



Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

8988th meeting
Monday, 7 March 2022, 3 p.m.
New York

Provisional

President: Mrs. Nusseibeh (United Arab Emirates)

Members:

Albania	Mr. Hoxha
Brazil	Mr. De Almeida Filho
China	Mr. Zhang Jun
France	Mr. De Rivière
Gabon	Mr. Biang
Ghana	Ms. Oppong-Ntiri
India	Mr. Tirumurti
Ireland	Ms. Byrne Nason
Kenya	Mr. Kiboino
Mexico	Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez
Norway	Ms. Juul
Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
United States of America	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield

Agenda

Threats to international peace and security

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Threats to international peace and security

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Ukraine to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Martin Griffiths, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator; and Ms. Catherine Russell, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Griffiths.

Mr. Griffiths: I congratulate you, Madam President, on presiding over the Security Council in these extraordinary times.

We are here, of course, to speak about the humanitarian situation in Ukraine. And yet, none of us want to be here today. We already had enough on our hands — many other unnecessary and unwanted conflicts, leaving misery in their wake. We had no need for another war that would have such a swift and sweeping impact for what Filippo Grandi has called "the fastest growing refugee crisis in Europe since the Second World War". Today indeed is not a day we had in mind.

In the weeks before the military offensive began in Ukraine and despite the din of commentary, rhetoric and prediction, humanitarian organizations went about their business. They had been working in the Donbas region, providing 1.5 million people there with humanitarian aid, which they have been doing quietly and without fanfare over the past eight years. And they are doing it still today, however and whenever they can. But of course, the humanitarian agencies also prepared for worse to come.

Two weeks ago, few thought the scenario in which we find ourselves today — one of such intense conflict — was thinkable. It was essentially unplannable

from a humanitarian operational perspective. And yet the humanitarian community did plan.

We looked to the possible numbers, with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration, our non-governmental organization (NGO) partners, UNICEF and the World Food Programme. We estimated together who might be in need, who might be on the move and those vulnerable people who might need help at home. We looked at possible routes and methods of delivery. The World Food Programme mobilized its considerable logistics capabilities to get supply chains up and running from a standing start.

We knew that the operation would need the best of talent. All humanitarian agencies, including my Office, sent in surge staff in the days before that offensive began. And as the unthinkable became the reality, the United Nations and its humanitarian partners started a scalable and agile, adaptable and resilient humanitarian operation fit for the changing situation.

The Secretary-General, at record speed, appointed Amin Awad, a person of the widest experience of fast-moving operations, including in that very region, as his Crisis Coordinator. Mr. Awad, supported by Osnat Lubrani, the experienced Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, is in Ukraine as we meet in this Chamber today.

In the first days of the offensive, our staff, like so many in Ukraine, spent their days and nights working from bunkers and basements. And yet they managed to produce the two robust response plans, which Filippo Grandi and I launched last week in Geneva, to a very generous donor response.

Do I need to describe what we have all seen and heard on the news? Simply put, millions of lives shattered. People cannot stay home with shops shut, power and water cut, shells falling and phones switched off. They cannot find what they need even if they have money to pay for it. As we have seen, even as the television cameras roll, many cannot even flee in safety either in this conflict.

It has been 11 days of escalating violence, fear and pain. As of 6 March, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights reported at least 1,207 civilian casualties, including at least 406 dead. The real figure could be considerably higher. UNHCR reports that more than 1.7 million refugees

have fled — and that figure is probably out of date already — in 11 days.

Humanitarian assistance has continued in areas where security permits. Under the leadership of the Crisis Coordinator and the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in country, we have new plans now on how to deliver where humanitarian needs are most acute. This includes cities that we have seen so much on during these last days, such as Mariupol, Kharkiv and Kherson. Our response is being scaled up from hubs in Vynnytsya, Uzhgorod and Lviv.

The United Nations and its partners — and we will hear from Catherine Russel in a minute — have already provided food to hundreds of thousands of people. The World Food Programme is setting up supply chain operations to deliver immediate food and cash assistance to 3 to 5 million people inside Ukraine.

The World Health Organization has shipped trauma care, emergency surgery equipment and other supplies that will help thousands of people in days to come. And more supplies are on their way.

UNHCR is providing assistance, albeit on a small scale at the moment, through a network of shops and supermarkets in Mariupol, in collaboration with NGOs.

Médecins sans Frontières never left. It is training trauma surgeons and providing support for the people in that city.

UNHCR is bringing in thousands of blankets, mattresses and other non-food items from Poland — I thank Poland — and shipping them to transit centres. And I look forward to hearing a lot more about the experience of children from Catherine Russell and the vital work of UNICEF and its partners.

The Ukrainian Red Cross has distributed humanitarian assistance to thousands via its emergency stockpiles, including hygiene and food kits, warm clothing and medicine. I would like to take the chance to salute the more than 4,000 Ukraine Red Cross volunteers across the country, who are used to conflict; the community workers of local NGOs; and the truck drivers carrying basic necessities into volatile areas. These are people all in harm's way who have no hesitation in carrying out their mission.

I see three immediate priorities to lessen the pain and suffering we are all watching unfold in real time.

First, the parties need to take constant care to spare civilians and civilian homes and infrastructure in their military operations. That includes allowing safe passage for civilians to leave areas of active hostilities on a voluntary basis, in the direction they choose. All civilians, whether they stay or leave, must be respected and protected.

Secondly, we need safe passage for humanitarian supplies into areas of active hostilities. Civilians in places like Mariupol, Kharkiv, Melitopol and elsewhere desperately need aid, especially life-saving medical supplies, the kind that have been brought in by the World Health Organization in these past days. Many modalities are possible, but safe passage must take place in line with the parties' obligations under the laws of war.

Thirdly, we urgently need a system of constant communication with parties to the conflict and assurances to enable the delivery of humanitarian aid. We have seen these systems in place in other countries, as Security Council members know well. A humanitarian notification system, as we term it, can support the delivery of aid at the scale needed.

I have already conveyed these three points to the authorities of Ukraine and the Russian Federation.

On the third point, thanks to cooperation with the Russian Federation, my office sent a team to Moscow to work on better humanitarian civil-military coordination that can allow us to scale up, precisely to begin to establish a humanitarian notification system. This follows last Friday's phone call between the Secretary-General and the Minister of Defence of the Russian Federation, Sergei Shoigu. United Nations teams have held the first technical meeting with the representatives of the Ministry of Defence. I welcome cooperation by both sides and sincerely hope to see further progress in the hours ahead.

People are watching as this unnecessary conflict engulfs cities and civilians. As well as what is happening in Ukraine, they have an extra sense of dread over the impact this will have on the wider world. I include myself in this category. I am deeply worried about the consequences on vulnerable people living half a world away. Food prices are spiking and supplies are uncertain. We did not need that either. People in the Sahel, Yemen, the Horn of Africa, Afghanistan and Madagascar already face profound food insecurity.

Record-level fuel prices mean life becomes harder still in places like Lebanon, where generators keep hospitals open and water treatment plants working. And with regard to the extraordinary generosity, which I welcome and praise, of donors to the launch of the regional plan and the Ukraine humanitarian response plan, we hope that will not divert those donors from other pressing humanitarian crises. This may be the latest one, but not the only one.

We have planned, we have mobilized and we have fundraised to meet the challenge we face. We have the capacity and the know-how to meet the most urgent needs in Ukraine, on the basis of cooperation with the parties. But I would like to stress this last point: make no mistake, we are unable to meet the needs of civilians today. All those points that I have made are points in preparation and supply and redeployment and getting to the right place. But we are failing to meet the needs of civilians today. I hope we will not fail them tomorrow.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Griffiths for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Russell.

Ms. Russell: I would like to express my appreciation to Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield and Ambassador Hoxha for convening today's meeting. I would also like to thank Ambassador Nusseibeh for hosting this briefing during the United Arab Emirates' Security Council presidency.

This is my first time briefing the Security Council as UNICEF Executive Director. I regret that it has been made necessary by the rapidly worsening situation in Ukraine and the unconscionable impact the conflict is having on Ukraine's children.

The past eight years of conflict in Ukraine have already inflicted profound and lasting harm to children. With the escalation of the conflict, the immediate and very real threat to Ukraine's 7.5 million children has grown. Homes, schools, orphanages and hospitals have all come under attack. Civilian infrastructure, such as water and sanitation facilities, have been hit, leaving millions without access to safe water.

For many, life has moved underground as families seek safety in shelters, subways or basements, often for hours on end. Women are giving birth in makeshift maternity wards with limited medical supplies. Most stores are closed, making it hard for people to buy essential items, including basic necessities for children

like diapers and medication. Even if stores were open, millions of people are too afraid to venture outside for food or water because of continued shelling and shooting.

The intensification of the armed conflict poses severe human costs, which are increasing exponentially by the day. As of today, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights recorded 1,207 civilian casualties in Ukraine. Since 24 February, at least 27 children have been killed and 42 children have been wounded. Countless more have been severely traumatized.

As the fighting has now reached densely populated areas and across the country, we expect child casualties to increase. We also expect the displacement crisis to continue growing rapidly. As of yesterday, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported in excess of 1.7 million refugees fleeing to hosting countries. Half of the people on the move are children.

UNICEF is working closely with the UNHCR to reach them with protection and assistance in receiving countries. I just returned from the Romania-Ukraine border, where thousands of women and children have travelled to escape the fighting. I met with mothers and children who had to flee their homes at a moment's notice. They told me how it felt to leave everything they know behind and to leave husbands, fathers and elderly loved ones, not knowing when or if they would see each other again. The children talked about being suddenly pulled out of school, of losing beloved toys and the terrifying sound of shelling and gunfire. So many children have been deeply traumatized.

