments, satellite imagery, witness accounts and social media posts. Such missiles can go off course due to electronic malfunctions or damage to guidance fins during launch. On 18 September, Ukraine's Deputy Defence Minister Hanna Maliar reported on the success of the Ukraine forces in the counteroffensive on the eastern and southern front. The forces are reported to be asserting their control in Bakhmut and advancing towards the Sea of Azov. Till now, more than 260 square kilometres have been captured back by Ukraine since the counteroffensive. On the same day, Oleksandr Syrskyi, Ukraine's General for ground forces, claimed a breakthrough south of Bakhmut.

On 18 September, Ukraine's genocide case against Russia resumed in the International Court of Justice in the Hague. When the hearing began, Russia countered saying it was "hopelessly flawed," as it invaded Ukraine to stop the genocide. Ukraine filed the case against Russia based on the 1948 Genocide Convention after the war began, accusing it of claiming wrong on the genocide in Luhansk and Donetsk.

On 18 September, following the replacement of Oleksii Reznikov, Ukraine's defence minister with Rustem Umerov, six deputy defence ministers were dismissed. The defence ministry, which has been fighting against corruption, Reznikov assured to prioritise coordinating Ukraine's defence forces, boosting individual soldier values, improving military industry and corruption. The dismissal also includes Hanna Maliar who provides briefing on Ukraine military developments.

#### **The Moscow View: Claims by Russia**

On 18 September, Russia's defence ministry reported on firing cruise missiles at replicas in the Bering Sea. According to the report, in the exercise, Vulcan, Granit and Onyx cruise missiles had fired at 100 miles distance as



part of the simulation against enemy ships. During the exercise, missiles from land, ships and submarines were shot, including 10,000 military personnel. The move is observed as Russia's determination to showcase its power in the Arctic and Far East. The Northern Sea route located near Murmansk in the northwest along Bering Strait in the east is gaining importance.

On 18 September, in Russia's self-claimed area Donetsk, Denis Pushilin Russia appointed governor, claimed explosions in the headquarters. He reported on civilian infrastructural damage due to Ukraine's rocket attack.

On 18 September, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation reported that Russia and China reaffirmed their alignment on several issues. Sergei Lavrov, Russia's Foreign Minister and Wang Yi, China's Foreign Minister addressed the alignment over the Ukraine conflict and the US. Both countries emphasised the importance of considering Russia's interests and participation in resolving the Ukraine crisis. Wang also discussed his talks with Jake Sullivan, US National Security Adviser.

### **The West View: Responses from the US and Europe**

On 18 September, Boris Pistorius, Germany's Defence Minister, announced its arms aid to Ukraine. In the package amounting to EUR 400, "armoured vehicles and mine-clearing systems" will be given to Ukraine, but the Taurus cruise missiles, which have been in long demand, were not included. He said: "A multitude of political, legal, military and technical aspects have to be clarified."

On 18 September, *The Guardian* reported on Bulgaria's defence ministry sending of special unit to investigate a drone and carry out deactivation. The decision comes after the drone was found to be carrying explosives and landed in the Black Sea town, of Tyulenovo.

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### **War in Ukraine: Days 571 & 572 Norway pledges multi-year support program for Ukraine**

#### **War on the Ground:**

On 17 September, Ukraine's Air Force reported that they successfully shot down 12 out of 16 Russia's missiles and drones. These missiles and drones were launched towards southern Odesa Oblast. The intercepted drones included six Shahed 131/136 drones and they also downed six Russia's cruise missiles. Some missiles struck a civilian agricultural facility in Odesa Oblast, causing no casualties. The drones were launched from occupied Crimea and Russia's Krasnodar Krai, while the missiles were fired from Russia's Saratov Oblast. Krasnodar Krai is located in the North Caucasus in southern Russia. The attacks were seen as retaliation for an earlier Ukraine's strike on a Russia's shipyard in Sevastopol.

On 16 September, in an interview with *Reuters*, Mykhailo Fedorov, Ukraine's Digital Transformation Minister, updated about Ukraine's plan. He said that Ukraine plans to increase drone attacks on Russia's warships. He affirmed that there would be "more drones, more attacks and fewer Russian ships." Ukraine recently claimed responsibility for attacks on Russia's Black Sea naval fleet, marking a shift in strategy. It has also significantly increased its aerial drone production, with plans to further expand. Additionally, Ukraine is testing AI systems to detect and target objectives, even in the presence of electronic warfare disruptions.

On 17 September, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President, announced the recapture of Klishchiivka, a strategically important town south of Bakhmut. Klishchiivka's recapture could facilitate the encirclement of Bakhmut, seized by Russian forces in May. Zelenskyy also mentioned preparations for new defence solutions, focusing on air defence and artillery.

### **The Moscow View: Claims by Russia**

On 16 September, *The Moscow Times* reported on Russia's disputed Ukraine's claim of retaking Andriivka, a village near Bakhmut. Russia's defence ministry stated that Ukrainian forces were attempting unsuccessfully to dislodge Russia's troops in Andriivka. The situation remains unclear, with previous conflicting reports and ongoing fighting in the village.

On 17 September, Russia's Defence Ministry reported that Russia's air defences thwarted a Ukraine's drone attack. According to the report it destroyed the unmanned aerial vehicle, in the Istra district outside Moscow. Sergey Sobyenin, Moscow Mayor, confirmed the incident and noted that there were no casualties or damage reported in the attack.

On 17 September, according to Russia's Defence Ministry it prevented the attack on Russia's facilities, over the southwestern part of Crimea. It reported that Russia's air defence systems intercepted and downed three Ukraine's drones. There were no reported damages to infrastructure in the region.

On 17 September, Kim Jong Un, North Korea's leader, concluded his official visit to Russia. During the visit, discussions with Russia's delegation covered topics such as agriculture, transport infrastructure, cultural exchange, education, medical issues and additional grain supplies. The next meeting of the Russia-North Korea intergovernmental commission will be held in November in Pyongyang.

### **The West View: Responses from the US and Europe**

On 16 September, the annual NATO

Conference in Oslo took place. It focused on the integrated defence plans and deterrence in the High North. Allies stood together in supporting Ukraine against Russia's aggression. Norway pledged a multi-year support program of approximately EUR 7.5 billion distributed over five years for Ukraine. The country also committed to funding the NATO's Comprehensive Assistance Package for Ukraine (CAP) program.

On 17 September, Poland implemented an EU ban on Russia's registered cars. It aligned with EU sanctions against Russia due to the Ukraine conflict. Under the ban, Russia's registered cars are prohibited from entering Poland. The move follows similar actions by Baltic States; Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, aiming to pressure Russia. Dmitry Medvedev, Russia's Deputy Head of Security Council, criticised the EU's move as racist and hinted at potential diplomatic repercussions.

On 16 September, in its defence intelligence UKs ministry of defence updated on Ukraine. According to the update, between October 2022 and March 2023, Russia targeted Ukraine's energy infrastructure with long-range strikes. It was targeted predominantly using modern AS-23a KODIAK air-launched cruise missiles (ALCMs) released from strategic bomber aircraft within Russia's territory. Recent reports indicate reduced ALCM usage since April 2023, while Russia emphasises increased production, potentially amassing a significant ALCM stockpile. There is a credible risk of renewed ALCM strikes on Ukraine's infrastructure during winter.

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### **War in Ukraine: Days 569**

#### **Europe to lift ban on Ukraine’s grain imports**

##### **War on the Ground:**

On 15 September, Ukraine’s government approved a draft budget for 2024 with a deficit of over USD 40 billion. The budget allocates around USD 45.6 billion for security and defence, constituting over half of all planned expenditures. The budget aims to support economic recovery, with an estimated short-term recovery cost of USD 10-15 billion in 2024.

On 15 September, the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine reported on recapturing parts of Bakhmut in the ongoing offensive operations. It confirmed partial success in the Klishchiivka area. According to the report, Russian forces continue to breach Ukraine’s defences in Bohdanivka, a village in the east of Kyiv facing strong resistance.

On 15 September, UNESCO added Kyiv’s Saint Sophia Cathedral, the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra and Lviv’s historic centre to its list of endangered World Heritage sites. The decision was made during a UNESCO World Heritage Committee meeting in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, cites the threat posed by the war, despite efforts by the Ukraine’s government to safeguard these sites. Saint Sophia Cathedral, Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra and Lviv’s historic centre contain significant

cultural and historical value, making their preservation a global concern and a deterrent against potential harm during the conflict.

##### **The Moscow View: Claims by Russia**

On 15 September, Ministry of Defence of the Russia’s Federation, reported on Russian forces thwarting attacks in Donetsk. According to the report, Russian forces, supported by aviation and artillery, thwarted four attacks by Ukraine’s troops near Klescheevka and Mayorsk. In South Donetsk, Russia’s units defended against Ukraine’s attacks, causing over 175 casualties for Ukraine and destroying equipment. The Black Sea Fleet destroyed Ukraine’s unmanned vehicles.

On 15 September, *The Moscow Times* reported on Kremlins rejection of claims over investigation into the plane crash that killed Yevgeny Prigozhin, Wagner leader, has been delayed, despite no recent updates on the incident’s cause for over three weeks. Dmitry Peskov, Press Secretary for Russian president Vladimir Putin, said: “No, I absolutely do not think that,” when asked if the Prigozhin crash investigation was slow, emphasising its complexity.

On 15 September, Sergey Shoigu, Russia’s Defence Minister, announced the development of innovative concepts for the Navy, including multipurpose nuclear submarines, unmanned underwater vehicles and robotic systems. Shoigu inspected state procurement progress at the Zvezda submarine shipyard and the progress helicopter plant in Russia’s Far East zone.

##### **The West View: Responses from the US and Europe**

On 15 September, Antony Blinken, US Secretary of State and Annalena Baerbock, German Foreign Minister, reaffirmed their support for Ukraine in its counteroffensive. Blinken also highlighted the importance of private-sector investment for Ukraine’s long-term economic success. They also discussed the Black Sea Grain Initiative and its impact on global food security due to Russia’s actions.

On 15 September, *Politico* reported on European Commission's decision to lift the ban on Ukraine's grain imports, despite pressure from Poland to impose a unilateral ban. The ban had blocked Ukraine's grain from entering Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria, protecting their farmers from cheap Ukraine's produce. Valdis Dombrovskis, the EU Trade Commissioner, stated that market distortions were not observed in these countries and the ban was meant as an exceptional safeguard.

On 15 September, according to the UK's Defence Intelligence update on Ukraine, a missile strike targeted Russia's Sevmozavod shipyard at the Black Sea Fleet (BSF) Sevastopol naval base, on 13 September. The Minsk landing ship and Rostov-na-Donu Kilo 636.3 submarine, undergoing maintenance, were hit. The dry docks used for repairs may be out of operation for months, challenging fleet maintenance.

On 15 September, according to *InfoMigrants*, Nancy Faeser, Germany's Interior Minister, advocated for an EU-wide extension of special protection status for Ukraine's refugees who fled Russia's invasion. This status, which grants rights similar to recognised refugees, may expire in March 2024 if not extended. Faeser emphasised the need for continued support for as long as the war persists.

On 14 September, the US imposed sanctions on over 150 entities and individuals across several countries, including Russia, Turkey, the UAE and Georgia, as part of efforts to curb evasion and deny the Kremlin access to technology and finances fuelling its war in Ukraine. The sanctions package, one of the largest by the State and Treasury departments, targets companies in the NATO member Turkey that supply western technology to Russia. It also aims to disrupt Russia's energy sector and cash flow from Arctic natural gas projects. While sanctions have impacted Russia's wartime production, some analysts believe it may still access technology in small quantities.

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## **War in Ukraine: Days 568**

## Drone attacks across Crimea, Black Sea and Belgorod

### War on the Ground:

On 14 September, a spokesperson from Ukraine's military reported on destroying Russia's advanced air defence systems in Crimea. The location is considered critical to Russia's military and the latest strike proves to complicate its logistics as per Wall Street Journal. According to the report, a Ukraine produced Neptune missiles has targeted down S-400 missile system near western Crimea.

Neptune missiles which were initially given to Ukraine by the West was officially confirmed to have produced by Ukraine. It is known as "ground-launched anti-ship missile," and was used before in targeting Moskva flagship in April 2022.

On 14 September, spokesperson from Ukraine's military claimed destroying Russia's submarine located in the Black Sea port of Sevastopol in Crimea with UK's cruise missiles. In the attack the Rostov-on-Don was reported to be severely damaged along with two warships in Minsk. According to Andriy Yusov, spokesperson of Ukraine's Ministry of Defence stated that the damage "cannot be restored." The same was confirmed by Ukraine's Air Force, which confirmed using storm shadow missiles in the attack.

### The Moscow View: Claims by Russia

On 14 September, Russia's Ministry of Defence claimed on defending 11 aerial drones launched by Ukraine in Crimea. On the same it published satellite images showing the destruction of one "missile launcher" of S-400. It also reported on destroying five sea drones of Ukraine which attempted attacking its naval vessel in the Black Sea. Apart from this, the ministry also claimed on taking down many Ukrainian drones near the border's areas of Bryansk and Belgorod districts. Alexander Bogomaz, Bryansk governor assured no damages or casualties. Defence ministry added shooting

down of drones launched over Belgorod district.

### The West View:

#### Responses from the US and Europe

On 14 September, Kai Wegner, Berlin's Mayor and Vitali Kitschko Kyiv's Mayor held a meeting. In the meeting both signed agreements to make both capital cities as "twin towns." Wegner stressed on achieving a peaceful Europe through "free and territorially sovereign Ukraine." Upon signing of the document, Kyiv will be the 18<sup>th</sup> partner city.

On 14 September, the *BBC* reported on the increased use of sea drones in Ukraine war. According to the report on the "seaborne technology," it states how it is gaining momentum. The drones which operate above and below the water surface can also be used in military for clearing mines, surveillance and detonate targets. Of the categories of sea drones, key features include "built-in explosives and camera," which help the operator with images. Long-range targets are pre-programmed and later guided by human according to Sidharth Kaushal from Rusi, a defence think tank. The nature of operations and programme is known, the cost factor remain undisclosed. Ukraine had earlier disclosed the price to be USD 250,000 and was observed to have used it at minimum 13 attacks targeting Russia's naval base and harbour.

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## **War in Ukraine: Days 566**

### **War on the Ground:**

On 12 September, Deny Shmyhal, Ukraine's Prime Minister expressed that Ukraine can reach out for international arbitration due to restrictions over its grain exports. Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia imposed a ban on sale of Ukraine's wheat, maize, rapeseed and sunflower seeds. After negotiation, the countries allowed for transit of the grains. Shmyhal said: "We have no intention of harming Polish farmers. We greatly appreciate the support of the Polish people and Polish families!"

On 12 September, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President prevented a parliamentary bill that reserved "closed asset declarations" for officers. The move comes after Parliament voted to bring back the declaration rule which was stopped after war began. Zelenskyy said: "The reason (for the veto) is clear: declarations must be fully revealed. Right now. Not in a year. The register must be opened right now." According to "anti-graft campaigners" and opposition perceive that the bill will overthrow the purpose of holding officials accountable. In case of International Monetary Fund (IMF) has also indicated the need of asset declarations as benchmark to receive its assistance package.

### **The Moscow View: Claims by Russia**

On 12 September, in the economic forum, Vladimir Putin, Russia's President stated that between 1000 to 1500 Russians had signed the voluntary contract every day to join Russia's military. Till now 270,000 are reported to have signed in the last six to seven months. Putin said: "We had a partial mobilisation... We called up 300,000 people. Now, in the last six-seven months, 270,000 people have voluntarily signed contracts to serve in the Russian army."

On 12 September, Kim Jong Un, North Korea's leader was reported to have arrived

in Russia. In the meeting, Russia is expected to demand artillery shells and anti-missiles from North Korea in exchange for advanced satellite technology and nuclear-powered submarines according to the US officials.

### **The West View: Responses from the US and Europe**

On 12 September, Denmark's foreign ministry announced its decision to provide EUR 833 million military aid to Ukraine. The package will include infantry fighting vehicles, tank ammunition and anti-aircraft guns. This will be twelfth package to Ukraine from Denmark since February 2022.

On 12 September, in an interview to Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Annalena Baerbock Germany's Foreign Minister stressed the international partners to deliver the air-defence systems. She said: "We need to stretch a winter air defence shield over Ukraine's critical infrastructure." Till now Germany has given two IRIS-T and is due to give another six to Ukraine.

On 12 September, on the debate over Ukraine's grains, Mateusz Morawiecki, Poland's Prime Minister stressed on not lifting the ban on grain imports as it affected Poland's farmers. He said: "Regardless of the decisions of the clerks in Brussels, we will not open up our borders." Since the war began, Poland has continuously supported Ukraine with military and humanitarian assistance but since the farmer's protest it has been persistent in the import ban.

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## **War in Ukraine: Days 565**

## **Ukraine claims recapture of drilling platforms in the Black Sea**

### **War on the Ground:**

On 11 September, in a press briefing Rafael Grossi, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) expressed his concerns over the explosions that took place in Zaporizhzhia. He said: "I am very concerned about that. The artillery activity is almost constant at the moment. As we have been pointing out in our report, we are following very closely the situation." He also revealed the start of technical issues due to the shutdown of the plant.

On 11 September, Ukraine's military intelligence reported on regaining control of many drilling platforms (Petro Godovenets, Ukraina, Tavryda and Syvash) in the Black Sea. These platforms were said to be used by Russia for placing helicopters and radar activity. According to Ukraine's defence ministry, a "stockpile of helicopter ammunition and a Neva radar system" were detained. The drilling platforms were earlier purchased and built in 2011 near Odesa gas field which was later taken control by Russia in 2015 during the annexation of Crimea.

On 11 September, Ukraine's deputy defence minister reported on the advances made by Ukraine's military on the ground. According to the report, Ukrainian forces had taken back two square kilometres of land in the eastern city of Bakhmut and a part of the village in the south. Since the counteroffensive, 49 square kilometres have been recaptured from Russia. Similarly in the Sea of Azov, 1.5 square kilometres had been taken back. The Sea of Azov is a "strategic waterway" that links the Black Sea and many of Ukraine's ports.

On 11 September, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President met Annalena Baerbock, Germany's Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs. The discussion focused on the energy sector, fulfilling Ukraine's defence force's battlefield requirements and the progress of its EU membership candidature status.

### **The Moscow View: Claims by Russia**

On 11 September, Russia's Ministry of Defence reported on the taking down of two

UAVs near the Belgorod area. The same was confirmed by Vyacheslav Gladkov, Belgorod Governor: "There were no casualties. Fragments of one of the drones fell on the roadway near a private residential building. All emergency services are on site."

On 11 September, Russia's government released a statement indicating the upcoming visit of Kim Jong-Un, North Korea's leader. On the same Dmitri Peskov, Press Secretary for Russian president Vladimir Putin stated that the talks are expected to be between delegations from both sides.

### **The West View:**

#### **Responses from the US and Europe**

On 11 September, Baerbock visited Kyiv and pledged to support Ukraine in joining the EU. She urged Russia's president to allow the return of children taken from Ukraine. The issue is expected to be highlighted by Baerbock in the upcoming UN General Assembly meeting next week. According to Ukraine, till now 20,000 children have been moved into Moscow. Apart from this Baerbock also assured to give EUR 20 million as humanitarian aid. She said: "Russia's perfidious goal is to starve the people again this winter and to let them freeze to death."

On 11 September, the EU along with Lithuania, warned Russia for holding elections in the areas occupied in Ukraine. In a statement, the EU condemned Russia's act to legitimize its illegal control in the self-claimed territories. The EU said: "Russia's political leadership and those involved in organising them will face the consequences of these illegal actions." On the same Gabrielius Landsbergis, Lithuania's Foreign Minister stated that the international community would not recognise the result of the elections and would continue to support Ukraine.

On 11 September, upon the German government's commission, Rheinmetall, the defence company will provide 40 Marder infantry fighting vehicles. The cost amounts to two-digit million euros, the company is attempting to revamp its older models with the latest Marder IFVs.

On 11 September, the UK government found Russia's military to be behind the target of a Liberian-flagged cargo ship that carried civilians in the Black Sea in September. It reported "multiple missiles" being targeted by Russia which was countered by Ukraine.

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### **War in Ukraine: Days 563 & 564** **Russia's latest military concentration near Finland border**

#### **War on the Ground:**

On 10 September, Ukraine's General Staff of Armed Forces reported on Ukrainian forces "partial success" in the villages of Klishchiivka (Donetsk) and Robotyne (Zaporizhzhia). According to the report, Ukrainian forces are also conducting successful counteroffensive operations in Melitopol and Bakhmut. On the same day, *Ukrainska Pravda* reported on Ukraine's blitz operation. Ukrainian forces

had recaptured a part of the settlement of Optyne towards the South of Avdiivka.

On 09 September, Oleg Nikolenko, Ukraine's Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson expressed disappointment with the G20 declaration. He added that if Ukraine was allowed to participate in the summit it would have allowed the summit participants to have a better understanding of the situation. He also cited a portion of the text of the declaration with suggestions such as "war in Ukraine" to "war against Ukraine" and "Ukraine crisis" to "Russia's war or aggression against Ukraine."

#### **The Moscow View:** **Claims by Russia**

According to Russia's Ministry of Defence, the soldiers were going towards the Crimean Peninsula. Russia's armed forces said that eight drones launched by Ukrainian forces were shot down over Crimea and Byransk, near Ukraine's border.

On 10 September, Sergey Lavrov, Russia's Foreign Minister noted that the western countries had failed to make the G20 summit in New Delhi revolve around the conflict in Ukraine. According to *RT*, he claimed that the participants stood up "to protect their legitimate interests," which prevented "the West from once again Ukraining the entire agenda." He stated that the joint declaration mentioned the Ukraine crisis, but "only in the context of the need to resolve all conflicts" following the principles of the UN Charter. The declaration acknowledged the divergent views of countries regarding the war while highlighting the human suffering and the negative impacts of the Ukraine war on global food and energy security, supply chains, macro-financial stability, inflation and growth.

#### **The West View:** **Responses from the US and Europe**

On 10 September, [satellite images](#) found by *Yle* revealed three large halls at the Alakurti garrison (50 kilometres from Finland border) and a large equipment warehouse in Petrozavodsk built by Russia for maintenance and storage. These halls are predicted to be the "largest fleet concentration" near Finland border that



can accommodate one battalion of combat vehicles. According to Marko Eklund, Finland's military intelligence spokesperson said: "This is the first time that this technology has reportedly been used in the northern region. Apparently, the material can withstand severe frost." According to report, these projects were the first concrete sign that Russia has begun investing in its military targets near its borders with Finland after long years of inactivity.

On 10 September, Victoria Nuland, US Deputy Secretary of State at the Yalta European Strategy (YES) annual meeting said: "This counter-offensive has been kilometre by kilometre but we are impressed by the progress made, especially in the south." She added that close cooperation between the governments of the US and Ukraine is necessary for breaking the strong defences Russia has built in the occupied southern Ukraine.

On 10 September, General Mark A Milley, US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff told the *BBC* that the colder conditions would make it difficult for Ukrainian forces. He said that Ukraine's counter offensive was slower than expected but was "at a very steady pace." According to General Milley, there is "Still a reasonable amount of time, probably about 30 to 45 days' worth of fighting" left for Ukrainian forces to recapture the territories. Kyiv's long-awaited counter-offensive was launched in June 2023 and has made only small gains so far.

On 10 September, Romania's Ministry of Foreign Affairs summoned the charge of affairs of the Embassy of the Russian Federation in Bucharest. Iulian Fota, Romania's Secretary for Strategic Affairs, expressed protest against the violation of Romania's airspace as drone fragments similar to those used by Russian forces were found near its border with Ukraine. He condemned Russia's aggression in Ukraine and firmly requested Russia to cease actions against Ukraine, including those that threaten the security and safety of the Romanian citizens in the region.

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### **War in Ukraine: Day 562**

#### **War on the Ground:**

On 08 September, Ukraine's foreign ministry criticised Russia's recent voting held in Donetsk, Lugansk, Zaporizhzhia, Kherson and Crimea, terming them as "fake elections," aimed at delegitimizing Russia's legal system. Ukraine called the international partners to condemn Russia's actions, not recognise any "administration" resulting from these votes.

#### **The Moscow View: Claims by Russia**

On 08 September, regional elections commenced across Russia, including the Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia. Over 4,000 elections will take place, with 21 regions electing regional heads, 20 regions choosing regional lawmakers and 17 regions electing

members of municipal legislatures. Elections will last three days in most regions. This marks the first-time parliamentary elections will be held in these regions under Russia's electoral laws, adapted for conflict conditions.

### **The West View: Responses from the US and Europe**

On 08 September, Denmark's armed forces reported on the delivery of that the first batch of ten Leopards tank to Ukraine. These tanks were pledged as part of a donation of 100 German-made tanks by the three countries. Denmark's troops in Germany are also training Ukrainian forces on how to operate these vehicles.

On 08 September, the EU imposed sanctions on six individuals involved in human rights violations in Russia's Federation and occupied Ukraine's territories. This includes prosecutors and judges, two Federal Security Service (FSB) members and those involved in persecuting the Crimean Tatar community and Jehovah's Witnesses. Europe's sanctions now apply to a total of 67 individuals and 20 entities under the Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime. Sanctions include asset freezes and travel bans. Europeans and companies are prohibited from providing funds to those listed.

On 08 September, *Ukrainska Pravda* reported on Romania's National Committee for Emergency Situations approved protection measures against Russia's attacks. These measures, authorized by the Ministry of National Defence, include issuing Ro-Alert messages to warn of potential falling debris from conflict-related means of warfare. Local emergency inspections will educate residents on how to respond to threats and shelters will be constructed in various settlements, such as Plauru and Ceatalchioi.

On 08 September, Institute of Study of War reported on Russian forces enhancing their command-and-control infrastructure in Ukraine. According to the report it was carried out by moving headquarters out of range of Ukraine's strike systems and placing command posts underground. They have also improved

communication with field units. However, horizontal integration remains a challenge due to the diverse forces deployed. Artillery constraints are pushing Russia to prioritize accuracy over volume in its fire's doctrine. It also observed Russia's adaptation to electronic warfare deployment for wider coverage, whereas Ukrainian forces continue offensive operations but have made no confirmed gains.

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### **War in Ukraine: Day 561**

#### **War on the Ground:**

On 07 September, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President, spoke with Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's Prime Minister, emphasising Israel's support for Ukraine's sovereignty and its assistance to Ukraine's citizens fleeing Russia's aggression. They discussed ways Israel could further aid Ukraine against Russia's invasion. Zelenskyy raised concerns about Ukraine's citizens being denied entry into Israel under the visa-free regime. Additionally, they addressed security

measures for the expected influx of Hasidic pilgrimage to Uman during Rosh Hashanah, with the possibility of deploying additional Israeli police forces to ensure safety.

On 07 September, Yulia Svyrydenko, Ukraine's Economy Minister, during the Three Seas Initiative summit, said that Ukraine has commenced grain exports through Croatian ports. Both countries discussed expanding this transport corridor. Croatia offered to aid Ukraine in demining and investigating Russia's war crimes, drawing on its experience and proposed assistance in establishing necessary institutions.

On 07 September, Zelenskyy introduced Rustem Umerov, the newly appointed Minister of Defence, to the Ministry's leadership, emphasising the importance of its role in coordinating the defence sector. Zelenskyy called for immediate reforms, including digitization and prioritized the well-being of Ukraine's soldiers. Umerov pledged zero tolerance for corruption, digitalization and harmonizing procurement procedures with the NATO standards.

On 07 September, Kurt Volker, former US ambassador to the NATO, during the Yalta Security Conference in Kyiv, urged investors to believe in Ukraine's future success. He dispelled misconceptions about Ukraine's counteroffensive, emphasising that regaining territory takes time. Volker also called for increased US military aid to Ukraine and quicker weapons delivery, suggesting a larger aid package to avoid politicization before the US presidential elections. He noted that military aid to Ukraine is not in cash, reducing corruption risks.

On 07 September, according to *Ukrainska Pravda*, Lloyd's of London was in discussions with the UN regarding insurance coverage for Ukraine's grain shipments if a new Black Sea Grain Initiative agreement is established. CEO John Neal confirmed their willingness to provide insurance if a corridor is re-operated, but it may require a different structure. Insurance is critical for Ukraine's cargo and without UN intervention, Lloyd's would not endorse it. Losses from

the war in Ukraine, after reinsurance, are estimated at USD two billion by Lloyd's.

### **The Moscow View: Claims by Russia**

On 07 September, according to the TASS, Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) disrupted an organised criminal group involved in illegally exporting components for military aircraft and helicopters, some intended for Ukraine's military. The group, comprising Ukraine's and Central Asian citizens operating in Russia, acquired and repaired these components for unauthorized export to western European countries. Authorities confiscated over 100 components, USD 117,000 and 59,000 euros. Charges have been filed against the detainees for smuggling military equipment and they are in custody pending trial in Moscow.

On 07 September, Dmitry Peskov, Press Secretary for Russian president Vladimir Putin, declared that the US plan to employ confiscated funds from sanctioned Russia's businessmen to assist Ukraine is unlawful and will face legal challenges. He noted that Russia's businessmen have contested similar actions in other countries, resulting in court rulings deeming them illegal.

### **The West View: Responses from the US and Europe**

On 07 September, Antony J. Blinken, US Secretary of State, held a conversation with Luminita Odobescu, Romania's Foreign Minister. They discussed Romania's investigation into drone debris found near the Ukraine border and emphasised cooperation for airspace security, including the deployment of additional US F-16 fighter jets to support the NATO's air policing mission in Romania.

On 07 September, the Pentagon unveiled a new USD 600 million aid package for Ukraine, part of the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative, to fund long-term contracts for weapons systems. This includes support for air defence systems, artillery ammunition, electronic warfare equipment and mine-clearing gear.

On 07 September, according to *Euronews*,

Emmanuel Macron, France's President, stated that Russia's flag should not be displayed at the 2024 Paris Olympics due to Russia's involvement in war crimes during the Ukraine's conflict. While he believes there is a consensus on this issue, he acknowledges that the final decision lies with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and Thomas Bach, IOC's President. Macron emphasises the need to distinguish between athletes who support the regime and those who are victims.

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## **War in Ukraine: Day 560**

### **War on the Ground:**

On 06 September, in Kostiantynivka, Donetsk region, 17 people were killed and 32 injured in an attack by Russia. The attack struck the central market, resulting in civilian deaths including children. Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President, noted that the pattern of Russian forces targeting civilians was when Ukraine's defence makes strides on the frontlines.

On 06 September, Verkhovna Rada, Ukraine's Parliament, voted in favour of appointing Rustem Umerov as the new defence minister following Oleksii Reznikov's resignation. Umerov, an Uzbekistan-born Crimean Tatar, previously served as head of the State Property Fund and contributed to peace talks with Russia. He received overwhelming support, with 338 lawmakers voting in favour and one abstaining.

On 06 September, Antony Blinken, US Secretary of State, announced a meeting with Zelenskyy in Kyiv. During his visit, he discussed on Ukraine's counteroffensive, assistance and recovery efforts.

On 06 September, in the Kyiv region, Russia's missile attack caused damage to commercial establishments, private cars and building facades. A truck and an excavator were destroyed. The attack resulted in grass fires but no casualties or damage to critical infrastructure were reported. Falling debris affected a medical facility and police station. Air defence successfully intercepted all incoming targets during the attack. Railway traffic was unaffected, with no threats were reported.

On 06 September, the UN human rights office reported over 9,500 casualties in Ukraine since the invasion, but the actual numbers are believed to be higher. Russia's strikes, including one on a market in Kostyantynivka, resulted in civilian casualties and extensive damage to infrastructure in Ukraine. Denise Brown, UN Humanitarian Coordinator, expressed deep concern over the attacks, emphasising the suffering caused by Russia's invasion. Brown called for respect for international humanitarian law and an end to the devastation in Ukraine.

### **The Moscow View: Claims by Russia**

On 06 September, according to *The Moscow Times*, in southern Ukraine, Russian forces withdrew from the village of Robotyne, which Ukraine claimed to have recaptured on 28 August. Yevgeny Balitsky, the Kremlin-appointed governor of the occupied Zaporizhzhia region, stated that Russia's army tactically abandoned the settlement. Balitsky suggested that holding the village, which had been the site of intense battles, no longer made sense for Russian forces. The situation near Robotyne remains uncertain, with reports suggesting Ukrainian forces are advancing in the area. The village's capture could enable Ukrainian forces to push further into Russia's held territories toward Crimea.

On 06 September, Russia's Defence Ministry reported on Russia's Aerospace Force precision night-time strike on Ukraine's sabotage group training base. Russian forces repelled ten Ukraine's army attacks in the Donetsk area, eliminating approximately 285 Ukraine's troops. In the South Donetsk area, Russian forces destroyed around 180 Ukraine's servicemen and five tanks. Russia's troops operating in the Zaporizhzhia region repelled four Ukraine's attacks. In the Kupyansk area, Russian forces improved tactical positions. In the Krasny Liman area, they repelled two Ukraine's attacks, eliminating about 50 Ukraine's soldiers. Additionally, Russian forces eliminated up to 65 Ukraine's servicemen in the Kherson area.

### **The West View: Responses from the US and Europe**

On 06 September, the EU strongly condemned Russia's deadly attack on a market in east Ukraine as "heinous and barbaric." The missile attack in Kostyantynivka killed at least 17 people, including a child and injured many others. The EU highlighted an escalation of such attacks across Ukraine, causing over 410 civilian casualties in the past two weeks. The EU labelled intentional attacks on civilians as war crimes and vowed accountability for all involved in such atrocities.

On 06 September, the US Department of Defence (DoD) announced further security assistance for Ukraine to address its critical defence needs in countering Russia's aggression. Valued at up to USD 175 million, this package includes air defence equipment, artillery munitions, anti-tank weapons, depleted uranium rounds for Abrams tanks and more.