UNICEF and our partners are working 24 hours a day to meet the rapidly escalating humanitarian needs in Ukraine and neighbouring countries by trucking in safe water for drinking and hygiene, providing emergency medical services and providing shelter and protection for those displaced from their homes. At present, we have some 135 people working for UNICEF in Ukraine and we are sending more to meet in-country needs. UNICEF-supported child protection mobile teams are reaching children wherever they can with psychosocial care, mental health support and protection services.

The operating environment in Ukraine is extremely complex. Access constraints and rapidly changing front lines make it much more difficult to deliver critical supplies and services. The safety and well-being of

our staff on the ground remains a top priority. I also want to spotlight our local partners and other local humanitarian actors, who continue to operate under extremely difficult security conditions, especially those working in the Donetsk and Luhansk oblast regions, which have been hit hard over the past several weeks.

I am very glad to tell the Council that on Sunday, UNICEF delivered 40 tons of life-saving medical items for children and mothers to 22 hospitals in five of the most affected regions. That equipment, including midwifery and obstetrics kits, resuscitation and surgical kits, oxygen concentrators for shelters and hospitals and first-aid kits for front-line workers, was enough to meet the needs of 20,000 children and their mothers. In coordination with the Ministry of Health, UNICEF is assessing further needs and preparing other shipments.

UNICEF and our partners need flexible resources and safe, uninterrupted access to rapidly scale up our efforts to meet children's urgent needs wherever they are, whether still in Ukraine or on the move. In collaboration with UNHCR, we have deployed teams to Poland, Hungary, Czechia and Slovakia and have built on our ongoing presence in Romania, the Republic of Moldova and Belarus to support the urgent needs of children.

We have begun operating "Blue Dot" safe spaces in hosting countries at border crossings, where children are first registered. The hubs provide a one-stop safe space for children and their families. They offer a range of services, including places for children to play, psychosocial support, basic legal counselling, recreational kits and hygiene products. I visited one of them last week. Staff at those hubs are also able to identify unaccompanied and separated children.

Children without parental care are at a heightened risk of violence, abuse and exploitation. When those children are moved across borders, the risks are multiplied. The risk of trafficking also soars in emergencies. UNICEF and UNHCR have urged all hosting countries to take measures to identify and register unaccompanied and separated children fleeing Ukraine after allowing them access to the country.

Temporary foster care and other community-based care, provided through a Government system, can help protect children who have been displaced without their families, but we want to stress that adoption should never occur during or immediately after emergencies.

Every effort should be made to reunify children with their families.

Inside Ukraine, UNICEF is also deeply concerned about the safety and well-being of the nearly 100,000 children, half of whom have disabilities, who live in institutions and boarding schools. We have received reports of institutions that are understandably seeking to move children to safety in neighbouring countries and beyond. Many of those children have living relatives or legal guardians. All of those children have the right to be protected.

While we recognize that humanitarian evacuations may become necessary to save lives, special measures must be taken to contact relatives and obtain consent to move those children to safety and to reunify them with their families once the threat has passed.

With the spread of the conflict, we should all be extremely concerned about the risk posed to children by landmines and explosive remnants of war. Even prior to the recent escalation, eastern Ukraine was one of the most mine-contaminated stretches of land in the world. That brutal reality is rapidly extending to other parts of the country. We will continue doing everything we can for children in Ukraine. We are committed to stay and deliver, but we need the Council's support.

What is happening to children in Ukraine is a moral outrage. Images of a mother and her two children and a friend lying dead on the street, hit by a mortar as they tried to flee to safety, must shock the conscience of the world. We must act to protect children from such brutality. UNICEF calls upon the members of the Council to remind all parties of their legal and moral obligation to protect children and spare them from attack.

We remain extremely concerned about attacks on the civilian infrastructure necessary to help children weather the conflict, including schools, hospitals, water and sanitation facilities, and critical energy infrastructure. We call on all parties to refrain from fighting near or targeting those protected areas and from cyberattacks that can disrupt critical services for children and families.

We appeal to all parties to avoid the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, including cluster munitions, which pose the gravest risk of harm to children. We urge all parties to protect civilians from

further harm related to contamination from landmines and explosive remnants of war.

UNICEF respectfully asks the Council to send a strong message to all parties of their obligation to ensure the safety of humanitarian personnel and equipment and to permit and facilitate our work. That also means ensuring that sanctions and other restrictive measures do not impede humanitarian action.

Finally, we have renewed our call for an immediate suspension of ongoing military actions in Ukraine. We need a ceasefire and adequate guarantees to enable safe and rapid humanitarian access to all people in need across Ukraine. That will allow critical humanitarian assistance and protection to reach those in need and will allow families in those most affected areas to venture out to get food and water, seek medical care and leave their homes to find safety.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that UNICEF is a humanitarian actor abiding by humanitarian principles. Over the past eight years, UNICEF has worked on both sides of the line of contact in eastern Ukraine. We are committed to providing humanitarian assistance and protection to all children in need across Ukraine and in neighbouring countries, but the brutality must come to an end.

Children in Ukraine need help and protection. They need supplies and other critical support. They need access to basic social services, such as health and education. They need hope for the future. But, above all, children in Ukraine need peace. It is the only sustainable solution.

I thank you, Madam President, for this opportunity to speak to the Security Council today.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Ms. Russell for her briefing.

I now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): I thank Executive Director Russell at her first briefing to the Security Council. We welcome her to this setting. I also thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths. Both their briefings were extraordinarily sobering, but we very much appreciate the work that they do. I also want to say that we are so appreciative and so proud and grateful to UNICEF, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and other

humanitarian agency staff on the ground in Ukraine and throughout the region. We have seen the images of them coordinating deliveries from bomb shelters and continuing to provide assistance to the Ukrainian people under difficult and dangerous conditions. They are testament to the life-saving work of the United Nations humanitarian agencies and their indispensable role helping vulnerable civilians suffering the consequences of war.

We are outraged by increased reports of Moscow's attacks harming Ukrainian civilians in its unprovoked and unjustified war against the Ukrainian people. President Putin's war of choice has already turned half a million children into refugees. More than 1.7 million civilians have already fled Ukraine into surrounding countries. That does not include those who have been internally displaced. We have seen the images of the elderly fleeing, a woman killed in her wheelchair, children dying in their mother's arms and a woman being rushed bleeding to a hospital. Those are the images that we see daily of what is happening on the ground in Ukraine.

Last week, I had the opportunity to speak to my counterparts from Romania, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and Moldova, where their Governments' international organizations and non-governmental organizations have been working non-stop to welcome all those who are fleeing. What I heard was staggering. My Polish colleague, who is sitting in the Chamber with us today, shared that 100 refugees are crossing into Poland every minute — 100 a minute. We should just do the maths.

We talked about many of the challenges that those neighbouring countries are facing and how the United States can help to keep their borders open to all those seeking international protection, including those who may experience communication barriers with border agents due to disabilities or other factors. We are committed to providing support, and we know that their needs will only increase if Russia does not cease its violence. We know that because of what we have seen over the past week from the reckless attack on Europe's largest nuclear power plant and the siege of cities across Ukraine to the tragic images and alarming reports from those who are unable to leave Ukraine to seek safety. The world is haunted by such images of homes, hospitals, schools and orphanages being destroyed, demolished in front of our eyes, child cancer patients unable to receive chemotherapy, babies delivered in basements instead of wards and hundreds

of thousands of civilians without access to electricity for heat or drinking water to stay alive.

Ukrainian cities are under siege, under relentless Russian shelling. Hospitals are running out of supplies. Food is dwindling and civilian casualties are mounting, while the most vulnerable groups — those with disabilities, the elderly and children — continue to bear the brunt of the suffering. We have seen besiegement before, from Leningrad to Aleppo. Those are tragedies of immense proportions.

The United States is closely coordinating with the Government of Ukraine, neighbouring countries and international organizations, including those within the United Nations system, to monitor the situation, and we will work with them to address the humanitarian needs, both in Ukraine and in the region.

While we are heartened by the international community's pledges of more than \$1.5 billion in humanitarian support so far, we know that, as long as Russia pursues its relentless and brutal campaign, the need for assistance will only increase. We all need to ensure that those pledged funds are flexible and mobilized as quickly as possible, given the escalating needs on the ground.

But, perhaps, most important of all, we must heed the call that we heard today from the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs. That means a sustained pause in hostilities to allow the safe passage of civilians who wish to leave areas of active conflict, the safe passage of humanitarian supplies and the free and safe movement of those delivering humanitarian assistance. We need Russia's firm, clear, public and unequivocal commitment to allowing and facilitating immediate, unhindered humanitarian access for humanitarian partners in Ukraine. Very specifically, we call for the Russian Federation to agree to, and honour in good faith, Ukrainian proposals for time-bound humanitarian safe passage in specific agreed-upon locations. We call for the establishment of a ground-level notification system that will facilitate the safe movement of humanitarian convoys and flights. That is imperative for ensuring that humanitarian supplies and commodities can be reliably transported into Ukraine to reach those most in need.

I also want to note today that the United States is increasingly concerned about the protection of civilians in this conflict, particularly women and girls, who are vulnerable to gender-based violence, and lesbian, gay,

bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex Ukrainians, as well as Ukraine's population of older adults and people with disabilities. We also call for the protection and care of all vulnerable children, including separated and unaccompanied children and those in institutional care. Children should never, never be involved in conflict. I reiterate: children should never be involved in conflict. They must be protected.

The humanitarian toll of President Putin's war on Ukraine is mounting. Children are dying. People are fleeing their homes. And for what? As UNICEF has reported, we already know that dozens of children have been killed in Putin's war. As we work to confirm cases, we know that the actual numbers are actually far greater. Young children have also been severely traumatized by the violence and destruction. They have witnessed so many things to the point that they have stopped speaking. The physical and psychological wounds of this war will be long-lasting.