On 06 September, the NATO expressed "strong solidarity" with Romania after parts of a possible Russia's drone fell on its territory during an attack on Ukraine. Romania initially denied this but later found drone debris and called for an investigation. Russia's intensified attacks on Ukraine's Danube infrastructure have raised regional concerns.

On 06 September, Blinken visited Kyiv, he reaffirmed US support for Ukraine's counteroffensive, emphasising progress and promising over USD one billion in new aid, including financial and humanitarian assistance.

On 06 September, the UK announced to designate the Wagner Group as a terrorist organisation, criminalizing membership, support and the use of its logo. Assets linked to the group can be seized as "terrorist property." Breaching this order could lead to 14 years in prison or a fine of up to GBP 5,000. Suella Braverman, UK's Home Secretary, stated that Wagner poses a global security threat.

On 06 September, in an interview with *Deutsche Welle*, Falko Drossmann, German lawmaker, expressed concern over a reported meeting between the leaders of Russia and North Korea, suggesting it reflects Russia's desperation to acquire new weaponry. Drossmann emphasised the impact of sanctions on Russia and its reliance on outdated weaponry, which North Korea still possesses.

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## **War in Ukraine: Day 558**

### **War on the Ground:**

On 05 September, Ukraine's parliament, the Verkhovna Rada, approved the resignation of Oleksii Reznikov, Ukraine's Defence Minister, with 327 votes in favour. Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President, announced Reznikov's dismissal and Rustem Umerov, nominated by Zelenskyy, will take over as defence minister on 06 September. Reznikov's term was marked by procurement controversies, including a report that USD 33 million for "winter" clothing was spent on summer attire.

On 05 September, according to the Cluster Munition Coalition annual report, in 2022, Ukraine witnessed over 900 casualties resulting from cluster munitions, primarily due to extensive Russia's use of these banned weapons. It caused global casualties to reach a record high of 1,172. Ukraine recorded 916 deaths and

injuries, mostly among civilians. Cluster munitions, known for their indiscriminate and long-lasting threat, were used in Syria, Myanmar and other countries, causing 987 casualties in total. Notably, the US decision to provide cluster munitions to Ukraine in July 2022 raised concerns as these weapons are banned by the majority of countries.

On 05 September, the Ukraine's Defence Forces continued their offensive in the Bakhmut and Melitopol sectors, as confirmed by Ukraine's General Staff. Gains have been made in Robotyne and Novoprokopivka, with artillery support and counter battery fire against enemy positions. In the Bakhmut direction, Ukrainian forces advance, inflicting substantial losses on Russia. Defensive efforts were held against Russian forces in Avdiivka and Marinka, with the latter's failed assault attempts.

On 05 September, during a visit to the Donetsk region, Zelenskyy met with combat brigades defending Ukraine in the Bakhmut sector, including the 93rd mechanized brigade Kholodnyi Yar, 28th mechanized brigade Knights of the Winter Campaign and 92nd mechanized brigade Kish Otaman Ivan Sirko. Zelenskyy awarded them Orders of Bohdan Khmelnytskyi and Orders of Princess Olga for their valor and defence of Ukraine's sovereignty. He expressed gratitude to the soldiers and their families, praising their dedication and sacrifice for the country's independence.

### **The Moscow View: Claims by Russia**

On 05 September, according to Sergey Sobyenin, Moscow's Mayor, Russia's Air Defence Forces successfully intercepted and destroyed Ukraine's attack drones approaching Moscow. The drones were neutralized over the Kaluga region and Istra District in the Moscow region. Although there were no reported injuries or infrastructure damage, debris from a downed drone caused damage to a household in the Istra District.

On 05 September, according to *The Moscow Times*, Russia's border agents foiled Ukraine's sabotage groups' third attempt in a month to infiltrate the Bryansk

region. Alexander Bogomaz, Governor of the Bryansk region, shared photos of seized weapons and ammunition. No casualties were reported, but Russia's far-right militia claimed to have killed two Federal Security Service (FSB) officers, with conflicting reports on the date of one officer's death.

### **The West View: Responses from the US and Europe**

On 05 September, according to Germany's Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community, the Russian Federation is actively disseminating disinformation and propaganda in Germany and its partner countries, including in the EU and the NATO, to influence public opinion. Since the onset of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, disinformation has increased from Russian-controlled media, pro-Kremlin websites and official diplomatic channels. Sanctions targeting Russia's pro-government media have led to increased use of social media for spreading disinformation. Russia's government entities employ various communication channels, including official press releases, social media and embassy websites, to shape perceptions of their unlawful war in Ukraine and portray the West negatively.

On 05 September, Harald Buschek, Chief Program Officer of Diehl Defence, reported that Diehl Defence, a German arms manufacturer, plans to increase production of its IRIS-T air defence system due to rising demand amid Russia's conflict in Ukraine. By 2025, the company intends to produce at least eight systems, up from three to four this year. Missile production will triple this year and double again next year, with an expected output of 400 to 500 missiles from 2024. Ukraine has effectively used IRIS-T to counter cruise missile attacks and the NATO allies are now seeking to procure the system for their defences.

On 05 September, according to the *BBC*, Cuba exposed a human trafficking ring allegedly recruiting Cubans to fight for Russia in the Ukraine conflict. While Cuba is a close ally of Russia, it emphasised it's not involved in the Ukraine conflict. Reports suggest Cubans in Russia joined Russian forces in Ukraine, possibly in exchange for

Russia's citizenship. Cuba condemned the use of mercenaries and pledged legal action against those recruiting its citizens.

### **The Global Fallouts: Implications of the War**

On 05 September, *NK news* reported that Kim Jong Un, North Korea's leader, may meet with Vladimir Putin, Russia's President, at the Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok from 10 to 13 September. Though not confirmed, experts suggest several factors make such a meeting likely. North Korean labour could help address Russia's labour shortage. Arms deals between the countries have been hinted at, though their impact is debated. It is seen as an opportunity for the two countries to strengthen diplomatic ties and counter trilateral military cooperation between South Korea, the US and Japan.

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## **War in Ukraine: Day 558**

### **War on the Ground:**

On 04 September, Oleksii Reznikov, Ukraine's Defence Minister, submitted his resignation after Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President, announced his dismissal. Reznikov highlighted achievements during his 22 month tenure and expressed gratitude for the opportunity to serve during the ongoing conflict with Russia. Zelenskyy cited a need for new approaches and transparency within the Defence Ministry amid recent procurement scandals. Rustem Umerov, the chairman of the State Property Fund of Ukraine, is nominated as Reznikov's replacement.

On 04 September, Oleg Nikolenko, spokesperson for Ukraine's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, reported that Russia led airstrikes on the port of Izmail in Ukraine's Odesa region, Russia's Shahed drones fell and detonated on Romania's territory. Ukrainian forces recently destroyed 23 Russia's attack drones in the southern and eastern regions.

On 03 September, Zelenskyy announced a significant agreement with France during his recent conversation with Emmanuel Macron, France's President. The agreement focuses on training Ukraine's pilots in France, enhancing the coalition of modern fighter aircraft and strengthening defence efforts in the Odesa region. This development is part of broader discussions on defence support and bilateral security guarantees between the two countries.

### **The Moscow View:**

#### **Claims by Russia**

On 04 September, Vladimir Putin, Russia's President and Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Turkey's President, discussed various aspects of their countries' cooperation during their meeting. They talked about trade, energy, agriculture and tourism. They also addressed the "Black Sea Initiative" for grain exports. Putin stated Russia's readiness to resume the grain deal if obligations are met, while Erdogan suggested sending one million tons of grain to the poorest African countries. They expressed their willingness to continue diplomatic efforts in the Ukraine conflict.

Putin stated that Ukraine's counteroffensive to reclaim territory from Russia appeared to be a "failure." Putin noted that the situation seemed unfavourable for Ukraine but hoped it would persist.

On 04 September, Russia's Defence Ministry announced the destruction of four of Ukraine's military boats carrying troops in the Black Sea, similar to an attack on 30 August. Ukraine's drones were also intercepted and destroyed over the Black Sea near Crimea.

### **The West View:**

#### **Responses from the US and Europe**

On 04 September, Putin announced that Russia is close to finalizing an agreement to supply up to one million metric tons of grain to six African countries through Turkey, with financial support from Qatar. This initiative is aimed at addressing global food crises, especially in Africa. However, Putin emphasised that it is not an alternative to the Black Sea grain deal, temporarily suspended due to disagreements between Russia and Ukraine. Erdogan also supported reviving the Black Sea Grain Initiative and proposed new solutions in consultation with the UN to address Russia's concerns.

On 04 September, Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann, head of Germany's Bundestag's defence committee, criticised Chancellor Olaf Scholz, Chancellor of Germany, for blocking the supply of Taurus cruise missiles to Ukraine within the coalition. She emphasised the urgency of the situation in Ukraine and questioned Scholz's delay in making a decision, while Friedrich Merz, Party leader of the Christian Democratic Union of Germany, suggested a joint European decision on the matter.

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## **War in Ukraine: Day 554**

### **War on the Ground:**

On 01 September, according to the Ukraine's Infrastructure Ministry, two bulk carriers, carrying pig iron and iron ore, departed Pivdennyi Port in Odesa Oblast, Ukraine, through a corridor facilitated by the Ukraine's Navy. These vessels, managed by a Singapore-based firm, had been stranded in Ukraine's Black Sea ports due to the conflict. Although Ukraine proposed this route to the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), concerns remain over Russia's military threats towards merchant ships in the region.

On 01 September, policemen in Kyiv, Chernivtsi and Poltava received bomb threat reports for educational institutions on the first day of the school year. Around 400 people were evacuated in Poltava, but no dangerous objects were found. Lviv introduced online drone operation lessons as part of a new subject called Defence of Ukraine. UNICEF reports that only a third of Ukraine's children attend school in person due to ongoing Russia's attacks and damage to educational institutions, with another third learning fully online and the remainder following a hybrid approach.

On 01 September, according to *Ukrainska Pravda*, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is expected to attend a UNSC meeting in September 2023, marking his

first visit to the UN since Russia's full-scale invasion. Ferit Hoxha, Albania's Permanent Representative to the UN, mentioned the event scheduled for 20 September, chaired by Edi Rama, Albania's Prime Minister. The meeting will discuss the global repercussions of the conflict in Ukraine, its impact on international peace, the UN and food security.

On 01 September, Russia's army launched two Kalibr missiles at Ukraine, with one being intercepted over the Kropyvnytskyi region. After a nighttime attack in the Vinnytsia region, victims of Russia's missile strike are receiving assistance, as confirmed by Serhiy Borzov, Head of the Vinnytsia Regional Military Administration. One missile was destroyed and the other hit a private enterprise.

On 01 September, Dmytro Kuleba, Ukraine's Foreign Minister, defended Ukraine's counteroffensive, stating it was not failing but moving forward. He emphasised the difficulties soldiers face and criticised those questioning the speed of the operation. Kuleba stressed the importance of understanding the challenges on the ground, expressing his support for the troops.

On 31 August, according to *Ukrainska Pravda*, Ukraine's military counterintelligence, reportedly using cardboard drones, launched an attack on Russia's airbase in Kursk. These drones are said to be undetectable by Russia's radar and can cause significant damage. During the attack, kamikaze drones targeted several aircraft and air defence systems, impacting the airbase.

### **The Moscow View: Claims by Russia**

On 01 September, journalist Dmitry Muratov, a Nobel Prize co-recipient, was labeled a foreign agent by Russia's Justice Ministry. This move is commonly used to silence critics and requires disclosure of funding sources and tagging of all publications. Muratov was accused of disseminating opinions against Russia's policies through foreign platforms.

On 01 September, Kyrylo Budanov, Ukraine's military intelligence chief claimed the recent

drone attack on Pskov airport in western Russia, damaging transport planes, originated from Russia's territory. Four Russia's military transport planes were hit, according to Budanov, but independent verification is pending. Satellite imagery suggests damage to Russia's military aircraft.

On 01 September, according to the TASS, Vladimir Putin, Russia's President and Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Turkey's President, are set to hold talks in Sochi on 04 September. This meeting follows the discontinuation of a grain deal between the two countries and marks their first in-person meeting since October 2022.

On 31 August, Russia's air defences intercepted a drone approaching Moscow, according to Mayor Sergei Sobyenin. The drone's origin was not specified initially. Russia's Defence Ministry later stated it was of Ukraine's origin. No casualties or damage were reported, but over 100 flights at Moscow airports were delayed.

### **The West View:**

#### **Responses from the US and Europe**

On 01 September, according to the BBC, Ukraine had made "notable progress" against fortified Russia's positions in the south, according to the US government, particularly near Zaporizhzhia. While Kyiv's forces are advancing, they acknowledge the difficulty of the fight. Russia claims to have taken strategic heights near Kupiansk in the northeast. Progress in the south has been hampered by Russia's complex defences, including trenches, tunnels, minefields and anti-tank barriers.

On 01 September, Denmark requested that Russia reduce its embassy staff in Copenhagen to match the number of Danish staff in Moscow. This decision follows failed negotiations over increasing the numbers, primarily due to Russia's efforts to include visa requests for intelligence officers. Denmark has set a deadline of 29 September for Russia to comply. Additionally, reports suggest that a Russia's military intelligence officer was posted as a diplomat in Copenhagen.

On 01 September, in an interview with Deutsche Welle, as the Ukraine's counteroffensive continues, experts suggest Ukraine may increasingly employ domestically made drones for attacks against Russia's positions. The recent thwarted drone strike on Moscow reportedly used Ukraine's-made drones, offering several advantages, including reduced risk to Ukraine's lives and cost-effectiveness compared to traditional missile strikes. Analysts point to drones like the UJ-22 and Beaver as potential models used in such operations, highlighting the challenge of identifying the production sources.

On 01 September, according to the UK's defence intelligence war update on Ukraine, Russian forces were reportedly reinforcing the Crimean bridge. Russia is using passive defences like smoke generators and underwater barriers, along with active defence measures like air defence systems. Satellite imagery shows the creation of an underwater barrier using sunken ships to block sea drones.

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## EM Short Notes\*

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\* EM Short Notes are notes published along with Daily Focus on Europe, every evening by the NIAS Europe Monitor team. The short notes provide a brief overview of the latest developments in Europe and provides the sources from which they are compiled. Visit <https://globalpolitics.in/europe/> to read them every day.

By Rishika Yadav and Sreeja JS



Source: Alberto Pezzali/AP, Nato.org, Bartek Sadowski/Bloomberg, rte.ie, MICHAEL KAPPELER/AP, Benny F. Nielsen/ AP

## AUSTRIA

### **EURO two million in aid to Morocco and Libya for natural disasters**

On 19 September, Karl Nehammer, Austria's Chancellor, announced that the country would provide EUR two million from the foreign disaster fund to assist Morocco and Libya in the wake of recent natural disasters. Austria's aid will be directed toward emergency relief efforts by the Red Cross and Red Crescent Society. It will provide essential assistance such as medical care, clean water, food and shelter to those affected by these disasters. ([“Chancellor Nehammer: Austria is helping Morocco and Libya with 2 million euros from the foreign disaster fund,”](#) *Bundeskanzleramt*, 19 September 2023)

## BELARUS

### **Myanmar opens consulate in Belarus; Strengthening diplomatic ties**

On 18 September, The Irrawaddy reported that Myanmar's military regime inaugurated a consulate in Belarus, marking their 18th worldwide. Belarus appointed an ambassador to Myanmar in 2022. On 15 September, Sergei Aleinik, Belarus's Foreign Minister, held discussions with Than Swe, Myanmar's Foreign Minister, during his

recent visit to Belarus and Russia. The talks encompassed various facets of Belarusian-Myanmar relations, emphasising trade, economic, scientific, technical, educational and cultural collaboration. Both sides focused on agricultural modernization, with Belarus expressing its readiness to share expertise in food security. Global and regional matters, as well as bilateral cooperation within international organisations, were also deliberated. Aleinik welcomed the forthcoming opening of Myanmar's Consulate General in Belarus, strengthening diplomatic ties and promoting mutual understanding. Swe expressed gratitude for their support at the UN. This strengthened alliance raises concerns for western countries that have imposed sanctions on Belarus for alleged electoral fraud and involvement in Russia's Ukraine invasion. ([“Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus S.Aleinik holds negotiations with the Deputy Prime Minister – Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar,”](#) *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus*, 15 September 2023; [“Pariah Diplomacy: Myanmar Opens Consulate in Arms-Supplier Belarus,”](#) *The Irrawaddy*, 18 September 2023)

### **New passport renewal rules**

On 06 September, Alexander Lukashenko, Belarus' President, forbade citizens from renewing their passports while abroad, potentially forcing individuals who fled the country amid rising repression to return to keep their travel documents. Major protests against a rigged election that re-elected Lukashenko forced an estimated 200-300,000 Belarusians to flee the nation. According to the new norm, only when the holder was a registered resident before leaving the country can they get permission to renew their passport. Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, an opposition leader who fled to Lithuania after opposing Lukashenko in the 2020 presidential election, cautioned Belarusians, saying, "even if your passport expires, you should not return to your home country if you risk persecution." Various journalists and activists in Belarus have suffered widespread repression under Lukashenko's governance. ("[Belarus bans citizens from renewing passports abroad, spreading fear among those who fled repression](#)," *Associated Press*, 06 September 2023)

### **BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA**

#### **EU urges Bosnia's Serb entity to withdraw "Special Registry and Publicity" draft law**

On 21 September, the EU called on authorities in the Serb-controlled part of Bosnia to withdraw a draft law. The law is called, "Special Registry and Publicity of the Work of Non-Profit Organisation." The law would classify non-profit organisations funded from abroad as "foreign agents." Critics argue that the law resembles Russia's law adopted before the aggression against Ukraine. The EU expressed concern that this law, along with recent legislation recriminalizing libel, limits freedom of expression and threatens civil society organisations. The move is seen as aligning Bosnia's Serb entity with authoritarian regimes rather than European values. ("[EU calls on Bosnian Serb parliament to reject draft law that brands NGOs as 'foreign agents'](#)," *Associated Press*, 21 September 2023)

### **DENMARK**

#### **Novo Nordisk partners with Aspen to produce insulin in Africa**

On 20 September, according to *Euronews*, Novo Nordisk, Denmark's pharmaceutical company, joined forces with South Africa's Aspen Pharmacare. This aims to manufacture human insulin for diabetes patients in Africa. This partnership aims to address the urgent need for insulin treatment on the continent, where diabetes is on the rise. Production is set to begin in early 2024, with a projection to supply insulin for 4.1 million diabetes patients annually in Africa by 2026. The WHO estimated that by 2045, the number of adults living with diabetes in Africa would rise to 55 million, underscoring the critical importance of this initiative. ("[Denmark's Novo Nordisk and South Africa's Aspen to produce insulin for African patients](#)," *Euronews*, 20 September 2023)

#### **Apologizes for decades of abuse against children with disabilities**

On 11 September, Pernille Rosenkrantz-Theil, Denmark's Minister for Social Affairs, apologised for the abuse suffered by children and adults with disabilities between 1993 to 1980. This included forced sterilization and sexual assault. Victims were committed to state institutions for various reasons and the abuse is a dark chapter in Denmark's history. A government inquiry in 2020 revealed a series of abuses, including violence and psychological and sexual abuse. The apology was made during an event attended by victims, offering recognition and closure for those affected. Denmark's apology represents a step towards reconciliation and accountability. (Richard Connor, "[Denmark apologizes for abuse of people with disabilities](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 11 September 2023)

#### **Government reports the influence of pharmaceutical industry**

On 06 September, government reported that the Denmark's GDP had increased by 1.7 per cent in the first six months of the year, although it would have decreased by 0.3 per cent if the new pharmaceutical

industry had not contributed. Denmark's laboratory Novo Nordisk, has reshaped the Scandinavian country's economy, with revenues surging and production straining to keep up with the exponential demand for anti-obesity pharmaceuticals. The two flagship products; the popular anti-diabetic Ozempic and the anti-obesity Wegovy, have benefited employment rates and stockholders. Novo Nordisk is presently benefiting from a 157 per cent increase in sales of anti-obesity therapies. Its revenues were valued at EUR 23.7 billion in 2022 and now are expected to increase by 30 per cent in 2023. This is mainly due to the lab's continued efforts to combat diabetes. (["Denmark's economy boosted by anti-obesity treatments," Euronews, 06 September 2023](#))

### **Mayor urges tourists to stop buying marijuana**

On 04 September, following a gang turf fight over the marijuana trade that killed a 30-year-old man, Copenhagen's mayor warned foreign tourists in Christiania to desist from purchasing drugs and Cannabis. Rival gangs, the Hells Angels and the banned Loyal to Family are fighting to control the region's cannabis sales. Christiania has grown in popularity as a tourist destination, fuelling illegal trade. Because city officials have not presented tangible answers to the drug trade, drug-selling gangs have emerged despite police officers repeatedly turning them down. Many tourists and visitors have relocated to Copenhagen to avoid falling into the traps of shootouts and gang vicinities. (["Copenhagen mayor urges foreigners to stop buying marijuana at city's drug oasis following shooting," Associated Press, 04 September 2023](#))

## **FINLAND**

### **Finland's youngest Prime Minister quits politics**

On 07 September, Sanna Marin, Finland's former Prime Minister, announced her resignation from Finland's politics. She is one of Europe's youngest leaders and a vocal supporter of Ukraine. She announced that she would be joining a London-based non-profit organisation. Marin, who was 37 at the time of her election in 2019, headed a

five-party center-left governing coalition until April of this year. She was lauded for her Cabinet's management of the COVID-19 pandemic and her loud support for Ukraine. Her vocal support and criticism of Russia raised her international profile. Marin quoted: "I'm excited to take on a new role. I also believe it can benefit the entire country of Finland." (["Former Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin, who was one of Europe's youngest leaders, quits politics," Associated Press, 07 September 2023](#))

### **Government announces new deals to contribute in clean energy**

On 07 September, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment and Ministry of the Environment issued a statement announcing the variety of measures that the government is seeking to take to accelerate the energy transition. The goal is to attract investments that cut emissions and position Finland as a leader in clean energy and a positive climate footprint. Access to and the cost of clean electricity, as well as expedited permission procedures and efficient transmission connections, are critical criteria for clean energy projects. The government expressed its desire to increase domestic electricity generation, which is required for the expansion of the clean industry and to encourage investments in solar and wind power and expand nuclear power. An ambitious objective for offshore wind power capacity will be set by 2035, providing Finland with a competitive advantage over other Baltic Sea countries. One of the organisation's top priorities is emission reductions and capturing of carbon in industry and energy production. The government will keep a continual overview of the situation and an assessment of activities that are adequate to satisfy Finland's emission reduction targets and responsibilities. (["Minister Mykkänen: Excellent opportunities for Finland to become major player in clean energy," Finnish Government, 07 September 2023](#))

## **FRANCE**

### **President announces withdrawal of**

### **troops and ambassador from Niger after coup**

On 24 September, President Emmanuel Macron announced the withdrawal of France's troops from Niger within the next few months. France has also decided to withdraw its ambassador, who had been effectively under house arrest in Niamey. The military cooperation between France and Niger is said to be over. The military soldiers had demanded the withdrawal of France's troops involved in anti-terror operations in North Africa. France initially resisted until requested to do so by the deposed Mohamed Bazoum, Niger's President. (Clea Caulcutt, "[France withdraws troops from Niger](#)," *Politico*, 24 September 2023)

### **Protests against police violence and racism**

On 23 September, tens of thousands of people demonstrated across France in protests against police violence, racism and social inequalities. The protests were initially triggered by the police officer killing of 17-year-old Nahel Merzouk in June. Besides demanding justice for Merzouk, various groups also rallied for immigration rights, affordable housing and economic justice. While unions reported 80,000 participants, policemen estimated around 31,800. Some clashes occurred in Paris, where a group of protesters vandalized a bank and attacked a police car. The death of Merzouk and police violence have raised concerns and led to calls for reforms. ("[France: Protests against police brutality turn violent](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 23 September 2023)

### **Global leaders emphasise on urgent climate action**

On 19 September, leaders of the High Ambition Coalition called for immediate climate action, stressing the urgency of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. They highlighted the need to cut global emissions in half this decade and phase out fossil fuels. The leaders emphasised financial reforms to support climate action and resilience-building, advocating for a just transition. They call for solidarity, inclusion of marginalized voices

and a turning point at the Global Stocktake to close ambition and implementation gaps. ("[High Ambition Coalition Leaders' Statement - UN General Assembly 2023](#)," *Elysee*, 20 September 2023)

### **ANFR warns of radiation emission from iPhone 12**

On 12 September, government of France barred the sale of iPhone 12 due to emission of electromagnetic radiation. The move comes after France's Agence nationale des fréquences (ANFR) had warned the company to resolve the issue through software update. This can be done by taking back all the iPhone 12 sold in France. Earlier World Health Organisation stated that there was no evidence found to conclude on low level electromagnetic fields to harm humans. The iPhone 12 was considered compliant in terms of radiation level at the global level, but as per ANFR observations the phone's absorption rate was above the restricted level. Jean-Noel Barrot, France's digital minister stated that Apple will have to respond in two weeks, upon failure to do so, all iPhone 12 in circulation will be recalled. ("[France halts iPhone 12 sales over radiation levels](#)," *BBC*, 13 September 2023)

### **School denies entry to girls who wear Muslim abaya dress**

On 05 September, nearly 300 pupils arrived at school wearing the Muslim abaya dress following the education minister's announcement of an abaya ban in schools. The girls, mainly aged 15 and above, were not allowed to start classes. Despite dialogue with the teachers, around 67 girls refused to accept the ban. A further dialogue with the families of these girls has been arranged. Refusal after the familial dialogue would lead to expulsion of these girls from the school. (Hugh Schofield, "[French state schools turn away dozens of girls wearing Muslim abaya dress](#)," *BBC*, 05 September 2023)

### **FINLAND**

#### **Government survives no-confidence motion over racism scandals**

On 08 September, Riika Pura, Finance Minister and Willie Rydman, Economy

Minister, survived a non-confidence motion after the far-right Finns Party (member of the ruling coalition) amidst repeated racism scandals during the summer this year. According to *Politico*, 106 MPs supported the government; 65 MPs voted against it. Around 21 MPs submitted blank voting forms; seven MPs were absent during the voting session. Both far-right Finns Party ministers accused of making racist and xenophobic remarks would remain in office. Finland's opposition parties called for votes of confidence on 06 September following the discussions on the government's plan to crack down on racism. (Laura Hülsemann, "[Finnish government and top ministers survive confidence votes over racism scandals](#)," *Politico*, 08 September 2023)

## GEORGIA

### **Georgia claims Ukraine's backed plot to overthrow the government**

On 18 September, Georgia's national security agency alleged the discovery of Ukraine's supported conspiracy to topple the government, ahead of the EU enlargement decision. Bacha Mgeladze, the counterterrorism unit's deputy director, accused opposition politicians and Ukraine's deputy head of military intelligence of involvement in the plot. Additionally, he cited concerns that the EU would issue an unfavourable opinion on Georgia's membership bid in October. Critics view this as a ploy by Georgia's ruling party to justify further political crackdowns. Tensions between Georgia and the EU have been rising due to concerns about human rights and civil liberties. (Gabriel Gavin, "[Pro-EU politicians planning coup, Georgia alleges](#)," *Politico*, 18 September 2023)

### **Impeachment campaign against President**

On 04 September, the Georgian majority party initiated an impeachment campaign against President Salome Zourabichvili. He is accused of breaking the constitution by travelling to EU countries without the government's consent. The party was also offended by Zourabichvili's recent remark that Georgia did not deserve (EU) candidate status last year. Impeachment requires the

approval of 100 of the parliament's 150 members; Georgian Dream and its supporters have 84 seats. The Georgian presidency, which has notably limited powers, is set to transition from a directly elected position to one chosen by a college of electors that includes members of parliament in 2024, allowing members of parliament to select their preferred President. The lack of this ability is the sole thing preventing the majority party from impeaching the President.

("Georgia's majority party in parliament pushes to impeach the president but is unlikely to succeed," *Associated Press*, 04 September 2023)

## GERMANY

### **Car manufacturers concerned about EU's anti-subsidy probe on China's electric vehicles**

On 23 September, Economy Minister Robert Habeck expressed concerns that Germany's car makers may face retaliation. The retaliation can occur if the EU imposes duties on China's electric vehicles as a result of an anti-subsidy investigation. He acknowledged a divide between France and Germany on the matter. France is pushing for the investigation, while German automakers fear the consequences, given their significant presence in China's market. Habeck's comments highlight the complexity of the issue and the challenge of aligning the interests of EU member states. The probe risks escalating trade tensions between the EU and China. (Hans Von Der Burchard, "[German carmakers 'afraid' of China retaliation, economy minister warns](#)," *Politico*, 23 September 2023)

### **Chancellor seeks clarification from Poland over visa scandal allegations**

On 23 September, Chancellor Olaf Scholz called on Poland to address allegations of a visa-for-bribes scandal. He expressed concerns that it could exacerbate Germany's migration issues. Poland's government faces allegations that consulate operatives may have granted thousands of Poland's temporary work visas and EU access in exchange for bribes. The EU has also urged Poland to clarify the matter, warning of potential violations of EU law. Poland has



initiated an audit at its Ministry of Foreign Affairs and terminated contracts with outsourcing companies handling visa applications. (Hanne Cokelaere, "[Germany's Scholz hints at checks on Polish border amid visa-for-bribes scandal](#)," *Politico*, 24 September 2023)

### **Signs High Seas Treaty for ocean protection**

On 20 September, Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock and Environment Minister signed the High Seas Treaty. It is aimed at designating large environmentally-protected areas in maritime zones outside individual countries' control. The treaty, adopted by the UN in June, introduces regulations for protecting biodiversity in the world's oceans. It addresses environmental consequences of activities like mineral extraction on the high seas. Germany was one of 67 countries to sign the treaty on the day it became available, including the US, China, Australia and the EU. ("[Germany signs UN treaty to protect ocean marine life](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 21 September 2023)

### **President calls for fairer EU migrant distribution**

On 20 September, President Frank-Walter Steinmeier expressed concern over the strain of migrants, asserting that Germany and Italy are reaching their limits. He advocated for a permanent European solidarity mechanism in addition to the current voluntary system to alleviate the burden. Steinmeier cited that Germany had received over 1,000 refugees from Italy and highlighted the recent surge in asylum applications, with over 162,000 in the first half of the year. (Laura Hulsemann, "[German president says country at 'breaking point' over migration](#)," *Politico*, 20 September 2023)

### **Eritrea's opposition clash with police in Stuttgart**

On 18 September, the *BBC*, reported on clash in Stuttgart. Over 200 opponents of Eritrea's one-party dictatorship were arrested following clashes with police officers. The incident took place during

Eritrea's cultural festival in Germany on the occasion of the 30<sup>th</sup> year of independence. Supporters of Eritrea's regime loyal to Isaias Afwerki, Eritrea's President, organised the festival in Stuttgart, Germany. Police officers faced "massive violence" from both groups, with officers attacked using various weapons. The violence mirrors similar protests in Canada, Tel Aviv and Sweden Eritrea's diaspora communities celebrating their 30th year of independence which has triggered the opponents of Afweraki who has been the leader of the one-party dictatorship since 1993. (Ruth Comerford, "[Hundreds of Eritrean opposition supporters arrested in Stuttgart](#)," *BBC*, 18 September 2023; "[Germany: Dozens injured in unrest at Eritrean event](#)," *The Telegraph*, 18 September 2023)

### **Parliament passes bill to phase out oil and gas heating systems**

On 08 September, Germany's lower house of parliament passed a bill phasing out oil and gas heating systems, part of the country's drive to become climate-neutral by 2045. The bill aims to cut greenhouse emissions in Germany's building sector, which was responsible for 112 million tonnes of greenhouse gases last year, or 15 per cent of the country's total emissions. The bill was strongly criticised by conservatives for being too costly and by the environmentalists for being weak. It even triggered a dispute within the ruling coalition between the Greens party and the pro-business FDP party. In June 2023, following the pressure from FDP, the ruling coalition agreed to dilute the bill to give more time for citizens and landlords to switch their boilers. The bill requires heating systems installed in new developments and old buildings to run on 65 per cent renewable energy. Gas heaters could be installed from 2024 onwards if they can be converted to hydrogen, including in new buildings if they are not part of the new developments. Further, the renewable heating systems switch requirement would not come into effect until municipalities submit their building heat plan, not expected before 2026 in smaller districts and 2028 in larger

districts. (Riham Alkousaa and Christian Kraemer, "[German parliament passes law to phase out gas and oil heating](#)," *Reuters*, 08 September 2023)

## GREECE

### **Floods: Deaths increase to ten**

On 09 September, *Deutsche Welle* reported that the death toll caused by the floods had increased tenfold in Thessaly (330 kilometres north of Athens). Four people were reported missing and around 1,700 people were rescued. Meanwhile, a massive forest fire broke out in northern Greece. According to meteorologists, storm Daniel was the worst storm to hit the country since the records began in 1930, devastating not only Greece but Turkey and Bulgaria for three days killing 12 people. Quoting scientists, *Deutsche Welle* noted that Greece is on the front lines of climate change and unusual weather patterns are becoming more common now. Kyriakos Mitsotakis, Greece's Prime Minister, said that his government would do "everything humanly possible" to support the regions devastated by floods as he was inspecting Kradista. ("[Floods in Greece: Death toll rises to 10](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 09 September 2023)