It is clear that Mr. Putin has a plan to destroy and terrorize Ukraine. If the past two weeks have shown us anything, it is that the Ukrainian people are not going to give up and that many Russian people themselves, including many Russian soldiers, do not want this war. Unfortunately, Mr. Putin does not seem to be listening, and we are concerned that the world needs to be prepared for a very long and very difficult road ahead.

The Ukrainians are defending themselves bravely, and we will continue to stand with them and support them. But President Putin is clearly willing to sacrifice the lives of thousands of Russian soldiers to achieve his personal ambitions. We have been warning Moscow for weeks that, in the end, Russia will be weaker, not stronger, for launching this war.

That is already proving true. The question is: How much devastation is President Putin willing to wreak for this enormous mistake? We continue to call on Russia to change course, withdraw its forces and de-escalate through diplomacy, and we support Ukraine's call for a ceasefire.

In the meantime, we applaud those doing everything in their power to alleviate the suffering that Putin has unleashed on the Ukrainian people. Whatever course Russia's invasion may take, we must do everything — and I stress everything — we can to help the people of Ukraine. Kyiv continues to stand and we stand with Kyiv. We stand with Ukrainians.

Mr. Hoxha (Albania): I thank Executive Director Russell and welcome her to the Security Council. I also thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for his sobering and painful briefing. In addition, I thank them both for everything that they and their teams are doing in meeting as far as they can the huge and increasing humanitarian needs in Ukraine.

Today marks the twelfth day of the unprovoked and unjustified aggression against Ukraine — the war of choice — that is becoming a world obsession. As in every day of this senseless war, Ukraine and its brave citizens find themselves in the well-known sickening inevitability of every conflict. Civilians are killed, children are traumatized and women are suffering.

In less than two weeks, Russia has managed to create out of nothing and for no reason the fastest and largest mass refugee crisis in Europe since the Second World War. We were told that the so-called special operation — the domestic nickname and the new Russian definition for aggression — would not target civilians. In reality, civilians are assaulted and trapped under the rubble. Toddlers are sheltering in cellars and subway tunnels, and as we saw last week, nuclear power plants are under the threat of deliberate or accidental attacks.

Fuelled by anger, owing to the heroic Ukrainian resistance, the civilian population, civilian infrastructure, residential areas, schools and hospitals — everything, as we heard — have become a target. Even diplomatic representation is not spared, as happened today with our own honorary consulate in Kharkiv.

The huge humanitarian needs across the country are multiplying by the hour. Hundreds of thousands are without safe drinking water because of damage to system infrastructure and many have been cut off from access to other essential services like health care. More than 1.5 million people are on the move, searching for shelter and safety, including in neighbouring countries. Families have been walking long distances in freezing temperatures to find shelter, most of them in neighbouring countries. Half of them are children.

We applaud the way in which Poland, Moldova, Hungary and Slovakia have responded in welcoming and sheltering hundreds of thousands of displaced people. They must not be left alone. The escalating aggression in Ukraine has been terrifying, especially for children. Tens of thousands of children have seen

their daily lives and routines shattered. Thousands are separated from their families, in shock and desperate for safety. That is what Russia is doing.

I therefore have some very simple direct questions.

What in the world can justify exposing children to such extreme violence and unbearable levels of fear and anxiety? Where is the humanity of a great nation? Where is the responsibility of a great Power? Where are the commitments of a permanent member of this organ? Does international humanitarian law continue to have any meaning for Russia today? The answers lie under the blood of innocent Ukrainians.

Russia's actions are a gross violation of the Geneva Conventions and are classified as a war crime under the Rome Statute. It must be made clear that if anyone in Russia thinks that what they are doing in Ukraine is a rendezvous with history and that they will get away with atrocities and crimes against humanity, they must think twice. There will be accountability. Albania was among 38 countries to refer Ukraine to the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court. We fully support his work to gather proof and document crimes committed to present them to the Court.

It is therefore urgent to open secure humanitarian corridors for the safe evacuation of civilians and the delivery of medicines and food. The Russian side must stop ignoring the appeals of international humanitarian organizations, in particular the International Committee of the Red Cross, to cease fire in order to create safe conditions for the departure of civilians and wounded, without discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, nationality or migration status. Differentiation among people, on any grounds, especially on the basis of race or ethnicity, is legally unjustifiable and morally and ethically unacceptable.

There is a devastating bloody war on the ground, but there is another nasty war in the background. The latter concerns information. We remain worried about developments within Russia itself with regard to freedom of information. With the latest measures taken by the Parliament, authorities in Russia have shut down foreign broadcasters, whose work has become impossible under the law that criminalizes independent reporting in the country. The last major local independent broadcasters, the Dozhd television network and Echo Moskvyy radio station, were shut down last week.

We know from our own terrible communist past that attacking freedom of information in that way is the first sign of a dictatorship. When a Government is afraid of its own people, it has a fundamental problem. Russian citizens have the right to know why their country attacked its neighbour, they need to be informed about the actions of their army against the people of Ukraine. Mothers must know why their sons are dying and Russians deserve better than doctored propaganda. Otherwise they would only hear about the fictional Ukrainian genocide in Donbas, which never happened; about Ukraine attacking Russia, which never happened; or about Russia winning the war, which is not happening.

The protection of civilians should remain a top priority. Yet, as bombardments intensify, fuelled by the anger caused by the heroic Ukrainian resistance, we are also worried about the destruction of cultural heritage. Indiscriminate bombardments have already destroyed architectural ensembles in Kharkhiv and risk inflicting irreparable damage to Ukraine's wider cultural heritage. Such heritage is a testimony to the past, as well as a vector of peace for the future, which Russia is assaulting.

Let me conclude with the cry of a woman, Oleksandra, living in Kharkhiv. It was last week and I do not know whether she is still alive. She said, "My city is being shelled, but my mom won't believe me". Her mom, who lives in Russia, would respond to her call that she heard on television that the Russian army would never target civilians and that it is Ukrainians who are killing their own people.

Twelve days ago, Ukraine was guilty because it exists. Now they are guilty because they do not surrender. What will tomorrow be made of for them? We call on Russia to come to its senses and stop. We call on Russia to halt its aggression and go home. The world knows what they are doing. What is happening is a global air-raid siren — a warning of how important multilateralism is, how much we need it to work and how essential it is to do everything possible to stop this war and make the aggressor pay for it. When one behaves like a rogue State, one should not expect to be treated differently.

Albania reaffirms its unwavering support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

This position was reiterated just a few hours ago by a resolution adopted by the Albanian Parliament.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Martin Griffiths for his views. We welcome the new Executive Director of UNICEF, Catherine Russell, to this meeting and thank her for her briefing. We wish to note that we have seen the unbiased reaction of the Fund to the Ukraine crisis over the past eight years of its duration. The Fund did not turn a blind eye to the bombing of Donbas, the territories of Donetsk and Luhansk or the humanitarian and psychological issues encountered by children. We hope that unbiased approach will continue in the future.

We believe that the views of UNICEF should be based on reliable, tried and tested information. We welcome the consideration, in the humanitarian plan, of the dangerous mass proliferation on Ukrainian territory of small arms and light weapons, many of which have fallen into the hands of radical elements, including those who have been deliberately released from prison. The consequences of that irresponsible step taken by Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who gave the order, are already clear. The number of victims among civilians, at the hands of radicals, is increasing, day by day, primarily in Kyiv. We have been drawing attention to that issue for some time.

We call upon all colleagues in the Security Council to maintain the focus of today's meeting on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine. We have already had the opportunity to exchange political views on events in the country. It is clear that our assessments diverge from those of other Council members and that they continue to rely on the views of Ukrainian politicians, as well as on dubious or openly mendacious material from social networks, and are determined to cast a shadow over the conduct and goals of our special military operation in Ukraine.

We agree with the representative of Albania about the fact that an information war is under way — more likely, a disinformation war. However, he forgot to mention that in the West, in the free world, Russian information resources are being turned off and any information that contradicts the West's version of events and its fakes is not allowed to be broadcast.

The Permanent Representative of the United States today accused us of not honouring our commitment to creating safe humanitarian corridors. Let us get things straight. We again wish to emphasize that a threat

to civilians in Ukraine is posed not by the Russian military, who do not target civil infrastructure, but by the Ukrainian radicals and neo-Nazis who are holding the populations of several cities as hostages. Using civilians as human shields, they do not allow them to leave the cities, despite the fact that humanitarian corridors exist and that Russian units have declared a ceasefire. There are many examples of that.

On 4 March, the Russian Ministry of Defence and the Deputy Prime Minister of Ukraine, Irina Vereshuk, agreed on parameters for humanitarian corridors from Mariupol to Zaporizhzhya and from Volnovakha to Dnipropetrovsk. They were supposed to open at 10 a.m. on 5 March. At Kyiv's request, representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) were invited to areas with open corridors. The Russian side was ready to provide comprehensive assistance in guaranteeing safe evacuation. We informed the Secretariat of the entire plan in a timely fashion.

However, radicals in Mariupol violated the agreement. As is clear from an intercepted radio conversation between two commanders of the Azov Nationalist Battalion, radicals were told to kneecap those heading to humanitarian corridors. When those who risked life and limb in an attempt to leave Mariupol reached checkpoints to exit the city, they were shot on site by Ukrainian Nazis. There is considerable video evidence of those events.

According to our data, in Mariupol alone, some 200,000 civilians are in the cross-hairs of the Azov Battalion and are trapped by radicals in that area. The humanitarian situation in cities is deteriorating rapidly. Humanitarians attempting to provide assistance are unable to reach Mariupol to prevent the impending catastrophe. The situation is critical for people in other regions of the country as they, too, are blockaded by nationalist battalions. We note that, day by day, Ukrainian radicals are showing their true colours more clearly. Local residents said that Ukraine's armed forces forced staff out of a maternity clinic No.1 in Mariupol and then established a firing site in the clinic. They also destroyed one of the nursery schools in the city. In addition, we have stated that Ukrainian authorities have categorically refused to cooperate in efforts to evacuate people from Kharkov or Sumy.