## HUNGARY

### **Budapest officials impose restrictions**

On 04 September, *Euronews* reported that Budapest officials had begun to take action to prevent anti-social behaviour in the city's "party district," which has harmed the lives of many citizens. Stag parties with yelling people dropping rubbish and even human fluids on the streets - this is a normal weekend in Budapest's so-called party area. Many locals object to the term "party district," claiming it is a residential area with schools, physicians' offices and people going about their daily lives. Residents, particularly students, in the regions have been affected by the party trend, as loud noises have disrupted their sleep. The locals dislike the culture since it affects the youngsters and the decorum and cleanliness of the surroundings. Authorities have indicated that they have already warned tourists about the penalties that would be imposed for misbehaviour and

disturbances, as well as loitering in public places. Because the town is underfunded, local cafe and nightclub operators must pay security to clean the environment. (Nóra Shenouda with Philip Andrew Churm, "[Budapest acts to reduce anti-social behaviour in 'party district'](#)," *Euronews*, 04 September 2023)

## IRELAND

### **Budget watchdog criticises government's public spending limit**

On 06 September, the *BBC* reported that the employment rate is at a record high and the domestic economy is forecast to grow by more than three per cent this year. Despite the strong economic performance, the governing coalition is struggling in the polls as high housing costs and strained public services have made people feel less involved in the country's prosperity. The Irish Fiscal Advisory Council (IFAC) has released its research ahead of the budget next month. In response, the Budget watchdog warned the Irish government of overheating the economy despite recovering strongly since the COVID-19. The watchdog suggested that pressures should be funded sustainably and reiterated that new spending commitments should be offset with tax increases. The watchdog has also reiterated its criticism of the administration's desire to deviate from its guideline that core government spending should not rise by more than five per cent per year. (John Campbell, "[Irish government warned it risks overheating economy](#)," *BBC*, 06 September 2023)

## ITALY

### **Right-wing government intensifies immigration crackdown**

On 18 September, *Politico* reported on Giorgia Meloni, Italy's Prime Minister, implementation of strict measures against migration. The measures came to address a recent surge in migrant arrivals in Lampedusa. These measures include extending the detention period for illegal migrants from three to 18 months and construction of new detention centres for those arriving without a visa. Meloni described the battle against immigration as

“epochal” for Italy and Europe, citing factors contributing to the immigration pressure, including coups, natural disasters and economic crises. The government aims to deter potential migrants and combat human trafficking through increased surveillance and Europe’s naval mission to block departures. Opposition leaders argue for safe and legal migration channels. (Hannah Roberts, “[Italy’s Meloni gets tough on migrants](#),” *Politico*, 18 September 2023)

## KOSOVO

### **Police ends standoff with gunmen**

On 23 September, a confrontation between gunmen and Kosovo policemen at a monastery near the Serbian border was concluded. It began when a Kosovo police patrol was ambushed, leaving one officer dead and another injured. The assailants fled to a nearby monastery, engaging in gun battles with policemen. At least three attackers were killed. Prime Minister Albin Kurti linked the attackers to Serbia, alleging political, financial and logistical support from Belgrade. This incident may exacerbate ethnic tensions between Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo. Josep Borrell, the EU’s top diplomat and Jeff Hovenier, US ambassador in Pristina have both condemned the attack. (“[Kosovo monastery siege ends with 4 dead](#),” *Deutsche Welle*, 24 September 2023)

## LATVIA

### **Evika Siliņa to become the new Prime Minister**

On 15 September, the parliament voted 53-59 to approve the new government led by Evika Siliņa following the surprise resignation of Krišjānis Kariņš, the former Prime Minister in August 2023. Siliņa, is a former lawyer and welfare minister who became the second woman Prime Minister of Latvia, following Laimdota Straujuma in 2014-2016. The new government would be led by a three-party coalition consisting of Siliņa’s New Unity (JV) party, the Greens and Farmers Union (ZZS) and the social-democratic Progressives (PRO). Kariņš would take on the role of minister of foreign affairs. His New Unity Party won the elections in October 2022 and formed a

coalition with the National Alliance and the United List controlling 54 seats in the Parliament. The coalition was in power for less than a year before collapsing in August 2023 over a planned cabinet reshuffle and attempts to broaden coalition. (Claudia Chiappa, “[Evika Siliņa is Latvia’s new Prime Minister](#),” *Politico.eu*, 15 September 2023)

## MACEDONIA

### **Protests after cancer treatment drugs sold on black markets**

On 05 September, thousands of people staged a protest outside the government buildings in Skopje, the capital of North Macedonia. The protests are over allegations that patients at a public cancer hospital were denied life-saving treatment because employees stole the pricey drugs to sell on the black market. Demonstrators demanded the resignation of the country’s health minister, Fatmir Mexhiti and chastised the hospital administration. The government and hospital officials have attempted to reassure the public that cancer patients are not in danger while prosecutors have investigated the allegations. The demonstrators were largely victims of individuals who did not receive effective chemotherapy treatment because the medications were stolen. (Konstantin Testorides, “[Thousands march in North Macedonia over claims cancer hospital staff stole drugs meant for patients](#),” *Associated Press*, 05 September 2023)

## NORWAY

### **Ocean-based climate solutions as key to limiting global warming**

On 20 September, an updated report from the High-level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy was presented at UNGA. It reported that ocean-based climate solutions can contribute to a 35 per cent reduction in emissions by 2050. These solutions, already available for implementation, could equate to four times the annual emissions of the EU countries. Jonas Gahr Store, Norway’s Prime Minister, co-chaired the meeting of the Ocean Panel during the UN General Assembly High-level Week. He emphasised the importance of ocean-based solutions in achieving climate goals. Store also

welcomed Seychelles as a new panel member and signed the international marine biodiversity agreement. ([“Many climate solutions to be found in the oceans,”](#) *Government.no*, 20 September 2023)

### **Donates Cargo carriers to Ukraine for supply transport**

On 19 September, the Government of Norway announced that Norway would provide around 50 tracked cargo carriers to Ukraine. It is to aid in the transportation of supplies to areas lacking roads. Bjorn Arild Gram, Norway’s Defence Minister, highlighted the carriers’ ability to manoeuvre in terrain inaccessible to wheeled vehicles. It makes them vital for transporting goods, including ammunition, food and water to Ukraine’s troops. The vehicles, known as NM199 in Norway and M548 internationally, have been in storage within the Norwegian Armed Forces and will be maintained before donation. ([“Norway donates cargo carriers to Ukraine,”](#) *Government.no*, 19 September 2023)

## **POLAND**

### **Pressure mounts on government as cash for visas scandal escalates**

On 16 September, the *BBC* reported that Tomasz Grodzki, Speaker of the Senate (upper house of the Polish Parliament) called upon the government to reveal what it knew about the cash over visas scandal. He said that the scandal is tarnishing the country’s international reputation as a responsible democracy. According to the *BBC*, the government has released a few details, but the media reports suggest that the migrants paid up to USD 5,000 each to accelerate their work visa applications. Seven people have been charged so far. Earlier, Deputy Foreign Minister and the director of legal services were dismissed following a search by the Anti-Corruption Bureau in the foreign ministry. The ministry said that it would terminate all the contracts for outsourcing companies handling visa applications since 2011. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki accused Donald Tusk, leader of

the opposition Civic Platform Party for causing problems for his PiS (Law and Justice Party) and denied that there is a huge issue. (Kathryn Armstrong, [“Poland: Government under pressure over escalating cash for visas scandal,”](#) *BBC*, 16 September 2023)

### **Opposition party threatens legal action against Central Bank Chief over inflation**

On 10 September, *Politico* reported on Poland’s leading opposition party pledge. The Civic Platform, pledged to put Adam Glapiński, the country’s central bank chief, on trial if it wins next month’s election. Glapiński was accused of “destroying the independence” of the National Bank of Poland and failing to control inflation. Civic Platform also plans to hold other senior officials, including the Prime Minister and president, accountable at state tribunals if they come to power. The move follows the central bank’s surprising rate cut, raising suspicions of political interference. Despite trailing in recent polls, Civic Platform aims to challenge the ruling Law and Justice Party. Civic Platform’s threat against the central bank chief highlights political tensions over monetary policy and inflation control in Poland’s upcoming election. (Edith Hancock, [“Polish opposition threatens to go after central bank chief over inflation,”](#) *Politico*, 11 September 2023)

### **Contesting parties present election promises**

On 09 September, political parties unveiled their campaign promises ahead of the 15 October parliamentary election. The ruling Law and Justice party aims for an unprecedented third term, pledging increased spending on social and military matters. The main opposition Civic Coalition vows to mend relations with the EU and address foreign and domestic issues, including media freedom. Opinion polls suggest Law and Justice may gain the most votes but may need a coalition partner, potentially the far-right Confederation. Poland’s upcoming election highlights ongoing divisions and EU tensions within the country, with the ruling party facing challenges to maintain control. ([“Poland’s political parties reveal campaign programs](#)

[before the Oct 15 general election](#),” *Associated Press*, 09 September 2023)

### **Opposition accuses the government of migrants and corruption**

On 07 September, Poland’s major opposition leader accused the conservative government of hypocrisy for reportedly allowing foreign workers despite anti-migrant rhetoric and the construction of a new border wall. Donald Tusk, the leader of the opposition Civic Coalition, stated that the administration admitted approximately 130,000 Muslim migrants last year despite anti-migrant rhetoric aimed primarily at non-Christians in order to ease limitations and corruption from foreign labor organisations. Allegations that the administration has opened the door to Middle Eastern migrants are linked to the unexpected dismissal of Piotr Wawrzyk, Deputy Foreign Minister. According to media sources, Wawrzyk was fired as the state Anti-Corruption Office was conducting an inspection of the Foreign Ministry, namely the consular and visa department he oversaw. Donald Tusk, former Prime Minister and former senior EU official stated the government’s actions contradicted its formal policy declarations. (Monika Scisłowska, “[Poland’s opposition accuses the government of allowing large numbers of migrants, corruption](#),” *Associated Press*, 07 September 2023)

### **Bank interest rates drop amidst high inflation**

On 07 September, *Euronews* reported that Adam Glapinski, President of National Bank of Poland stated that despite inflation, the country's big interest rate drop is appropriate since prices are stabilising. His comment surfaced following the bank’s monetary council announcement of a 75-basis-point cut in interest rates. Critics of Poland’s populist authorities accused Glapinski and members of the central bank’s monetary policy council of acting to support the ruling party ahead of parliamentary elections next month, with a significant cut considered as premature by economists. The bank reduced its reference

rate from 6.75 per cent to six per cent as well as other interest rates. The zloty plummeted versus the dollar and euro, extending its dramatic decline since the interest rate cuts were announced. The reduction will provide some comfort to individuals with mortgages, but they will also raise the risk of additional inflation. (Daniel Bellamy, “[Poland slashes interest rates, causing zloty to slide against dollar](#),” *Euronews*, 07 September 2023)

### **Central bank to reduce interest rates ahead of upcoming elections**

On 05 September, Poland's central bank is likely to lower interest rates for the first time in more than three years, providing relief to a government in the midst of a contentious election campaign. The inflation tide has already turned in Central Europe, where central banks responded quicker to the price spike that began in 2021 than the European Central Bank and others. The National Bank of Poland (NBP) is expected to lower its key lending rate by 0.25 per cent to 6.50 per cent in response to a recent drop in inflation from a peak of 18.4 per cent. Analysts say that if the NBP cannot drop rates, it will be vulnerable to significant losses while the European Central Bank continues to raise them. Russia’s aggression against Ukraine and the pandemic were to blame for inflation. (Geoffrey Smith, “[Polish central bank weighs first rate cut as crucial poll nears](#),” *Politico*, 05 September 2023)

## **ROMANIA**

### **Two-day summit to boost ties with the EU member states bordering Ukraine**

On 06 September, a two-day meeting in Romania brought together 12 EU member states which were largely formerly communist countries to strengthen ties amid Russia’s war in Ukraine. The summit intends to increase interconnection in the transportation, energy and digital sectors. Sandu stated that Moldova, which borders Ukraine, is prepared to contribute to Europe’s connectivity and unity. According to the initiative’s website, the initiative was introduced based on shared interests in developing transport, energy and digital infrastructure connections on

the EU's north-south axis. (Stephen Mcgrath and Vadim Ghirda, "[Romania hosts summit to boost ties between 12 EU countries and partners](#)," *Associated Press*, 06 September 2023)

## **RUSSIA**

### **Putin introduces Arctic vessels showcases its long-term strategy**

On 11 September, Vladimir Putin, Russia's President visited the Zvezda shipbuilding complex for the naming ceremony of two new vessels, Alexey Kosygin, an Arctic gas tanker and Valentin Pikul, a shuttle tanker. These vessels, designed to operate in extreme cold and ice conditions, hold strategic importance for Russia's Arctic ambitions, energy security and global transport routes. The ceremony also highlighted the importance of domestic production and technological advancements in shipbuilding. Putin praised the modern capabilities of these vessels and emphasised their role in Russia's long-term Arctic strategy. The shipyard has an extensive order portfolio of around 60 vessels. Putin's visit underscores Russia's commitment to expanding its presence and capabilities in the Arctic region, where it sees economic and strategic opportunities. (Primorsky Krai and Bolshoy Kamen, "[Visit to the Zvezda shipbuilding complex](#)," *Kremlin.ru*, 11 September 2023)

## **SCOTLAND**

### **Salmon farming crisis amid marine heatwave**

On 24 September, *Euronews* reported on persisting heat wave in Scotland. According to the report, it is grappling with an unprecedented Category 4 marine heat wave since March 2023. It is causing mass marine mortalities. Rising sea temperatures have led to a proliferation of sea lice infestations on salmon farms. Investigations have revealed fish covered in invasive sea lice on several farms. Sea lice, which feed on salmon, thrive in warmer waters and can weaken fish, potentially spreading to wild salmon populations. Salmon deaths doubled in 2022 and by September 2023, 8.9 million fish had died prematurely on salmon farms. Rising sea temperatures also pose threats from jellyfish, impacting aquaculture

globally. (Daniel Bellamy, "[Salmon fishing in Scotland threatened by rising sea temperatures](#)," *Euronews*, 24 September 2023)

## **SERBIA**

### **Pride activists defy anti-gay sentiments**

On 09 September, in Belgrade, Pride activists gathered amid police presence and opposition from conservative leaders and far-right groups. The event faced anti-gay sentiment, with last year witnessing clashes. Participants carried banners advocating LGBTQ+ rights and criticised rainbow capitalism. Aleksandar Vucic, Serbia's President, opposed same-sex marriage and LGBTQ+ symbolism. Ana Brnabic, Serbia's Prime Minister has rarely supported LGBTQ+ rights. Ahead of the event, 25 countries and the EU delegation in Serbia issued a joint statement in support of Pride and LGBTQ+ rights. The Pride event's defiance in the face of opposition underscores the struggle for LGBTQ+ rights in Serbia amid conservative leadership and social divisions. (Marko Drobnjakovic, "[Hundreds of Pride activists march in Serbia despite hate messages sent by far-right officials](#)," *Associated Press*, 09 September 2023)

## **SPAIN**

### **Massive protest in Madrid against potential Catalan amnesty**

On 24 September, demonstrators gathered in Madrid to protest. The protest was against reports that acting Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez might grant amnesty to Catalan separatists in exchange for political support. The rally was organised by the conservative People's Party (PP) and authorities estimated around 40,000 attendees, while the PP claimed 60,000. The PP, which narrowly won Spain's election in July, lacks a majority in parliament and needs the support of regionalist parties. The party of Carles Puigdemont, exiled former Catalonia leader, Junts per Catalunya, holds crucial seats and demands amnesty as a condition for support. ("[Spain: 40,000 protest possible amnesty for Catalan leaders](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 24 September

2023)

### **Parliament allows the use of minority languages amidst protests**

On 19 September, Spain's national parliament permitted the use of three minority languages – Catalan, Basque and Galician – after the concession by Pedro Sanchez, Spain's Prime Minister, to Catalan separatists. The move led to objections from the far-right party, Vox, which then abandoned the chamber in protest. The conservative Popular Party demanded formal approval for the use of minority languages. This development is part of Sanchez's efforts to gain support from Catalan separatist parties for his investiture vote. Spain has also called for these languages to be recognised as the official EU languages, but this has faced resistance from some member states. (["Spain's parliament allows use of Basque, Catalan, Galician," Deutsche Welle](#), 19 September 2023)

### **Separatists give Prime Minister an ultimatum**

On 05 September, Carles Puigdemont, the separatist leader, issued an ultimatum to Pedro Sánchez, Spain's Prime Minister. Spain is in political limbo after the July elections failed to produce a clear winner. Sánchez is best set to keep his job as Prime Minister, but he will need the support of Puigdemont's Junts party to keep his Socialist administration afloat. Puigdemont departed Spain for Brussels in 2017 after calling an illegal referendum on Catalonia's independence as president. Spanish authorities charged Puigdemont and his supporters with several offences following the vote. Sánchez will not be able to govern without the support of Puigdemont's Junts party. The Catalan leader stated that he was not interested in reaching a patch but in forging a historic agreement. Yolanda Diaz, deputy Prime Minister, also travelled to Brussels to speak with Puigdemont and reassured that the meeting was solely as the leader of her left-wing Sumar alliance and not as an ambassador of the Madrid administration. Despite their attempts, Sánchez and Daz failed to convince Puigdemont that they could be trustworthy

partners. (Aitor Hernandez Morales, ["Spain's Pedro Sánchez faces Catalan ultimatum," Politico](#), 05 September 2023)