In the light of the catastrophic humanitarian situation and the fact that it is worsening in Kyiv, Kharkov, Sumy and Mariupol and the request made

by President Emmanuel Macron to President Putin, Russian Armed Forces announced the start of a ceasefire from 10 a.m. on 7 March 2022. Humanitarian corridors will be opened in Kyiv, Mariupol and Sumy, leading to Russian territory, for those who wish to evacuate through that logistically reliable route, and to Ukrainian territory.

That information was conveyed last night to Kyiv, the specialized agencies of the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the ICRC and other international organizations, via all available information resources, including the media. An official answer from Kyiv was received only today at 7:10 a.m., Moscow time, and it ignored humanitarian corridors leading to the Russian Federation.

The issue was raised in an official statement by Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Vereshuk, who called the proposal to open humanitarian corridors leading to Russia "absurd and unacceptable". It is clear to us that the Kyiv regime uses all available and unavailable methods to halt the exit of civilians, as well as foreigners who wish to go to Russia, because they fear that once those people are free, they will tell the truth about the actions of Ukrainian radicals, as those who have been able to escape the radicals have done. We refer here to threats, intimidation, blackmail, physical violence and orders to shoot on sight — directed at citizens and foreigners. By way of illustration, the Mayor of Sumy, Alexander Lysenko, along with the commander of a nationalist battalion, made a statement today.

"There will be no green corridors. No civilians will leave for Russia and those who try to do so will be shot dead."

While saying that Ukrainian civilians cannot be evacuated to Russia, Ukrainian officials have ignored the fact that Ukrainian refugees are already in Russia. More than 168,000 people, including 43,469 children, have been evacuated to Russia from the area in which the special military operation is being conducted. In the past 24 hours, 5,550 people, including 740 children, have been evacuated to Russia. Some 19,256 private vehicles, 900 of them in the past 24 hours, have crossed the Russian border.

We are also establishing temporary accommodation facilities. They are all ready to work with civilians arriving from Ukraine. Regrettably, the issue of evacuating people from other regions is also being politicized, as is the issue of humanitarian assistance.

In particular, the requests of the Ukrainian party to guarantee evacuation from several settlements that are under the control of the Russian Armed Forces that were made to us less than three hours prior to the opening of humanitarian corridors seem absurd. None of the inhabitants of those areas said that they wanted to evacuate. People are living peacefully in their homes. They are under no threat.

In parallel, we were asked to organize the evacuation of citizens from several cities, which, for the time being, are under the control of nationalist battalions. We were also asked to deliver alleged humanitarian goods to Melitopol and Berdiansk, in the Zaporizhzhya region, and Kherson. It also appears cynical with regard to the people living in cities as those regions are under full control of the Russian Armed Forces and their populations continue to live peacefully. They have everything they need, including humanitarian assistance from Russia — some 50,000 tons of it has arrived in various regions of Ukraine .

We are also particularly concerned about the fact that Ukrainian radicals continue to hold hostage more than 1,500 foreigners in several cities, using them as human shields. We are working around the clock with the relevant diplomatic agencies to resolve that issue. Foreigners encountered severe problems in their attempts to leave for Europe. We refer here to citizens from various countries, including African countries.

We have also taken note of a public statement by Senegal as current Chair of the African Union on the issue. We are shocked by news of the inhumane attacks by nationalists on student dormitories, which have, among other things, caused the death of Indian students. With regard to the safety of United Nations personnel in Ukraine — and for us that is a priority — Russian troops guaranteed the exit of 180 United Nations staff members from Kyiv. That support will continue as needed. We are in constant contact with the Secretariat. We are adopting a responsible approach to resolving the humanitarian issues faced by Ukrainian civilians.

On 2 March, an inter-agency humanitarian coordination unit was created on the basis of the National Defence Management Centre in connection with the special operation being carried out in Ukraine. The unit is working around the clock. The staff include the authorized representatives of all the federal bodies of the executive branch of Government, State corporations and federal subjects of the Russian

Federation. Their main objective is to guarantee multifaceted humanitarian assistance to the Ukrainian population in the controlled regions and in the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics, as well as to ensure the safe evacuation of peaceful Ukrainians and citizens of other countries.

I must also mention another aspect. The deployment of heavy weaponry, including anti-aircraft defence systems, multiple-launch rocket systems and bombardment artillery in heavily populated areas, are not isolated incidents but have become a go-to method for Ukrainian nationalist battalions. Attempts by civilians to protest and to request that that weaponry be removed have been brutally stopped through the threat of use of weapons. Similar cowardice on the part of the combatants who are using the civilian population as hostages is not just deeply immoral but also violates the norms of international humanitarian law, including articles 57 and 58 of the First Additional Protocol to the 1949 Geneva Conventions.

Furthermore, in a number of cities, in particular in Odesa, it has been reported that weaponry has been placed near or inside objects of cultural heritage, in violation of article 53 of that Additional Protocol. The break-off in the evacuation of civilians using humanitarian corridors is a violation of article 75 of the Additional Protocol, and the footage published on social networks of the torture and abuse of Russian troops who are being imprisoned is a violation of article 14 of the Geneva Convention of 1949, which guarantees respect for the person and the dignity of troops under all circumstances.

I encourage colleagues to make the correct appraisal of all those egregious incidents. We expect the same from the leadership of the United Nations. Otherwise, they would be encouraging Ukrainian radicals and neo-Nazis to commit more crimes.

In conclusion, I wish to once again firmly encourage our Western colleagues to convince the Ukrainian leadership to think, finally, about the safety of the Ukrainian and foreign citizens held hostage by radicals and to join in efforts to open and ensure the safety of humanitarian corridors — if, of course, they still have any ways of influencing the nationalists; we have increasing doubts about that. We for our part are ready to do our work.

Ms. Byrne Nason (Ireland): I would first like to thank UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell

and welcome her to the Chamber, and to thank her and Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths for their briefings today. Their messages were really, really stark, but we need to hear them. The international community needs to hear the facts. We commend the vital work of all humanitarians in Ukraine. Today, on the eve of International Women's Day, I salute the courage of all women working on the ground in Ukraine to save lives. The safety and security of all those brave individuals must be ensured.

One of the youngest fleeing over the weekend was a 2-month-old boy called Andri, who crossed the border from Ukraine into Poland. As his aunt, Valentina, comforted Andri and his mother, she told the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "I never thought I would have to leave my home, that I would have to flee just to save my life".

The Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine has now created what is nothing short of a humanitarian catastrophe. As a brutal war is waged, we are seeing little to no regard for the safety of civilians. Andri and Valentina represent just two of the 1.7 million people who have become refugees in less than two weeks. "We gathered some things and fled", Valentina said. She had reason to: we now know that something on the order of 12 million people are in need of assistance. Thousands have been killed or injured. The human cost is mounting by the day — a humanitarian catastrophe simply of tragic proportions.

In densely populated cities, in villages and towns, Ukrainian civilians are forced to shelter for safety in underground car parks and metro stations. Their daily lives are upended. Everything is on hold. They are terrorized. All the while the use of explosive weapons is destroying their homes and the civilian infrastructure that they rely on for survival.

We are hearing reports hourly of multiple attacks on medical facilities, including maternity and children's hospitals, even oncology clinics — all protected under international humanitarian law. We have looked on in horror as attempts to evacuate an estimated 200,000 people from Mariupol have failed. The International Committee of the Red Cross has been clear: whatever is agreed, or not agreed, on humanitarian corridors or other measures, civilians and civilian infrastructure must be protected. That applies both to those who choose to leave and those who choose to remain. That is a core obligation under international humanitarian law.

Each chilling violation of international law evokes the darkest days of Europe's past.

The humanitarian consequences of damage to civilian infrastructure is not abstract. It means interrupted supplies of electricity, which is critical for the continued functioning of hospitals and essential services. It means heating homes. It means enabling parents to cook to feed their children.

The children's hospital where Valentina worked as a volunteer was hit by artillery at the beginning of the invasion. As she looked at her nephew, she recalled the children whom she saw killed in that attack. She says simply, "They were so small".

Ireland calls on the Russian Federation to uphold its international obligations. That includes protecting civilian health-care facilities and protecting medical and humanitarian personnel. All parties must also facilitate the safe passage and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance, including medical and food supplies, to those in need. A notification system and emergency helpline should be established to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid.

Ireland reiterates our call made at last Friday's meeting (see S/PV.8986) for the immediate cessation of military activities by Russia against and at Ukraine's nuclear facilities, in order to avert nuclear disaster and the subsequent humanitarian consequences. We note that over the weekend the International Atomic Energy Agency expressed grave concern at the situation at the Zaporizhzhya plant.

As Ms. Russell so clearly set out for us today, the women and children of Ukraine are in the midst of a desperate protection crisis. The terror of war and the trauma of family separation will have lifelong effects on thousands of Ukrainian children. They will be marked forever by these days.

As in all conflicts around the world, women and girls are especially vulnerable to the abhorrent scourge of sexual violence, sexual exploitation and abuse. All women and girls in Ukraine must be protected from rape and sexual violence, and we will work to ensure that there will be no place to hide from accountability for anyone who perpetrates crimes against them.

In the face of the massive exodus of refugees from Ukraine, we once again commend our European partners and Moldova for their continued generosity

and solidarity. They are welcoming vulnerable people seeking to leave Ukraine, without discrimination.

We appeal to all countries in the region to keep their borders open to all those seeking safety and protection. Ireland is fully committed to supporting the humanitarian response both domestically and in the region.