### **Flash flooding claims three lives and several others missing**

On 05 September, heavy rainfall caused flash flooding in central Spain, killing three people with several others missing. The raging winds and hail caused widespread infrastructure and environmental damage. The emergency services were called to approximately 1200 events in only one night. Pedro Sanchez, Spain's Prime Minister, hailed emergency personnel for their efforts and encouraged citizens to remain cautious. The weather office AEMET issued a red notice on Sunday and has now reduced it to a yellow alert as the storm moves away from the country. Following the storm's low strength, several subway lines and high-speed railway links have resumed service. The extreme floods are attributed to climate change caused by the combustion of fossil fuels. (["Spain flooding: 3 dead, 3 missing after heavy rainfall," Deutsche Welle](#), 05 September 2023)

## **SWEDEN**

### **Greta Thunberg faces second charge**

On 18 September, according to *Euronews*, Greta Thunberg, a climate activist, was charged with disobeying a police order for the second time in Sweden. In July, she was fined KR 2,500 for a similar offence. Thunberg admitted to disobeying the police order but claimed necessity. The activist stated that those who act in line with science should not have to pay the price. Thunberg and other activists returned to Malmo harbour in protest of fossil fuel use, shortly after the first verdict. They were forcibly removed and prosecutors cited a lack of a permit for the demonstration. Thunberg faces a second trial on 27 September, potentially carrying a six-month prison sentence. (Rosie Frost, ["Not going to back down': Greta Thunberg faces new trial over Swedish protest," Euronews](#), 18 September 2023)

## **SWITZERLAND**

### **Passes ban on face coverings**

On 20 September, the National Council, lower house of parliament, voted in favour of a ban on face coverings, including burqas, with a 151-29 majority. The legislation was originally approved by the upper house and is now part of federal law. Violators can face fines of up to CHF 1,000. While few women in Switzerland wear full face coverings, this move aligns the country with others like Belgium and France that have implemented similar bans. The ban applies in public spaces and private buildings accessible to the public, with some exceptions. The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) criticised Switzerland's decision on the ban. The ban is seen by CAIR as driven by anti-Muslim prejudice. CAIR called on the US State Department to condemn the decision. ("[Swiss parliament approves ban on full-face coverings like burqas and sets fine for violators](#)," *Associated Press*, 21 September 2023; "[CAIR Condemns Swiss Ban on Face Veil](#)," *CAIR*, 21 September 2023)

### **President Alain Berset addresses the UN on Ukraine and global challenges**

On 20 September, President Alain Berset attended a UNSC meeting on Ukraine. He urged Russia to respect the UN Charter and withdraw from Ukraine's territory. In his UNGA speech, Berset emphasised global challenges, including inequality and the climate crisis. He focused on advocating for strong institutions and a renewal of the cooperative world order. Switzerland welcomed the New Agenda for Peace presented by Guterres and pledged continued commitment to peacebuilding. Berset also held bilateral meetings discussing various issues and global challenges with heads of state and government, including Moldova, Brazil and South Korea. ("[President Berset speaks at UN Security Council debate on Ukraine](#)," *The Federal Council*, 20 September 2023)

### **Bilateral agreement with Slovakia for second contribution**

On 19 September, Switzerland and Slovakia inked a bilateral agreement for the implementation of Switzerland's second contribution to selected EU member states.

Switzerland will provide CHF 44.2 million to support programs in Slovakia, focusing on vocational training, sustainable tourism and healthcare. This agreement marks the final step in establishing 13 bilateral implementation agreements for Switzerland. It is aimed at strengthening cohesion within the EU. The cooperation program with Slovakia addresses the country's current needs, promoting Swiss-Slovak partnerships where Switzerland can offer valuable experience. This contribution seeks to enhance sustainable tourism, vocational education and healthcare in Slovakia. ("[Greater cooperation with Slovakia](#)," *The Federal Council*, 19 September 2023)

### **Switzerland and US air forces to conduct a joint training exercise**

On 18 September, the Federal Council of Switzerland reported on a collaboration between Switzerland's Air Force and the US Air Force in a joint training exercise. The exercise will take place between 18 to 21 September in Swiss airspace, where Switzerland's 17 and 18 Air Force Squadrons along with the US Air Force's 510th Fighter Squadron will participate. Swiss aircraft is expected to operate from Payerne Air Base in Vaud, whereas the US aircraft will operate from Aviano Air Base in Italy. This exercise aims to evaluate the planning, execution and debriefing of air defence exercises and share experiences. It aligns with Switzerland's strategy to bolster defence capabilities through international cooperation, as outlined in the Federal Council's 2022 Security Policy Report. ("[Swiss Air Force to train with U.S. Air Force in Switzerland](#)," *The Federal Council*, 18 September 2023)

### **Cassis and Joly discuss strengthening their partnership at UNGA**

On 18 September, Ignazio Cassis, Switzerland's Federal Councillor, held a meeting with Mélanie Joly, Canada's Foreign Minister. They emphasised the development of both countries' ties in areas such as economy, research, environment and human rights. The focus now shifted to New York, where Cassis will attend thematic events and meetings during the



UNGA's opening week. Key topics include addressing Russia's military aggression in Ukraine, enhancing nuclear security, combating pollution and upholding the rule of law and international humanitarian law. Additionally, environmental protection discussions will lay the groundwork for reducing plastic pollution worldwide by 2040. (["Federal Councillor Ignazio Cassis at UN in New York after consolidating Swiss partnership with Canada,"](#) *The Federal Council*, 18 September 2023)

### **International Energy Agency urges Switzerland to accelerate energy transition**

On 11 September, according to the Federal Council of Switzerland, the International Energy Agency (IEA) called on Switzerland to expedite its transition to sustainable energy. The IEA recommends swift licensing procedures for energy infrastructures, early definition of climate measures from 2030 onwards to reach net-zero emissions by 2050 and consistent incorporation of energy efficiency measures in policies. The report commends Swiss responses to the global energy crisis and supports measures in the Secure Electricity Supply from Renewable Energy Sources bill. It also recommends Switzerland align its electricity market regulations with the EU and establish a regulatory authority for gas supply. Skilled workforce, slow licensing and supply chain disruptions are identified as key challenges. The IEA's recommendations underscore the importance of an agile transition to renewable energy and alignment with broader European energy policies. (["International Energy Agency \(IEA\) recommends that Switzerland speed up the restructuring of its energy system,"](#) *The Federal Council*, 11 September 2023)

### **THE NETHERLANDS**

#### **Climate activists arrested after highway blockades**

On 10 September, Netherlands' police officers detained thousands of climate activists who blocked the A12 highway to The Hague for two consecutive days. Around 10,000 activists protested government subsidies to fossil fuel

companies, leading to 2,400 arrests on 09 September and another 500 on 10 September. Extinction Rebellion vows to continue until fossil fuel subsidies end, highlighting an annual sum of EUR 37.5 billion. The protests emphasise growing concerns about climate change and call for immediate action. A significant number of arrests indicates the urgency and commitment of climate activists in demanding climate policy changes. (["Netherlands police detain thousands of climate protesters,"](#) *Deutsche Welle*, 10 September 2023)

### **THE UK**

#### **Army on standby as police officers hand in weapons in protest**

On 24 September, several London police officers handed in their weapons in support of a fellow officer charged with murder. The UK's Ministry of Defence has put the army on standby to assist police with specific tasks. Police in Britain are not routinely armed. This move follows the appearance in court of a firearms officer charged with the fatal shooting of a young Black man, Chris Kaba. The protest has raised concerns about the impact on police officers decision-making and allegations of institutional racism within the Metropolitan Police. (["UK army put on standby as London police hand in weapons,"](#) *Deutsche Welle*, 24 September 2023)

#### **Prime Minister Rishi Sunak to go slow in adhering to country's net zero commitments**

On 20 September, the *BBC* reported on Rishi Sunak, UK's Prime Minister decision to reverse carbon emissions targets. According to the report, he was reportedly considering a significant policy shift. It may involve postponing the ban on new petrol and diesel car sales and scaling back the phase-out of gas boilers. It is aiming for an 80 per cent reduction by 2035. While Sunak maintains the commitment to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, he suggests a "more proportionate way" forward. He emphasised the need to be realistic about costs. Critics argue this could harm the UK's environmental credibility and economic growth, while supporters see it as a

pragmatic approach. The Chancellor is expected to outline these changes in an upcoming speech, marking a potential divide with the Labour Party's stance on climate policy. (Henry Zeffman & Chris Mason & Brian Wheeler, "[Rishi Sunak considers weakening key green policies](#)," *BBC*, 20 September 2023)

### **France, Germany, the UK and the US condemn Iran's actions impacting IAEA inspectors**

On 18 September, France, Germany, the UK and the US strongly criticised Iran for withdrawing the designation of several experienced inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA.) Iran's move, which includes its most knowledgeable uranium enrichment experts, is seen as detrimental to the IAEA's safeguard mandate. It hinders normal verification and monitoring activities. The countries asserted that Iran's actions exacerbate an already strained IAEA-Iran relationship and demand an immediate reversal of these measures. They emphasised Iran's obligation to cooperate fully with the IAEA to ensure the peaceful nature of its nuclear program. ("[Joint statement on Iran's de-designation of experienced IAEA inspectors, September 2023](#)," *Gov.UK*, 18 September 2023)

### **Northern Ireland Investment Summit to open doors for international businesses**

On 13 September, the *BBC* reported on the upcoming Northern Ireland Investment Summit in Belfast. The Summit, organised by the UK is expected to attract 120 international investors and businesses to make invest in the Northern Ireland. Rishi Sunak, UK's Prime Minister stated that the summit was aimed to improve the standard of living and boost economic growth. One of the key proposition is the Windsor Framework which prevents the hard border between Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland, therefore no businesses will face the post-Brexit norms when exporting to the EU Northern Ireland goods will not be subject to checks and controls when exported to the UK. This could attract US businesses into Northern Ireland as it aims to target both the UK and the EU markets.

(John Campbell, "[What is the Northern Ireland Investment Summit?](#)," *BBC*, 13 September 2023)

### **UKs new law stirs human rights concerns**

On 12 September, UK parliament adopted amnesty law to grant immunity for those involved in sectarian violence in Northern Ireland. The bill known as the "Troubles" earned criticism from Ireland and the Council of Europe. During this more than 3500 were killed in the conflict in 1960s and 1200 are still under investigation. In response to the law, the UN Human Rights office expressed its regret over the bill and urged to reconsider by keeping victims in the centre. Similarly, the Council of Europe also expressed concerns over the compatibility of the bill with European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR). ("[UK parliament adopts amnesty law over Northern Ireland Troubles](#)," *Le Monde*, 13 September 2023)

### **Government agrees on strategic partnership with Singapore**

On 09 September, according to the Government of UK, Rishi Sunak, UK's Prime Minister, agreed on a new strategic partnership with Singapore to enhance shared security and bolster the UK's economy. Sunak would meet Lee Hsien Loong, Singapore's Prime Minister along the sidelines of the G20 summit India to sign the agreement. Following the strategic partnership, both countries would work to conclude a new and modern bilateral investment treaty to bolster the confidence of Singapore's companies to invest in the UK and vice-versa, creating jobs and growing economies. Additionally, the partnership would strengthen security cooperation, science and technology innovation and research and development. Singapore is one of the UK's closest and most dynamic partners in Southeast Asia accounting for almost 40 per cent of its total trade with the region. In 2022, both countries signed a Digital Economy Agreement to help businesses seize new trade opportunities. ("[UK agrees new strategic partnership with Singapore](#)," *GOV.UK*, 09 September 2023)

### **Government to host global food security**

### **summit to tackle hunger and malnutrition**

On 08 September, the government announced it would host a global food security summit with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF) to tackle world hunger and malnutrition. The summit would involve governments, international organisations, scientists, NGOs and the private sector. It would also explore how innovation, partnerships and technological advances can ensure long-term food security and improved nutrition for vulnerable countries. The key focus would be on identifying new approaches to tackle preventable deaths among children, building a climate-resilient and sustainable food system, supporting early action to prevent and reduce the impact of humanitarian crises and using science and technology to boost food security. Additionally, the UK has been helping to find solutions to address global food and climate challenges through the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's science and research partnership with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. ("[UK to host a global summit to turn the dial on world hunger](#)," *Gov.UK*, 08 September 2023)

### **UKs climate goals at risk as offshore wind projects fail to attract investments**

On 08 September, *Reuters* reported that the offshore wind power developers warned that Britain's climate goals could be at risk following the failure of offshore wind projects off the UK's shores to draw investments after a subsidy auction. The UK aims to develop 50 gigawatts of offshore wind capacity by 2030 against the present 14 gigawatts to achieve net zero emissions by 2050. Developers also warned that the guaranteed price offered for power generated at the auction was too low for the developers. Further, Tom Glover, UK Country Chair of RWE added that the UK's ambitions for a five-fold offshore wind growth by 2030 and a net zero power system by 2030 are unlikely to be fulfilled without decisive government action. The government raised the funding available by GBP 22 million for the auction but turned out to be insufficient. Later, it said that the

auction had succeeded in supporting other technologies such as solar, tidal and onshore wind projects capable of generating 3.7 gigawatts, powering around two million homes. (Susanna Twidale, "[UK climate goals seen at risk after offshore wind spurns auction](#)," *Reuters*, 08 September 2023)

### **Rejoins the Horizon Europe and also the Copernicus Earth satellite program**

On 07 September, *Deutsche Welle* reported that the UK will rejoin Horizon Europe, the EU's main science research initiative, as part of a new deal. Horizon Europe has an annual budget of 95.5 billion pounds and it funds scientific research in sectors ranging from terminal diseases to climate technologies to food and energy security. Following the negotiations ended by Rishi Sunak, the UK's Prime Minister and Ursula von der Leyen, EU Commission President, the UK will return to Horizon and also to the EU's monitoring satellite program Copernicus Earth. Horizon will provide unique chances for UK companies and academic institutions to lead global efforts to develop new technology and research projects in areas including areas from health to artificial intelligence. The UK will contribute approximately three billion pounds to Horizon and Copernicus beginning in January 2024. The new agreement includes an underperformance clause, which permits the UK to be compensated should UK scientists receive significantly less money than the UK puts into the program. ("[UK to return to EU science research program Horizon Europe](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 07 September 2023)

### **Weight loss drug launched in the UK market**

On 04 September, the weight-loss medicine Novo Nordisk arrived in the UK in limited quantities, where people suffering from obesity and at least one additional ailment will be eligible for the Wegovy injection containing the medicine semaglutide. According to a statement from the Danish corporation, some goods will also be offered for private purchase. The medication is only available in conjunction with a diet and

fitness routine. The corporation is increasing pharmaceutical manufacturing but is adopting a cautious approach to expanding Wegovy into other areas. The trial results revealed that those who took the treatment lost 15 per cent of their body weight and this has greatly increased its demand in the market. Social media influencers have already started to promote the medication and subsequent research proving further heart health benefits has added to its mythology. Wegovy has been released by Novo Nordisk in the US, Denmark, Norway and Germany. However, supply has been constrained in the US, with the industry preferring existing patients over new ones. (Helen Collis, "[Novo Nordisk's weight loss drug launches in UK](#)," *Politico*, 04 September 2023)

## TURKEY

### **Government policies narrowing space for the LGBTQ+ community**

On 05 September, in the presence of Ebrar Karakurt, a notable LGBTQ+ star, Turkey's ladies' volleyball team won the European title. The sporting event became a type of protest because of the ruling party's systematic hate speech against Karakurt. Since sharing romantic images of herself with a girlfriend on her Instagram account in 2021, Karakurt has been a target for extreme Islamist groups. Since then, pro-government media in Turkey and ultraconservative Islamists have targeted her as a "homosexual deviant." The government has been accused of doing little to protect Karakurt from Islamist-led homophobic violence. Karakurt has defended her rights and personal liberties in response to the ongoing homophobic attacks. To safeguard the public from being tainted by the community's ideals, government policies have shrunk the space for LGBTQ+ expressions and gatherings. Since 2015, the country's Pride marches have been prohibited and security forces have been commanded to prevent any social or political activity that promotes the cause. (Elcin Poyrazlar, "[LGBTQ+ volleyball champion hits a nerve in Turkey's culture war](#)," *Politico*, 05 September 2023)

### **Turkey hits highest inflation since 2022**

On 04 September, *Euronews* reported that official figures indicated inflation statistics. According to the numbers, the country hit 58.9 per cent in August, the highest level since December 2022. Since the end of 2019, Turkey has experienced continuous double-digit inflation, making the cost of living difficult for families across the country. While prices soared by about 60 per cent compared to last August, they increased by 9.1 per cent compared to the previous month, fueled by the Turkish lira's depreciation. Following an eight-month drop, inflation began to rise again in July, reaching 47.8 per cent year on year. To combat inflation, the Turkish Central Bank, whose mandate is to maintain price stability, has hiked its primary important interest rate from 8.5 per cent to 25 per cent since June. The bank amended its predictions, predicting that inflation will reach 58 per cent by the end of the year. ("[Inflation in Turkey jumps to 59%](#)," *Euronews*, 04 September 2023)