The humanitarian impact of this war will be felt not just on the European continent. It will affect the food security situation in countries heavily reliant on Ukrainian agricultural products in Africa, Asia and the Middle East, reminding us at this table once again of the inherent links between conflict and hunger.

Ireland once again urges the Russian Federation to immediately cease hostilities, unconditionally withdraw its forces from the entire territory of Ukraine and refrain from further threat or use of force of any kind against Ukraine or any other Member State.

Andri and his family speak to the human face of this reprehensible conflict. Before any more lives are ruined or lost to this war, before more children die, before more families are separated, before it is too late, we plead one more time with the Russian Federation to choose dialogue and diplomacy over bombs and bullets.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): I would like to start by thanking Mr. Martin Griffiths and Ms. Catherine Russell for their sobering briefings. I also want to add my thanks and appreciation for the work of their organizations, the courage of their staff and the integrity of their reporting.

Mr. Griffiths, Ms. Russell and colleagues have described in sobering detail the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine 1.7 million refugees — 1.7 million individual lives destroyed. And the United Nations expects this number to rise to 4 million in the coming weeks. We have seen the devastation caused by Russian missiles and bombardment, including reports of cluster munitions, in Ukrainian cities — apartment blocks torn apart, hospitals and schools in ruins, people left without electricity, food, water or shelter. We cannot turn the clock back.

Russia's invasion has been met with fierce resistance by the Ukrainian people. In response, President Putin is directing a campaign of violence and cruelty against civilians. Let me be clear: we will hold Russia to account for its actions, and we will thoroughly

investigate allegations of war crimes and violations of international law.

In response to this tragedy, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom today announced a further \$130 million of aid, which brings to a total the United Kingdom's support for Ukraine to \$520 million. In addition, individual members of the British public have given over \$130 million. This is intended to help Ukrainians in need and support neighbouring countries receive refugees. But as I have said before, what the Ukrainian people really need is an end to this invasion. We therefore appeal to the Russians to end their war before they bring even more tragedy to Ukraine and even more shame on their own nation.

The great Russian writer Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn wrote that man is given not only one life, but also a conscience. I know that the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation has spoken under instructions today, but I ask that he report faithfully back to Moscow what he has heard in this Chamber — the urgency of the Security Council's calls for peace.

Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Executive Director Russell and Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for their briefings.

As we have been informed, the humanitarian situation in Ukraine 11 days after the beginning of the conflict requires urgent and coordinated action, with the participation of impartial humanitarian actors. The challenge is enormous. Today there are already almost 1.7 million refugees — a number that will continue to grow — and approximately one million internally displaced persons, and surely many more who wish to evacuate, but who have not yet been able to do so, the majority of whom, we have been told, are women and children. In addition, we have also been informed of aggravating circumstances that have arisen in recent days, including critical conditions for access to water and food in besieged cities.

We urgently call for a sustained pause in hostilities. Humanitarian aid cannot and must not be held hostage to political considerations or military attacks. Unrestricted and safe access for all humanitarian workers in Ukraine and in all neighbouring countries must be guaranteed, in accordance with international humanitarian law. Likewise, the provisions of resolution 2573 (2021) on the protection of civilians, goods indispensable for their survival and the infrastructure essential for the delivery of humanitarian aid must

be complied with. We also recall that, in resolution 2573 (2021), the Security Council clearly requires all parties to armed conflict to establish a humanitarian pause to facilitate the safe, unimpeded and sustained delivery of required assistance and related services by impartial humanitarian actors, in accordance with the humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence, and in accordance with international law, including applicable provisions of international humanitarian and refugee law.

I would like to emphasize four action-oriented aspects on the ground. First, the use of cluster munitions under any circumstances is deplorable. These weapons have a devastating impact on the civilian population, even after a conflict has ended. We urge the cessation of the use of cluster munitions in Ukraine and call on those States that have not done so to join the Cluster Munitions Convention now.

Secondly, the direct impact of the conflict on the most vulnerable — women, children and disabled persons — must be urgently addressed. We are particularly concerned about the situation of unaccompanied minors in the massive exodus and call for putting in place monitoring mechanisms that have a gender focus and that take into consideration the situation of children. We recognize and support the involvement of UNICEF.

Thirdly, the establishment of an immediate humanitarian pause is necessary to ensure access for humanitarian operators, as well as the establishment of safe evacuation and transit routes for civilians. Attacks on civilians seeking refuge are in violation of international humanitarian law.

And fourthly, the immediate impact of the conflict is indeed multidimensional, so humanitarian aid must include the provision of mental health and psychosocial support services.

Together with France, we insist on holding consultations with a view to the Security Council adopting a largely humanitarian resolution, which addresses the points that have been raised at today's meeting. It is urgent that the Council resume playing its role as the main body responsible for international peace and security. We hope that both today's meeting and the consultations that will follow will serve to advance the dialogue and allow us to bring positions closer together and reach agreements with a single purpose — to help the people who urgently need this humanitarian aid.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Griffiths and Ms. Russell for their briefings.

A true humanitarian tragedy is unfolding before our eyes. Russian aggression in Ukraine is killing civilians, including children, every day. Essential civilian infrastructure is being destroyed. Hospitals and schools are under attack. The city of Mariupol is under siege, depriving its 450,000 inhabitants of water, food, heat and electricity. There are already 1.7 million refugees, and it is only the beginning.

We welcome the solidarity shown to the Ukrainians by European States, notably Poland, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and Moldova. France and its European Union (EU) partners stand firmly by Ukraine. The EU has announced €590 million in humanitarian aid. France is also doing its part, announcing €100 million, and it has already delivered more than 100 tons of humanitarian aid.

The priority is an immediate cessation of hostilities and full respect for international humanitarian law. That is the nature of the commitment of President Macron, who is in close contact with President Putin. That is the message carried all around the world by people marching in peace demonstrations over the weekend. Increasingly, Russians are also voicing their opposition to a war they do not want, despite attempts to muzzle them.

It is essential to protect civilians, including children and humanitarian workers and civilian infrastructure. The Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation spoke of the potential establishment of humanitarian corridors and prepared a draft text in that regard to President Macron. I would like to read from that text, drafted a few hours ago. Let us be clear — humanitarian corridors represent the possibility of allowing men and women to leave. Russia is proposing humanitarian corridors to Russia. I do not know many Ukrainians who seek refuge in Russia. That is hypocritical.

That is why France and Mexico are proposing a resolution that calls for an immediate cessation of hostilities and full respect for international humanitarian law. As Mr. Griffiths and Ms. Russell have indicated, the Council must assume its full responsibilities and put an end to this tragedy.

People trying to flee Ukraine must be allowed to do so safely and unhindered. Ukraine has made commitments in that regard. The protection of civilians

and humanitarian access must be guaranteed throughout the territory, both for those civilians who can leave and for those who remain.

We call on the Russian Federation to comply with the Charter of the United Nations and to respect international law, including international humanitarian law and human rights law. Allegations of crimes must be investigated and, if confirmed, must not go unpunished. That is why France supports the International Criminal Court and the Commission of Inquiry created by the Human Rights Council.

France commends the people of Ukraine for their courage. Within the United Nations and in all forums, France will continue to mobilize alongside its partners in order to support Ukraine and the Ukrainian people.

Mr. Tirumurti (India): I join others in thanking Under Secretary-General Martin Griffiths and the Executive Director of UNICEF, Catherine Russell, for their briefings.

The worsening situation in Ukraine and ensuing humanitarian crisis deserve our immediate and urgent attention. As per the estimates of the United Nations, more than 1.5 million refugees have sought shelter in Ukraine's neighbouring countries over the past 11 days. That has led to a pressing humanitarian crisis that needs to be addressed expeditiously.

Numerous civilian lives have been lost so far, including that of a young Indian student. India mourns his death, and we convey our deepest condolences to his family, just as we mourn the loss of each and every civilian life in the conflict.

India has been consistent in calling for an immediate end to all hostilities. Our Prime Minister once again spoke to the leadership of both sides today and reiterated our call for an immediate ceasefire and the need for both parties to return to the path of dialogue and diplomacy. We also reiterated our urgent demand for safe and uninterrupted passage for all innocent civilians, including Indian nationals remaining in Ukraine. We are deeply concerned that despite our repeated urgings to both sides, the safe corridor for our students stranded in Sumy did not materialize.

We managed to facilitate the safe return of more than 20,000 Indians from Ukraine. We have also assisted nationals from other countries who approached us in their return to their respective countries. And we will remain open to doing so in the coming days. More

than 80 evacuation flights have been criss-crossing the skies to bring them home. We are appreciative of the assistance rendered by the authorities of Ukraine and its neighbouring countries in facilitating their return.

We note the joint launch of the Secretary-General's Humanitarian Flash Appeal and his Regional Refugee Response Plan for Ukraine. We hope that the international community will respond positively to the humanitarian needs.

On its part, India has already sent seven tranches of humanitarian supplies to Ukraine and its neighbouring countries. Those include medicine, medical equipment, tents, protective eye gear, water-storage tanks and solar lamps, among other relief material. We are in the process of identifying other such requirements and sending more supplies.

Allow me to underscore that it is important that humanitarian action always be guided by the principles of humanitarian assistance — humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. Those should not be politicized.

Mr. Biang (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I thank Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths and Ms. Catherine Russell, Executive Director of UNICEF, for their very informative briefings.

We take note of the appointment of Mr. Amin Awad as United Nations Crisis Coordinator for Ukraine.

A dozen days after the start of the war in Ukraine, we are holding today this second meeting on the humanitarian situation, which allows us to assess the situation on the ground, taking into account that in times of armed conflict, the situation is likely to evolve very quickly and that the context can alter our projections or judgment of the reality.

Let us stick to the facts. On 24 February this year, the security situation in the Ukraine flared up. The fighting has caused significant loss of life and led to almost 1 million people leaving the territory of Ukraine to seek refuge in neighbouring countries. The massive displacement of people, in particularly difficult conditions due to the cold, has left them in urgent need of food, water and other basic necessities. In addition, the damage to, and destruction of, civilian infrastructure in combat zones and those affected by air strikes and bombing is likely to hamper people's access to water, food, health care and other basic services.

We are particularly concerned about the harm to civilians, women and children. UNICEF estimates that several million people are at risk. My country expresses its solidarity with the people in distress and all those suffering from the consequences of this war and calls on the parties to the conflict to create safe and unrestricted exit routes from combat zones.

We call on the warring parties to facilitate the quick, safe and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian assistance to those who need it and to protect civilians, including humanitarian personnel and people in vulnerable situations, in particular women, the elderly, persons with disabilities and children, in accordance with the Geneva Conventions of 1949.

We welcome the important and multifaceted action of the international community, which is reflected in donations in kind and in financing from bilateral and multilateral partners, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, which since the beginning of the war activated their rapid financing mechanisms and pledged to mobilize \$3 billion, including \$550 million, in the very short term, to support Ukraine. That mobilization provides invaluable support to the humanitarian response plan that was just launched by the United Nations.

We also express our appreciation for the generosity of the countries neighbouring Ukraine, which have shown exemplary selflessness in hosting refugees fleeing the fighting.

I would like to call on everyone's sense of humanity to offer the same reception to all people in distress, regardless of origin or race, including African nationals and students, whose distress is no less great in this situation of confusion and terror. We call for their dignity to be respected and for equal treatment of all persons in distress. Indeed, there are repeated reports from various sources of discrimination and the detention of African students in areas at risk. That is a worrisome and morally unsustainable situation, which must be unanimously and vigorously denounced.

My country calls on the warring parties to respect the provisions of international humanitarian law, in particular the Geneva Convention of 1949 and its Additional Protocols, and to guarantee respect for and protection of all medical personnel and humanitarian workers.

Gabon welcomes the establishment of humanitarian corridors for civilians to evacuate combat zones and urges the parties to the conflict to do everything possible to bring about an immediate ceasefire.

I would like to reiterate the position that Gabon clearly expressed in the General Assembly, namely, that this situation cannot end without an immediate and lasting resolution to stop the fighting. That will require all parties to engage in negotiations in good faith and with a firm will to end the conflict and remove all its deep-rooted causes.

In conclusion, I call on the members of the Security Council to seize every opportunity that diplomacy offers to reach a negotiated settlement and avoid an escalation of hostilities. In my African culture, when two people from the same village come to blows, it is up to their relatives, neighbours and friends to arbitrate and engage in finding peace. Experience has often shown that the sooner friends and relatives intervene, the sooner calm returns. And whenever those around them take sides in the confrontation, it exacerbates the situation.

Of course, once calm is restored it is always easier to establish who is responsible in a holistic and peaceful way. It is in the light of this Bantu wisdom of Africa that I would like to reiterate to all parties our call for an immediate ceasefire and de-escalation.

Mr. De Almeida Filho (Brazil): Let me thank you, Madam President, for convening this meeting and express my appreciation to Under-Secretary-General Griffiths and Executive Director Russell for their briefings and their efforts in minimizing the human suffering in this tragic conflict.

Brazil reiterates its grave concern at the humanitarian situation arising from the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. First and foremost, we urge all parties to establish a ceasefire and engage in negotiations.

The current situation can only bring more suffering and losses, especially in Ukraine but potentially to the whole region. While hostilities continue, we call on all parties to fully respect international humanitarian law, including when resorting to new military technologies and cyber means. Parties must always uphold the principles of distinction, proportionality, precaution and humanity.

Brazil urges the parties to continue to establish humanitarian pauses and create humanitarian corridors.

We echo nonetheless the concerns of the International Committee of the Red Cross regarding the need to respect international humanitarian law rules, both for those who choose to leave and for those who remain. The rules of war are not optional.

We insist on our call for safe, timely and unimpeded access for providing humanitarian assistance to those in need, particularly the most vulnerable. We recall the plea, echoed by many Member States, for neighbouring countries to keep their borders open to refugees, without any kind of discrimination. Brazil reiterates its gratitude and solidarity to Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Moldova, Romania and others who are facilitating the exit and reception of refugees.

When the lines between combatants and civilians become blurred, we risk seeing a rise in civilian casualties, especially in armed conflicts fought in urban areas and when explosive weapons are used in these contexts. In the worst cases, children may suffer the direst consequences of armed conflicts.

Children in Ukraine must be protected from the dangers of war and under no circumstances should be recruited, used or allowed to join any military activity or take any direct part in hostilities. Attacks against civilian infrastructures, especially schools and medical facilities, as well as water and sanitation systems, must be avoided. Parties must respect the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in its entirety. Furthermore, no additional hardship should be imposed on the affected populations and vulnerable groups through broad economic sanctions.

Children forced to flee their homes to ensure their own survival are especially vulnerable. The increasing number of internally displaced children in Ukraine and refugee children in neighbouring countries will require support from the international community.

For our part, following the swift establishment of a humanitarian visa policy for those fleeing the conflict, which entered into force on 3 March, Brazilian embassies in Bratislava, Bucharest, Budapest, Prague and Warsaw have started to grant special visas for displaced Ukrainians and stateless persons for humanitarian reception purposes.,

A few days ago, the General Assembly sent a political message urging the immediate peaceful resolution of the conflict. This is a strong call of the international community for peace.

Now, the Security Council must play its part and genuinely contribute to a peaceful solution to this crisis. Garnering consensus in the Security Council around basic humanitarian messages is imperative. We must work collectively to widen humanitarian corridors and assistance and also to open the path for dialogue and diplomacy, guided by international law and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Kiboino (Kenya): I wish to thank Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths and Executive Director Catherine Russel for their briefings and I thank them for their work. I also welcome the participation of the Permanent Representative of Ukraine.

The rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation in Ukraine is gravely concerning. Kenya offers its condolences to the families who have lost loved ones to the conflict in the past few days.

Kenya commends Ukraine's neighbours for opening their borders to refugees of multiple nationalities. We urge them to ensure that the protections sought are offered with no discrimination on any basis, particularly with regard to race or religion.

We are disturbed by the reported widespread damage to civilian objects and infrastructure. Kenya draws the attention of the parties to the need to comply with resolution 2573 (2021) on the protection of objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population.

Ukraine is a major producer of agricultural products that are key to ensuring food security. The humanitarian impact of the conflict will be felt far beyond Ukraine because of the shock to the global food supply system. Indeed, the closure of its ports as a result of the conflict — not to mention the destruction of infrastructure — is going to result in fewer grain and fertilizer exports. The resulting sharp price increases are likely to plunge many countries into food insecurity and, as a result, possible political turmoil.

In addition to Ukraine's key place in the global food supply system being impacted by the conflict, the world will also suffer greatly from the unilateral and regional sanctions against the Russian Federation. We have previously urged that humanitarian and legal consideration be given to the impact of those sanctions on the Russian people. Now we must add our concern for the many, including in our own country, who will suffer all over the world. While the sanctions are aimed at responding to the inexcusable armed breach

of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity by the Russian Federation, they will end up harming not only the innocent in Russia but also millions around the world, particularly in the Global South.

In that regard, I have two questions to pose to Under-Secretary-General Griffiths.

First, could he make public his assessments of the impact of the armed conflict in Ukraine and the sanctions against the Russian Federation on the humanitarian situation in other countries, particularly with regard to food security?

Secondly, what are the preventive actions that can be taken by the United Nations and the Security Council to ensure that the shock to the global food supply system does not translate into new crises?

I wish to welcome the joint commitment by Ukraine and the Russian Federation to establish humanitarian corridors for the safe passage of civilians and humanitarian supplies. However, during this past weekend, the humanitarian corridor openings failed. We hope that the humanitarian corridors, particularly those from Sumy, will be open to all foreign nationals and civilians tomorrow. Civilians and foreign nationals are not party to the conflict and must be protected at all times. They are not and must not become a target. We strongly urge both parties to ensure their safe passage.

We commend the United Nations and its partner agencies for their continued efforts to provide humanitarian assistance. In particular, we welcome the identification of four humanitarian hubs in Lviv, Vynnytsia, Uzhhorod and Chernivtsi.

Ultimately, the only way out of the crisis is through a ceasefire and dialogue to protect Ukrainian sovereignty and shape a stable European security order.

I conclude by reiterating Kenya's recognition of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Ukraine.

Ms. Opong-Ntiri (Ghana): I would like to thank you, Madam, for convening today's session. I would also like to express my delegation's appreciation to the UNICEF Executive Director, Ms. Catherine Russell, for highlighting the impact that the conflict has had on children in Ukraine. Let me also thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for the updated situational report on the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine.

Ghana is alarmed at the exponentially high levels of the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine since the Security Council's first consideration of the matter on 28 February (see S/PV.8983). At the time, it was reported that about 100,000 people were displaced, as some 500,000 more attempted to flee from heavy artillery shelling, missiles and air strikes in cities. Today — only a week later — nearly 1,200 casualties have been recorded since the start of the conflict; 1.7 million people have fled the cities of Ukraine to neighbouring countries; and some 160,000 people have been internally displaced.

What remains unchanged, however, are our principles and the responsibility to ensure the protection of all persons suffering under the weight of the raging conflict in Ukraine. We must therefore uphold the legitimacy of the international norms of the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, which require of conflicting parties a duty to preserve the sanctity of human life by taking the necessary precautions to spare the lives of civilians and avoid the destruction of civilian infrastructure during the time of war. All Member States are duty bound to comply with their obligations under international law, international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Failure to do so constitutes a serious violation that cannot and must not be ignored.