## UKRAINE

### **New IT coalition launched to support Ukraine's defence forces**

On 19 September, Luxembourg and Estonia led a kick-off meeting of the IT Coalition within the "Ramstein framework" during the Ukraine Defence Contact Group (UDCG) meeting. This coalition is supported by seven countries including Belgium, Denmark, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg and Estonia. It aims to provide a secure and resilient IT infrastructure for Ukraine's Ministry of Defence and Defence Forces. Luxembourg has pledged EUR 10 million for 2023 to launch this initiative. The coalition focuses on IT, communications and cybersecurity support to enhance Ukraine's military efficiency and effectiveness. The coalition was initially announced during the June UDCG meeting. ("[Luxembourg, Estonia and Ukraine have launched the IT Coalition](#)," *The Luxembourg Government*, 19 September 2023)

### **Kyiv denied access to Starlink to avoid complicity in a "major act of war," says Elon Musk**

On 08 September, the *BBC* quoting Elon

Musk (founder of SpaceX) said that he refused to give Kyiv access to his Starlink communications network over Crimea to avoid complicity in a “major act of war.” His comments followed an allegation in Walter Isaacson’s new book on Musk that claimed that the billionaire switched off Starlink to thwart Ukraine’s drone attack on Russia’s fleet in Crimea fearing that it could provoke a nuclear response from Moscow. SpaceX, where Musk remains the largest shareholder, began providing thousands of Starlink satellite dishes to Ukraine shortly after Russia launched its full-scale assault on Ukraine in February 2022. He added that there was a request from Ukraine’s government to activate Starlink to Sevastopol with the intent to sink most of Russia’s fleet at anchor. He did not agree to the request because “then SpaceX would be explicitly complicit in a major act of war and conflict escalation.” Earlier, Musk said that even though Starlink turned out to be the “connectivity backbone of Ukraine all the way up to the front lines,” he would not allow it to be “used for long range drone strikes.” (Dearbail Jordan, “[Elon Musk says he withheld Starlink over Crimea to avoid escalation](#),” *BBC*, 08 September 2023)

## REGIONAL

### Central banks across amends interest rates

On 21 September, *Euronews* reported on European central banks decision to announce changes to their interest rates. Sweden's central bank, Riksbank, raised its key interest rate by a quarter-point to four percent. While signs of falling inflation were noted, the bank stated that inflation pressures remain too high. Norway’s central bank increased its policy rate by 0.25 per cent to 4.25 per cent due to rising costs and inflation. Meanwhile, the Swiss National Bank maintained its policy rate at 1.75 per cent and the Bank of England is set to decide on potential rate changes. Additionally, Turkey's central bank has increased its policy rate by five per cent to 30 per cent in an effort to control rampant inflation. The central bank emphasised its commitment to further monetary tightening as needed to bring down inflation. The decision follows similar moves by central

banks across Europe to address rising inflationary pressures. Central banks worldwide are grappling with inflationary pressures caused by post-pandemic recovery and global events. (“[Sweden's central bank ramps up key interest rate over high inflation](#),” *Euronews*, 21 September 2023; James Thomas, “[Norway central bank pushes up interest rate, hinting at another hike in December](#),” *Euronews*, 21 September 2023; James Thomas, “[Turkey pushes interest rates up to highest level since 2003](#),” *Euronews*, 21 September 2023; Daniel Harper, “[Bank of England pauses interest hikes, as several European countries climb](#),” *Euronews*, 21 September 2023)

### Labour Party leader Keir Starmer meets Macron in Paris

On 19 September, Keir Starmer, UK’s Labour Party leader, met with Emmanuel Macron, France’s President, in Paris. Although it is not unusual for Macron to meet with opposition leaders, the talks did not provide Starmer with any endorsement from France’s president. Starmer has been making appearances on the world stage and recently expressed his desire for closer ties with the EU while ruling out rejoining the bloc if he becomes the UK’s Prime Minister. Starmer’s visit to Paris highlights the warming UK-France relationship after disputes over the Brexit deal. (“[French President Macron to host UK opposition leader Starmer](#),” *Deutsche Welle*, 19 September 2023)

### Schengen reform aims to limit border controls

On 21 September, members of the European Parliament backed proposals to reform the Schengen Borders Code. The code governs border crossings within the Schengen Area while preserving free movement and addressing external threats. The proposals are aimed to ensure that border controls within the Schengen area are reintroduced only when genuinely necessary. The reform clarifies rules, strengthens free movement and introduces targeted solutions to real threats. In cases of large-scale cross-border health emergencies, temporary restrictions may

apply. However, the EU citizens, long-term residents and asylum-seekers would be exempted. Enhanced police officer cooperation is proposed as an alternative to border controls. Clear criteria for imposing border controls and stricter time limits are outlined. The Court of Justice of the EU ruled in April 2023 that re-installed border controls due to serious threats should not exceed six months, with extensions only for new threats or exceptional circumstances risking the Schengen area. ("[Free movement: Schengen reform to ensure border controls only as a last resort](#)," *European Parliament*, 21 September 2023)

### **France and Germany present joint proposal for the EU enlargement**

On 19 September, France and Germany submitted a joint report outlining the EU reforms. It comes with the need to accommodate new member states like Ukraine, Moldova and the western Balkans. The report suggests tighter rules on the rule of law, changes to voting procedures in the European Council and an expanded EU budget. It also proposes a multi-tiered bloc that includes an inner circle of select EU countries, the EU itself, "associate members" of the single market and an outer tier. This proposal aims to facilitate an enlarged EU while avoiding treaty changes, with some countries opting for deeper integration while others maintain a looser association. (Mared Gwyn Jones, "[Germany, France present EU reform proposal as bloc prepares for new members](#)," *Euronews*, 19 September 2023)

### **EU urges Serbia and Kosovo to fulfil commitments amid dialogue stalemate**

On 19 September, the EU expressed concern about both parties' failure to implement their commitments under the Agreement on the Path to Normalisation. This took place following the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue on 14 September. The EU called on Serbia and Kosovo to engage constructively, starting implementation without delay, including the establishment of the Association/Community of Serb Majority Municipalities. The EU expressed concern over tensions in northern Kosovo and

criticised actions by both parties that risk further escalation. The EU reaffirmed its readiness to lift or impose measures based on progress and emphasised the importance of holding early local elections in northern Kosovo. ("[Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue: Statement by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union on expectations from Serbia and Kosovo\\*](#)," *European Council*, 19 September 2023)

### **Ursula announces action plan to combat migration overcrowding in Lampedusa**

On 17 September, Georgia Meloni, Italy's Prime Minister and Ursula von der Leyen, European Commission's President visited Italy's island of Lampedusa. The island located between Italy and Malta, 7000 migrants entered in last one week from Tunisia. A migrant reception in the Island with only 400 migrants, due to the sudden influx, declared "state of emergency," as challenges arose in supply of food and water. On arriving at the Island, Meloni affirmed to address the situation at "pan-European level." Von der Leyen announced the 10-point action plan and said: "Migration is a European challenge and will receive a European solution." Under the plan, the EU's asylum agencies the European Union Asylum Agency (EUAA) and the European Border and Coast Guard (Frontex) will be deployed to handle the crowd and find ways to manage migration and returns. Till now the EU and Tunisia has a deal in place to stop the migration from North Africa and as part of the deal EUR 100 million is yet to be paid. (Priyanka Shankar, "[Migrants on Lampedusa: Italy, EU announce action plan](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 17 September 2023)

### **Erdogan warns of withdrawing membership bid from the EU**

On 16 September, Recep Tayyip Erdogan Turkey's President said that Turkey can end its membership bid to join the EU. He said: "The European Union is trying to break away from Turkey..we will make our own evaluation of these developments and if necessary we could part ways with the European Union." The statement comes after the European Parliament released a

report earlier on its inability to continue Turkey's accession process due to current situation. Turkey's foreign ministry condemned the move and criticised the EU for taking "a shallow and non-visionary," viewpoint. The EU-Turkey accession talks which began in 2005 was frozen due to EU's concerns over rule of law and state of human rights in Turkey. Since Erdogan's win in May elections, the stress on accession has increased. ("[Erdogan: Turkey can part ways with European Union](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 16 September 2023)

### **Finland joins Baltic states to ban Russia-registered vehicles**

On 15 September, Finland joined its three Baltic neighbours to ban vehicles with Russian license plates from entering its territory. This is in accordance with the recent interpretation of the sanctions imposed by the EU (on 08 September) on Moscow over its aggression in Ukraine. Earlier on 13 September, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania banned Russia-registered vehicles in a similar move. According to the *Associated Press*, Russian citizens living in Kaliningrad, would be able to continue transiting through Lithuania via train. Also, Russia-registered cars with passengers less than ten would no longer be permitted to enter Finland from Russia, even though some exceptions are likely. Under the EU's decision, Russian-registered motor vehicles are no longer allowed to enter the territories of 27 member states of the EU, including the Baltic states which are among the most vocal European critics of Russia and Vladimir Putin, Russia's President. ("[Finland joins Baltic neighbors in banning Russian-registered cars from entering their territory](#)," *Associated Press*, 15 September 2023)

### **European Commission to lift ban on Ukraine's grain imports**

On 15 September, the European Commission said that it would not extend the ban on Ukraine's grain imports despite continuous lobbying from the eastern EU countries. Meanwhile, Poland's government threatened to impose its own unilateral ban on the imports. This move

would violate the EU's single market rules and break solidarity with Kyiv. An import of grains from Ukraine was blocked in five eastern EU countries (Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria) following an agreement with Brussels in early 2023. Only transit to other countries was allowed. Vladis Dombrovskis, the EU Trade Commissioner stated that there no market distortions and Ukraine would have to take measures now to ensure that it's grains are not creating any market distortions. Also, the EU executive would refrain from imposing any restrictions if measures by Ukraine are in place and fully-functioning. The decision follows months of lobbying by Janusz Wojciechowski, EU Agriculture Commissioner and Poland's government to keep the restrictions in place at least until the end of 2023 and to extend their scope to other products. (Bratosz Brzezinski, "[EU lifts Ukrainian grain import ban: Poland vows to go it alone](#)," *Politico.eu*, 15 September 2023)

### **Baltic states ban Russia's license plates**

On 13 September, Estonia joined Latvia and Lithuania in prohibiting vehicles with Russia's license plates from entering their territories in line with updated European Commission directives. The move, a response to Russia's ongoing war in Ukraine, aims to collectively raise the cost of aggression. Exceptions include transit traffic to Russia's Kaliningrad exclave and diplomatic vehicles. The status of Russia's registered cars already in Estonia remains to be addressed. The European Commission's recent guidelines also extend to seizing high-value items from Russia's citizens upon entry to the EU. Dmitry Medvedev, Russia's Deputy Head of Security Council denounced the move as "racist," prompting tensions. Moreover, five EU member states, including Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, share borders with Russia. These Baltic states and Poland are prepared to close their borders if necessary. ("[Baltic states shut borders to Russia-registered cars](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 13 September 2023)

### **The EU parliament adopts electricity market reform position despite**

### **objections**

On 14 September, the European Parliament officially adopted its position on reforming the EU's electricity market. This mandate, based on a report by Nicolás González Casares, Spain's Member of the European Parliament (MEP), seeks to counter soaring energy prices linked to the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Despite objections from over 180 MEPs, the objection to the Parliament's position was rejected, solidifying the Casares report as the Parliament's stance in negotiations with the European Commission and Council. Christophe Grudler, France's MEP, who initiated the objection, expressed disappointment but noted that it demonstrates a lack of unanimity in Parliament, potentially affecting future trilogue discussions. (Paul Messad, "[Divided EU Parliament adopts weakened stance on electricity market reform](#)," *Euractiv*, 14 September 2023)

### **Ursula's annual address focuses on climate, AI, migration and Ukraine**

On 13 September, during the annual address, Ursula von der Leyen, European Commission's President focused on women's rights, "green, digital and geopolitical Europe," and highlighted the European Green Deal initiative. She stated how the shift in climate agenda took place towards economy helping in procuring investments and innovation. Warning over flooding of China's cheaper electric cars called the EU to investigate into China's subsidies for electric cars. At the economic front, Von der Leyen stressed on striking deals with Australia, Mexico and South America by end of 2023 to increase's the EU accessibility to "critical minerals." Africa was also under focus referring the natural disasters and increasing Russia's presence. She called for unity of the EU similar to Ukraine for Africa. On the technology, Von der Leyen announced the initiative to establish the EU high-performance computers, AI startups and called for a revamp of irregular migration legislations. Lastly, appreciating Ukraine's progress in war called the EU to help match Ukraine's determination. ("[Von der Leyen: EU has matured into a 'geopolitical](#)

[union'](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 13 September 2023)

### **Switzerland concludes firefighting operations in Greece**

On 10 September, Switzerland's deployment to aid Greece in battling forest fires and managing flood aftermath concluded. Initially, Swiss army helicopters assisted Greek firefighting operations for five days, followed by a focus on flood-affected areas in central Greece. Three Super Puma helicopters transported individuals and distributed aid materials. The Swiss intervention, comprising 23 Swiss Armed Forces members and three specialists from the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit, totalled 27 flying hours in firefighting operations and 23 hours in flood relief, transporting 36 flood victims. The operation, in coordination with Greek authorities, concluded with a commendation from Katerina Sakellaropoulou, Greece's president. ("[Swiss aid operation in Greece concluded](#)," *The Federal Council*, 11 September 2023)

### **The EU scraps plan to redistribute multinationals' profits among member states**

On 11 September, *Politico* reported on the European Commission plan to not redistribute profits of multinationals among the EU countries. Instead, the Commission will suggest that companies with annual revenues over EUR 750 million pool their tax bills in an aggregate tax base, excluding oil and gas, shipping and aviation groups. The aim is to provide more certainty to businesses operating across borders regarding their tax bills and facilitate cross-border compensation of losses. The proposals come as all 27 EU countries signed a global tax deal, including a minimum corporate tax rate of 15 per cent. The shift in the EU's approach to taxing multinationals reflects ongoing efforts to harmonize tax rules and ensure fair contributions from large corporations, although some stakeholders remain critical of the proposed changes. (Paola Tamma, "[Brussels drops tax plan to distribute multinationals' profits across EU](#)," *Politico*, 11 September 2023)



### **Talks on the outlook of the Reykjavik Summit**

On 07 September, Marija Pejnovi Buri, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, visited Switzerland to meet with Alain Berset, President of the Swiss Confederation, to discuss the Council of Europe's outlook in the aftermath of the Reykjavik Summit and the impact of the war in Ukraine. The president handed over Switzerland's ratification instrument for Convention 108+, which strengthens data protection. The summit encouraged the creation of a record to document the harm caused by Russia's aggression against Ukraine, which would help in gathering evidence of Russia's crimes. The aim of Kosovo to join the Council of Europe was also discussed. The country's residents, including members of the Serb minority and other communities, would get access to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). The Convention has evolved into an important reference point for European legislative and judicial institutions. The amending protocol (Convention 108+) is intended to address the issues posed by modern information and communication technologies and it will enter into force only after ratification by 38 States Parties. ("[President Berset receives Council of Europe secretary general: talks on outlook following Reykjavik summit](#)," *The Federal Council*, 07 September 2023)

### **Iceland and Luxembourg to strengthen partnership**

On 07 September, Xavier Bettel, Luxembourg's Prime Minister and Katrin Jakobsdottir, Iceland's Prime Minister, held a discussion about further developing bilateral relations, the tight linkages within the European Economic Area, international security issues such as continued support for Ukraine and the need for stronger climate action. Luxembourg and Iceland, as natural partners, share a common goal of constructing a stronger, safer, greener, more competitive and affluent Europe based on the fundamental values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The leaders expressed their worry about the global backlash against

gender equality and minority rights, including those of LGBTI people and emphasised the importance of reinforcing SDGs implementation to achieve gender equality. During the conference, it was resolved to explore stronger cooperation in the education and cultural sectors and explored strategies to improve Iceland-Luxembourg people-to-people communication. ("[Joint press release on the occasion of the visit of the Prime Minister of Iceland to Luxembourg](#)," *The Luxembourg Government*, 07 September 2023)

### **New transatlantic agreement challenges in the EU court**

On 07 September, Philippe Latombe, a member of parliament, announced that he is challenging a new transatlantic agreement allowing companies to freely transfer data between the EU and the US before the EU's General Court, potentially opening the door to years of legal wrangling. After the EU's top court ruled down its predecessor, known as Privacy Shield, in 2020, Brussels and Washington rubber-stamped a deal known as the EU-US Data Privacy Framework in July. The EU Court of Justice had invalidated the plan because of concerns that US spy agencies could readily snoop on European citizens. According to Latombe, he filed two challenges which included immediate stop of the agreement and the text's content. The Data Privacy Framework was only notified to the EU countries in English and was not published in the EU's Official Journal thus violating procedural norms. (Laura Kayali, "[French lawmaker challenges transatlantic data deal before EU court](#)," *Politico*, 07 September 2023)

### **Armenia- Azerbaijan border dispute**

On 07 September, Armenia announced that its neighbouring rival Azerbaijan is mobilising troops along their shared border. Armenia and Azerbaijan recently waged a war in 2020 over Nagorno-Karabakh, a landlocked ethnic Armenian region. A cease-fire that year allowed Azerbaijan to reclaim land in the region, while Russia sent peacekeepers to the conflict zone. Over the last few days, Azerbaijan has massed forces along the line of contact with Nagorno-

Karabakh and on the border with Armenia. Azerbaijan is showing its intent to launch a new military provocation against Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia. The Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry stated that Armenia must abandon territorial claims to Azerbaijan, stop military-political provocations and stop impeding the peace process. Armenia's security concerns over Azerbaijan come as the country wants greater defense relations with the United States. (["Armenia says Azerbaijan mobilizing troops in border regions," Deutsche Welle, 07 September 2023](#))

### **Prime Minister finalises agreement to re-join Horizon scheme**

On 06 September, *Politico* reported that the UK and the EU are expected to announce a post-Brexit agreement on rejoining the bloc's flagship Horizon science funding initiative. According to *Bloomberg*, Rishi Sunak, UK's Prime Minister, has directed authorities to finalize a Horizon agreement. When Britain formally left the EU in January 2020, it abandoned the EU's science financing structure. Talks about re-joining Horizon as a third country were halted in Northern Ireland because of a heated dispute over post-Brexit trade regulations. The new agreement would follow the Sunak approach of calming all rumors about an EU agreement before releasing the final product with a bang, as the Windsor Framework did. His government's priority and preference is to associate with Horizon on terms that are both fair and equitable. (Esther Webber and Vincent Manancourt, ["Britain to unveil deal on rejoining EU's Horizon scheme within days," Politico, 06 September 2023](#))

### **Deadly storms and floods after extreme heatwaves**

On 06 September, *Deutsche Welle* reported that new storms killed more than a dozen people in Greece, Turkey and Bulgaria, after a spell of severe heat in the region gave way to torrential rainstorms. The central region of Magnesia in Greece had record rainfall. According to the governor's office, in the course of six hours, Turkey's largest metropolis received rainfall approximately similar to what it would expect for the

entire month of September. Ali Yerlikaya, Interior Minister stated that search and rescue activities were underway along with financial assistance to flood-affected families. Heavy rain and thunderstorms have forced rivers to overflow, breaking bridges and blocking off access in the region south of the seaside city of Burgas, stranding holidaymakers. According to the meteorological department, the storms are expected to last till Thursday afternoon. (["Deadly storms and floods rage in Greece, Turkey and Bulgaria," Deutsche Welle, 06 September 2023](#))

### **Vestager keeps her options open if the EIB bid fails**

On 05 September, Margrethe Vestager revealed her intention to run for the chair of the European Investment Bank (EIB). Following this announcement, Didier Reynders, Justice Commissioner, announced that he would take over as the European Commission's competition leader. The Renew group has formally endorsed Vestager's EIB candidacy. Vestager had previously promised to take a leave of absence when her candidacy for the EIB became public. If she is chosen to lead the lender by finance ministers at a meeting on 15 to 16 September, she will quit and Denmark will choose a new commissioner. If she does not obtain the job, she will return to her current position as director of digital and competition policy. Her temporary absence has resulted in significant reorganising the Commission's portfolios. (Barbara Moens and Aoife White and Giovanna Faggionato, ["Reynders to take over as EU competition chief," Politico, 05 September 2023](#); Giovanna Faggionato, ["Margrethe Vestager goes on leave from the European Commission," Politico, 05 September 2023](#))

### **Turkey and Greece to build new relations after strains for more than a decade**

On 05 September, *Deutsche Welle* reported that the foreign ministries of Greece and Turkey declared a new era of brotherly cooperation following a high-level meeting in Ankara. The two Mediterranean neighbours have historically had strained

relations, especially over maritime borders and Cyprus's status. However, they have recently attempted to restore relations. Greece's humanitarian contributions in the aftermath of the catastrophic Turkish earthquakes and Turkey's sympathies following a fatal train tragedy in Greece indicate the willingness to mend their bilateral ties. Giorgos Gerapetritis, Greece's foreign minister, stated that Athens would consider backing Turkey's EU membership quest if it met the human rights standards. As part of the agreement, both ministers have set a road map for future ties, which includes a series of confidence-building measures. ("[Turkish, Greek foreign ministers hail 'new era' of relations](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 05 September 2023)

### **New innovation chief to bolster Europe in the competitive game**

On 05 September, Iliana Ivanova, Bulgaria's European Commissioner candidate, promised to enhance the EU's leadership in new technologies in her campaign to manage the bloc's innovation and research portfolio. Ivanova intended to increase the EU investment, enhance education and skills and promote European culture. She also advocated for greater transparency in expenditure and less red tape for research institutes when obtaining funds. She vowed to enhance engagement with like-minded countries in the face of a complex geopolitical situation. She expressed concern about "deteriorating basic skills and challenges in the teaching profession," committing to push the EU measures to improve skills critical for green and digital transitions, such as the Digital Education Action Plan. In response to the recent controversy in Spain over the Football Federation President's non-consensual kiss with a female football player, she said that she would use the Commission's High-Level Group on Gender Equality in Sport as a potential tool to ensure equal participation. (Mared Gwyn Jones, "[Incoming EU innovation chief vows to sharpen Europe's competitive edge in parliament hearing](#)," *Euronews*, 05 September 2023)

### **Sami people introduce election campaign ahead of polls**

On 04 September, the Sámi Parliament in Inari introduced a month-long election campaign to enable recognised indigenous people in the EU to go to the polls to elect 21 members of the Sámi Parliament. It is an important entity for the Sami people because of the lack of a specific government minister or national representation. The Sami parliament acts autonomously to represent the interests and desires of the Sámi people in Sámi in areas like education, language and culture; amidst their limited powers, it is the only way to raise local voices about sensitive issues. One of the most pressing challenges confronting the future Sámi Parliament is political participation outside the traditional homeland territory. The campaign comes just months after Sanna Marin, former Prime Minister's government, failed to pass key human rights reforms, a major controversy between the traditional Sámi homeland area, Sámi and Helsinki. Campaigning in Sami is different because of its smaller population. Actively participating in the community shows the work, making it easier for people to choose whom to vote for. The UN has often chastised Finland, which was judged in 2022 to have breached an international agreement on racial discrimination regarding the political rights of the Sámi people. (David Mac Dougall, "[EU's only indigenous people vote in Finland's Sámi Parliament elections](#)," *Euronews*, 04 September 2023)

## **MIGRATION**

### **Italy to rush the relocation of newly arrived migrants in Lampedusa**

On 15 September, *Deutsche Welle* reported that Italy is rushing to relocate thousands of newly arrived migrants in Lampedusa to other parts of the country. Rosario Volastro, Italy's Red Cross director said that around 700 people left the island on ferries and police vessels to Sicily and mainland Italy. Meanwhile, Matthew Saltmarsh, UNHCR's director urged the government to hasten the relocation as the resources and the capacity of the island is limited to accommodate the huge numbers of

migrants. Saltmarsh also added that calm sea conditions and suitable weather coupled with economic and social and economic turbulence in Tunisia, Libya and the conflict in Sudan could be the contributing factors. Giorgia Meloni, Italy's Prime Minister called the influx of migrants "unsustainable" and pointed out that the EU should intervene. Immanuel Macron France's President said that he would work with Italy to muster support from the other EU member states to resolve the issue. He also signalled devising a scheme, all the EU members could take part in to help Italy. ("[Italy rushes to relocate thousands of new Lampedusa arrivals](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 15 September 2023)

## INTERNATIONAL

### **Wang Yi to head to Russia for bilateral talks**

On 18 September, *Deutsche Welle* reported on the upcoming four day-visit of China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi to Russia. According to the report, the meeting comes as a preparatory for Vladimir Putin's visit to Beijing in October for third Belt and Road Forum. The visit is aimed at promoting bilateral relations, hold in-depth talks over strategic interest of China and Russia. ("[China top diplomat heads to Russia for 4-day talks](#)," *Deutsche Welle*, 18 September 2023)

### **India and Russia explore new maritime corridors and training for seafarers**

On 13 September, India and Russia engaged in discussions to expand maritime cooperation during a meeting at the Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok. Both countries explored the potential of new transport routes, such as the Northern Sea Route (NSR) and the Eastern Maritime Corridor (EMC) connecting Vladivostok to Chennai. They also agreed to train India's seafarers in Polar and Arctic waters using simulators at the Russia's Maritime Training Institute in Vladivostok. Sarbananda Sonowal, India's Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways and Ayush, emphasised India's interest in NSR development for improved connectivity and trade. A.O. Chekunkov, Russia's Minister for the Development of the Far East and the

Arctic, expressed eagerness to strengthen ties with India across various sectors, focusing on cargo like coking coal, oil, LNG and fertilizers. (Dinakar Peri, "[India, Russia exploring use of Northern Sea Route, Eastern Maritime Corridor](#)," *The Hindu*, 14 September 2023)

### **The EU launches anti-subsidy probe amidst surge in Chinese electric car imports**

On 13 September, *Politico* reported on Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, initiation of an anti-subsidy investigation against China's electric car imports. It is escalating concerns over state-backed China's electric vehicles flooding global markets at artificially low prices. Von der Leyen cited the distortions caused by these subsidies, posing a threat to the EU's auto industry. The move was met with approval from France's ministers but raised concerns in Germany's automotive sector, heavily invested in China's market. The EU aims to prevent China's companies from dominating the growing electric vehicle market. Valdis Dombrovskis, EU's Trade Commissioner, will negotiate with China on this matter on 25 September. The EU's probe into China's electric car subsidies reflects concerns about market fairness and may lead to significant trade tensions. (Joshua Posaner, Barbara Moens and Stuart Lau, "[EU risks trade war with China over electric vehicles](#)," *Politico*, 13 September 2023)

### **UK, France and Germany to maintain sanctions over Iran**

On 15 September, the *BBC* reported on the UK, France and Germany declaration of their intention to uphold sanctions on Iran, aiming to dissuade Iran from supplying drones and missiles to Russia. Iran's 2015 nuclear deal allowed for the easing of certain sanctions, due to happen next month. However, the European countries allege that Iran violated the accord by enriching and stockpiling uranium, which can be used in nuclear weapons. Iran has termed this move "illegal and provocative." The European powers will incorporate expiring UN sanctions into their laws,

targeting Iran's development and export of ballistic missiles and drones. Iran argues this decision violates its obligations under the nuclear deal and UNSC Resolution 2231. The European countries' decision to maintain sanctions reflects their concern over Iran's nuclear activities and potential arms sales to Russia. (James Landale & Aoife Walsh, "[UK, France and Germany to keep nuclear sanctions on Iran](#)," *BBC*, 15 September 2023)

### **UKs project in Honduras aims to conserve endangered species in Atlantic Coast**

On 11 September, Nick Whittingham, the UK's Ambassador to Honduras during his visit the project funded by the UK. The project is "Strengthening ecological and socioeconomic resilience in the Atlántida Seascape, Honduras" project. It aims to support 23 coastal communities in the Atlántida Seascape, addressing issues like illegal poaching, pollution and climate change. Key actions include enhancing marine habitat protection, promoting responsible fishing, engaging national authorities and building community resilience to climate change. With a budget of approximately USD 675,000 from the Britain's government and local contributions, the three-year project seeks to conserve threatened species and sustain livelihoods. ("[UK promotes sustainable fishing and environmental protection in the Atlántida Coast](#)," *Government of UK*, 11 September 2023)

### **France aims to strengthen bilateral ties with Bangladesh**

On 11 September, during his visit to Bangladesh Emmanuel Macron, France's Prime Minister, aimed to bolster strategic partnership in climate action, resilience and prosperity. During the meeting swift implementation of the Paris Pact for People and the Planet and endorsing principles for inclusive global financial governance were under focus. France pledged support for Bangladesh's energy transition, while both called for climate finance acceleration. Enhanced trade, defence cooperation and cultural exchanges were also prioritized. ("[Joint Statement Bangladesh – France :](#)

[Partnership for Peace, Prosperity and People](#)," *Elysee*, 11 September 2023)

### **UK deploys search and rescue teams to assist Morocco earthquake**

On 10 September, in response to Morocco's request for assistance following a 6.8 magnitude earthquake, the UK dispatched 60 search and rescue specialists, four search dogs, rescue equipment and a medical assessment team. This support includes RAF aircraft to aid Moroccan-led rescue efforts. The UK's swift deployment of resources demonstrates solidarity and cooperation in times of crisis, strengthening international relations. ("[UK deploys search & rescue teams to Morocco following earthquake](#)," *Government of UK*, 10 September 2023)

### **Meloni meets Qiang despite uncertainty over Belt and Road initiative**

On 09 September, in the G20 Summit, Giorgia Meloni, Italy's Prime Minister met Li Qiang, China's Prime Minister. The discussion focused on "deepening relations" while omitting talks on the Belt and Road initiative. Italy, which was the first G7 country to join the project in 2019, is now considering abandoning it, given strong economic ties. In the last five years, China's trade with Italy has increased from USD 50 billion to USD 80 billion and still maintains that Italy will continue to trade. Meloni and Qiang stated that both countries will develop relations in the areas of common interest. ("[Italy's Meloni meets with China's Li as Italy's continued participation in 'Belt and Road' in doubt](#)," *Associated Press*, 09 September 2023)

### **The UK-India free trade deal 'not guaranteed' says Sunak**

On 08 September, Rishi Sunak, the UK's Prime Minister said that a trade deal with India is "not guaranteed" as he prepares to meet Narendra Modi, India's Prime Minister along the sidelines of the G20 summit in New Delhi. Sunak is hoping to overcome several hurdles including the politically sensitive question of visas for Indian workers and students coming to the UK. Adding that it is vital for the UK to deepen ties with India, in particular economic ties,

he stressed that an ambitious comprehensive free trade deal is “not a given” and takes “a lot of work and a lot of time.” Earlier, Sunak’s immediate predecessors, Liz Truss and Boris Johnson tried to push for an agreement by October 2022 but was delayed by arguments over everything from visas to the rules governing intellectual property. According to The Guardian, both countries would be able to reach an agreement on the visa issue, although Sunak faces stiff opposition from his allies in the house. Insisting on never hastening the deal, he added that “...we shouldn’t sacrifice quality for speed” and “...we need to end up with something that works genuinely for both sides.” (Kiran Stacey, [“UK-India trade deal ‘not guaranteed’, says Sunak before Modi meeting,”](#) *The Guardian*, 08 September 2023)

### **Collaboration between UK and Japan’s export credit agencies**

On 06 September, Nippon Export and Investment Insurance, a Japanese export credit agency, signed an Memorandum of Understanding with UK Export Finance to provide the groundwork for future collaboration and cooperative projects between the two G7 export credit agencies. The signing is part of the first UK-Japan Strategic Economy Policy and Trade Dialogue, which aims to facilitate additional deals that benefit exporting businesses. It will set out revised parameters of collaboration that complement the Hiroshima Accord, the G7 Partnership for Global Infrastructure Investment (PGII) and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. With an emphasis on export credit policies and co-investment initiatives, the two ECAs’ sustained collaboration aims to boost the international competitiveness of UK and Japanese enterprises seeking to access global trading possibilities. The collaboration is expected to promote long-term, inclusive and resilient growth. (“[UK Export Finance strengthens ties with Japan’s export credit agency NEXI](#),” *Government of UK*, 06 September

2023)

### **The EU targets big techs with tighter restrictions**

On 06 September, the EU pressurised six big tech giants, including Amazon, Apple and Microsoft to fight their digital dominance with far-reaching rules which aim at providing people more options and making competition fairer. Facebook owner Meta and TikTok parent company ByteDance were designated as online gatekeepers subject to the tightest restrictions of the EU’s Digital Markets Act. The list of “do and do not” aims to keep tech behemoths from monopolizing digital marketplaces, with the possibility of massive fines in order to operate in Europe. This means that European users of Big Tech social media or chat services may soon be able to send messages to rival platforms and choose which search engine or browser they want rather than being stuck with the default version. (Kelvin Chan, [“EU targets Apple, Amazon, Meta and other Big Tech in next phase of digital crackdown,”](#) *Associated Press*, 06 September 2023)

### **Syrian family challenges Frontex in EU Court**

On 06 September, a EU court in Luxembourg dismissed a claim for damages filed against the bloc’s border control agency Frontex by a Syrian family who claimed they were deported in violation of international law on individuals seeking asylum. According to the family’s lawyer, the flight was supposed to take them to Athens, Greece, rather than Turkey. Furthermore, members of the family were separated during the journey and were not allowed to ask questions which reinstated that the children were not treated in accordance with international law. The family sought compensation for both material and intangible losses caused by the return operation. (“[EU court rules Frontex not liable in pushback damages case](#),” *Deutsche Welle*, 06 September 2023)

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