It is regrettable that the agreement reached between the two sides for the creation of humanitarian corridors for safe evacuations and the passage of food and medicines did not hold. We join other members of the Council in reiterating the call for a humanitarian pause to allow the evacuation of civilians, especially in the cities of Mariupol and Kharkiv, where intense military operations are ongoing.

We call for the immediate cessation of hostilities in residential and civilian populated areas. It is also vital that agreements be reached to allow windows of silence that would enable the safe and unhindered passage of humanitarian convoys to all areas in which civilians remain in need of water, food and medical care.

Ghana further supports the call of the United Nations for the urgent establishment of a notification system and an emergency hotline with both the Russian Federation and the Ukrainian Government to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid and life-saving supplies.

Moreover, we are compelled to reiterate the absolute importance for the parties to steer military hostilities

away from all nuclear installations in Ukraine in order to avoid the risk of a nuclear disaster. We urge the International Atomic Energy Agency to continue to monitor activities within Ukraine's nuclear programme and operationalize preventive mechanisms to avert any accidental occurrences.

We take note of the complex environment within which humanitarian agencies are operating and commend them for their commitment. We also acknowledge those Member States and international institutions that have contributed to the humanitarian fund required to ensure an adequate humanitarian response.

We are disheartened by the trauma and suffering that children in Ukraine are experiencing during this period. Those are the succeeding generations whom we pledged to save from the scourge of war. We commend UNICEF for its active engagement in humanitarian operations and encourage humanitarian agencies in their efforts to address the peculiar vulnerabilities of children, as well as women, the elderly and persons with disabilities.

I wish to take this opportunity to commend Ukraine's neighbouring countries and other European countries that have opened their borders to offer refuge to persons fleeing the conflict situation. We continue to prevail on them to continue their efforts to be guided by the principles of humanity and neutrality, impartiality and independence.

In conclusion, I must once again echo the call on the Russian Federation to end the aggression against the internationally recognized borders of Ukraine and withdraw its military forces. We firmly believe that military options will not deliver the mutual demands for security between the Russian Federation and Ukraine.

As the humanitarian situation in Ukraine worsens, economic ramifications are already being felt globally. We hope that the Council will take a unified path to support efforts to resolve the conflict through diplomacy and dialogue.

Ms. Juul (Norway): Let me begin by thanking the briefers for their sobering accounts regarding the humanitarian situation in Ukraine, particularly for outlining the terrifying ordeal that many children are facing.

We are seriously concerned by the staggering numbers of civilian casualties in Ukraine. Children have been killed and wounded. Children have lost their

homes. Let me underline that Russia, and Russia alone, bears the sole responsibility for this humanitarian crisis. The Russian aggression against Ukraine must stop now. Troops must be withdrawn immediately.

Civilians, including children, and civilian infrastructure must be protected, in accordance with international humanitarian law. We are deeply concerned by the reported use of cluster munitions by Russian forces in Ukraine. Those are inherently indiscriminate weapons. They continue to kill and injure children long after conflicts end. Children are traumatized as they seek shelter from the bombing and shelling, forced to flee across Ukraine and across borders, putting them at risk of sexual and gender-based violence.

We are deeply concerned about unaccompanied children separated from their families. Every effort must be made to restore family links and trace missing persons. Humanitarian organizations must give priority to the assistance and protection of children affected by the conflict, including their need for mental-health and psychosocial support.

Russia's warfare in urban and populated areas and the use of heavy explosive weapons are causing terrible, long-term harm to civilians and cause the most severe physical harm to children, killing and maiming them. With attacks on hospitals, water processing plants, food systems and other civilian infrastructure, children are being deprived of services essential to their life and health. The fighting around nuclear plants endangers the health and safety of today's children and those of future generations in Ukraine and beyond. Schools are under attack. Such attacks represent a clear violation of resolution 2601 (2021), on the protection of education in armed conflict, which the Council unanimously adopted only a few months ago. We call on the Russian Federation to respect the civilian character of schools and educational facilities, in accordance with international humanitarian law.

We stand behind and support the call of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs today for concrete steps to be taken to ensure the protection of civilians and humanitarian access. We call on the parties to the conflict to comply with their obligation under international humanitarian law to allow and facilitate safe, rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access to those in need. The space for humanitarian action must be restored and protected in a way that ensures continuous

and sustained humanitarian access. Civilians must be protected at all times. Ceasefire agreements and so-called humanitarian corridors to evacuate civilians can be measures for that purpose. The evacuation of civilians must be safe, voluntary and to destinations of their own choosing. Unclear agreements will not meet the needs of the civilian population. Those civilians who are leaving, as well as those civilians who remain, must be protected.

We commend the neighbouring countries for keeping their borders open and for the great generosity and solidarity shown towards those fleeing the conflict. The door to safety and protection must remain open, without discrimination. We also commend all the humanitarian organizations, and in particular the local organizations, for their heroic efforts to deliver life-saving aid. Medical and humanitarian workers must be protected. They are not a target.

Norway condemns Russia's massive military aggression against Ukraine. We reiterate our call on Russia to withdraw its troops immediately and stop causing further death, suffering and destruction. The 7.5 million children of Ukraine are seeing the places where they live, play and learn being damaged and destroyed. Their lives and future are at stake. This war must stop now. Dialogue and diplomacy are the only way forward.

Mr. Zhang Jun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First of all, I thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths and Executive Director Russell for their respective briefings.

We remain concerned about the rapidly changing situation in Ukraine and deeply deplore the increasing number of civilian casualties. We call for maximum restraint and the intensification of diplomatic efforts so as to put an early end to the fighting, ensure the protection of civilians, their property and their basic needs and prevent a large-scale humanitarian crisis. Russia and Ukraine have reached a consensus on the establishment of humanitarian corridors through negotiations. We hope that the two sides will overcome the difficulties encountered in the implementation process so as to ensure the safety and smooth functioning of those humanitarian corridors.

Chinese State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi today put forward a six-point proposal on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine.

First, humanitarian operations must strictly abide by the basic principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 46/182, and prevent the politicization of humanitarian issues.

Secondly, full attention should be paid to all displaced persons inside and outside Ukraine, in particular in order to provide humanitarian assistance to the main countries that are hosting them and helping them with adequate shelter.

Thirdly, the effective protection of civilians, particularly the rights and interests of vulnerable groups, such as women, children, the elderly and people with disabilities, must be ensured. Efforts must be made to prevent secondary humanitarian disasters, such as food shortages and the spread of infectious diseases in Ukraine.

Fourthly, efforts should be made to ensure safe and smooth humanitarian operations, including by providing rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access, protecting the safety and security of medical and humanitarian personnel exclusively engaged in medical duties and protecting medical equipment and transportation used in humanitarian operations and critical civilian infrastructure.

Fifthly, the safety of foreign nationals in Ukraine must be ensured, allowing their safe, guaranteed and unrestricted departure from Ukraine and helping them to return to their home countries.

Sixthly, the United Nations must be supported in playing a coordinating role in channelling humanitarian assistance in Ukraine and the work of the United Nations Crisis Coordinator for Ukraine must be supported.

In the course of organizing the refuge and evacuation of Chinese nationals, we have received friendly assistance from the Government and the various sectors of society in Ukraine. Countries such as Russia, Moldova, Romania, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and Belarus have also provided valuable support. In that regard, we express our heartfelt thanks to the Governments and the people of those countries.

The fact that the situation in Ukraine has deteriorated to where it is today is due to a combination of complex factors. Resolving complex issues requires calm and reason rather than adding fuel to the fire, which will only result in escalation. To resolve the crisis in Ukraine, it is imperative to abide by the purposes and

principles of the Charter of the United Nations, respect and ensure the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries, adhere to the principle of indivisibility of security and address the legitimate security concerns of the parties involved. It is imperative to adhere to dialogue and negotiation and resolve the dispute through peaceful means. China will support any efforts that contribute to easing the situation and finding a political settlement. China opposes any actions that are not conducive to promoting a diplomatic solution but instead fuel the fire and escalate the situation.

We are deeply concerned about the ever-increasing unilateral sanctions, which are not an effective way to finding lasting solutions to the issue at hand. On the contrary, they will lead to disastrous humanitarian consequences and their spillover effect will also result in losses and damage to other countries. Exporting offensive weapons and mercenaries into Ukraine could exacerbate the situation and generate additional and greater risks.

China will continue to advocate for and work towards achieving peace. We encourage Russia and Ukraine to continue direct negotiations and are hopeful that those talks will be constructive and lead to peace. China has always been committed to bringing about peace through negotiations.

As early as the second day of the conflict, President Xi Jinping spoke by telephone with President Vladimir Putin and expressed his desire to see Russia and Ukraine meet for peace talks as soon as possible, to which President Putin also responded positively.

China also stands ready to carry out the required mediation with the international community, as needed.

We also encourage the United States, NATO and the European Union to hold talks with Russia on an equal footing; confront the causes of antagonism and issues that have built up over years; be extremely mindful of the negative impact that the continuous eastward expansion of NATO has had on Russia's security environment; and seek to establish a balanced, effective and sustainable European security mechanism in accordance with the principle of the indivisibility of security.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United Arab Emirates.

At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. Martin Griffiths, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, and Ms. Catherine Russell, Executive Director of UNICEF, for their briefings.

As those who have spoken before me have noted, the humanitarian situation in Ukraine has reached catastrophic levels. Today, more than 40 million Ukrainians, including 7.5 million children, face insecurity, damaged and destroyed infrastructure and a severe lack of basic services. As was mentioned earlier, nearly 1.7 million Ukrainians are either internally displaced or refugees, while the number of those who have been killed or injured continues to rise. In light of these bitter realities, we as international community need to do our utmost to urgently alleviate the humanitarian suffering of Ukrainians, while we intensify our efforts to end the fighting and find a lasting solution to the current crisis.

In that regard, the United Arab Emirates notes the importance of focusing on the following issues.

First, we call on all parties to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law. That includes ensuring, first and foremost, that civilians and civilian objects, including schools and hospitals, are not targeted. We further note that the destruction of Ukrainian infrastructure is severely affecting humanitarian conditions. Access to urgently needed services, such as water, health care and food supplies, is increasingly difficult.

Humanitarian aid must reach those in need without being preconditioned on any ceasefire agreement. The safety of humanitarian personnel must be also ensured. We stress the need to stop hostilities to allow affected civilians to leave cities exposed to violence, including Mariupol, Kharkiv and Sumy. We deeply regret the collapse of the humanitarian corridors that have been agreed and recognize that humanitarian corridors are temporary and imperfect solutions. They are not an alternative to respecting international humanitarian law. However, properly established humanitarian corridors can be an immediate measure as we explore every means that can contribute to the protection of civilians.

Secondly, there is an urgent need for realistic initiatives that can contribute to building confidence between the conflicting parties and ensuring respect for international humanitarian law. For example,

the remains of the dead should be identified and respected and, whenever possible, their return should be arranged. All people, including the wounded, sick and captured soldiers, are to be protected by the parties under international humanitarian law.

Thirdly, we call on the international community to intensify efforts to urgently provide humanitarian support to Ukraine. That includes contributing to the United Nations humanitarian Ukraine flash appeal and the Regional Refugee Response Plan for Ukraine, as well as other initiatives. In that regard, we commend the role of the Secretariat in supporting and coordinating the humanitarian response, which should focus particularly on women and children. We also commend the efforts made by neighbouring countries in receiving fleeing Ukrainians. The United Arab Emirates will provide \$5 million to alleviate the suffering of Ukrainians. Additionally, we have sent today 30 metric tons of medical and relief aid to Ukraine.

In conclusion, we stress that resolving the humanitarian crisis radically and preventing further damage and casualties require, first and foremost, restraint and an immediate ceasefire throughout Ukraine. It also requires opening diplomatic channels to sustainably end the conflict. We welcome the continued high-level engagement of the international community with both parties. We believe that such efforts will contribute to a diplomatic solution in a manner that maintains regional and international peace and security while preserving the dignity and meeting the needs of millions of civilians.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

Mr. Kyslytsya (Ukraine): Twelve days of an all-out Russian invasion in Ukraine, including from the territory of Belarus, have brought us to the brink of a humanitarian catastrophe of a potentially global nature. I would like to thank all the countries that are accepting Ukrainian refugees and have been letting other foreign nationals into their territory. As we have already heard, more than 1.7 million people, mostly women and children, have already fled the unprovoked war unleashed by Russia.

At Sachsenhausen in Germany in the spring of 1942, an extermination unit was built in the industrial yard, with a crematorium and a neck shot unit. The gas chamber was added in 1943. The SS cynically named

the building Station Z. “Z” is the letter that the Russian military is putting on its vehicles departing for Ukraine. Some interpret “Z” as standing for the first letter in the Russian word for victory. Some say it stands for the first letter in the Russian word *zapad*, meaning “west”. I would insist that it stands for the first letter of the Russian word *zvyeri*, meaning “animals” — or rather, “beasts”.

Russia continues to cynically disregard the norms of international humanitarian law during hostilities. Russian troops block the numerous attempts of the Ukrainian authorities to evacuate civilians through humanitarian corridors. They deny international organizations access to provide humanitarian assistance to the most affected places.

It is even more appalling that Russian troops have opened fire on evacuees and evacuation vehicles and shelled the roads allocated to humanitarian corridors. For instance, they shelled depots with evacuation buses near Mariupol, blew up the railway near Irpin in the Kyiv region to prevent evacuation by train, and destroyed the bridge on the way to Volnovakha — all of which were the main routes for evacuating civilians.

As was stated today by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine:

“Today, in violation of the previously reached agreements, the Russian Federation yet again disrupted the opening of the humanitarian corridors for the evacuation of the civilian population from besieged cities and the suburbs of the Kyiv, Kharkiv, Donetsk and Kherson regions.

Russia’s armed forces continue their bombing of and missile attacks on Kyiv, Mariupol, Volnovakha, Sumy, Mykolaiv, Kharkiv and other cities, towns and villages. This prevents the safe exit of humanitarian convoys carrying Ukrainian and foreign citizens, as well as the delivery of medications and food.”

Today, hearings in Ukraine’s lawsuit against Russia in a case of genocide have been commenced at the International Court of Justice. As an immediate action, Ukraine has appealed to the International Court of Justice to impose precautionary measures in this case in order to stop the bloodshed

We condemn Russia’s unwillingness to fully implement General Assembly resolution ES-11/1, “Aggression against Ukraine”, and in particular to

immediately cease its use of force against Ukraine. In fact, not only is Russia not fully implementing it — it is not implementing it at all. First of all, Russia must stop violating the ceasefire arrangements aimed at ensuring rapid, safe and unhindered passage through humanitarian corridors. It must put an end to spreading disinformation and manipulating the lives of civilians. Evacuation through humanitarian corridors is possible only when the ceasefire regime is fully upheld. The Ukrainian side is ready for that.

We also consider inappropriate any attempts by Moscow to force civilians, Ukrainian citizens and foreigners alike, in the besieged cities to flee to the territory of Russia and Belarus, taking into account the high probability of provocations, in particular the evacuated being taken hostage or used by the Russian armed forces as human shields. That looks especially cynical when European borders are wide-open to refugees from Ukraine. I totally agree with my friend, Ambassador Nicolas de Rivière, who said that it is pure hypocrisy to push Ukrainians into Belarus or Russia. Ukraine calls on Member States to spare no effort in forcing Russia to uphold the ceasefire regime in order to open humanitarian corridors and prevent a large-scale humanitarian catastrophe.

Life is very dynamic. Unfortunately, while we have been sitting here and discussing our business, another appalling example of Russia's disregard for its own commitments on humanitarian corridors has taken place just now. According to available information from my capital, Russia has undermined arrangements on humanitarian corridors for tomorrow. I regret that we did not have this information when all my colleagues at this table called me to discuss this business. The arrangement was made and broken by the Russians. Despite a route through Poltava being agreed, including with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the Russian side has already sent us a letter with routes to Russia and Belarus only. I call on the Russian side to revert to the previously agreed routes to allow Ukrainian and foreign citizens to leave for Europe.

Today, more than a hundred Ukrainian cities and villages, attacked and besieged by the aggressor State, are on the verge of a humanitarian disaster. The population does not have access to drinking water, food, medicine, electricity, heating or other basic necessities.

Much of the environmental damage inflicted on Ukraine by the Russian invasion will likely prove irreparable in the near to medium terms. The Chernobyl disaster of 1986 teaches us that the effects of nuclear accidents endure for hundreds and even thousands of years. The carbon dioxide being released as a result of Russia's scorched-earth tactics will likewise linger in the atmosphere for the long term, compounding the effects of greenhouse gases on the climate.

So far, Ukraine has been one of the guarantors of global food security. That status is now being challenged by the Russian war against Ukraine. The implications at the global level will be catastrophic. As just two examples, 55 per cent of the sunflower oil exported worldwide comes from Ukraine, and 60 per cent of Ukrainian agricultural products are exported through seaports. The closure of ports and the sea by the Russian army threatens the global supply chain. This means that defending Ukraine from the Russian aggression also protects the world from hunger.

Given that the Russian leadership is attempting to conceal real losses and resolutely denies any discussion of the ways to return their soldiers bodies, Ukraine is facing the additional threat of a health crisis. We are speaking about dozens of thousands of bodies decomposing in the fields of Ukraine — the bodies of Russian soldiers. In this regard, we call on the ICRC to set up a database of fallen occupiers and prisoners of war through the ICRC Central Tracing Agency, as well as to provide assistance in returning the remains of the fallen occupiers to Russia.

According to the Ministry of Education, more than 211 Ukrainian schools have been damaged or destroyed by the Russian military forces since the beginning of the invasion. Thousands of Ukrainian children have been deprived of their right to education.

According to the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, as of 6 March, 34 hospitals had been destroyed. The World Health Organization has reported that 6 Ukrainian doctors have been killed and 11 wounded as a result of the Russian shelling. Given the threat of bombing and shelling, hospitals and maternity wards have moved their patients to basements. The country is running low on critical medical supplies. We therefore call on all United Nations humanitarian missions to act decisively to respond to the growing humanitarian crisis without delay.

Yesterday, the occupiers completely destroyed the city airport of Vynnytsya. It must be noted that the Assistant Secretary-General and United Nations Crisis Coordinator for Ukraine, Mr. Amin Awad, had announced that Vynnytsya was prepared to be a main hub for all United Nations humanitarian missions.

The Russian occupiers are killing Ukrainian children, consciously and cynically. At least 38 children have already been killed since Russia's full-scale armed aggression against Ukraine; more than 70 have been seriously wounded. Due to the ongoing shelling of civilian infrastructure in many cities, this number may be increasing right now.

Ukraine deeply regrets that more than 2,000 citizens of India, China, Turkey, Pakistan and other countries are suffering today alongside Ukrainians from Russian aggression. The Government of Ukraine is in contact 24/7 with the diplomatic missions and consulates of foreign countries to ensure that their citizens can safely return to their countries as soon as possible. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine has established an emergency hotline for foreign citizens wishing to leave Ukraine because of the Russian armed aggression.

Ukrainian border guards, in cooperation with colleagues from neighbouring European Union countries and Moldova, are doing everything possible to speed up the passage of all refugees from Ukraine and have never created obstacles that would hinder this.

We would like to reiterate that the only root cause of the ongoing, massive humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, including the situation at the western border of Ukraine, is the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine. Russia bears full responsibility for the killing and injuring of innocent people, the destruction of civilian infrastructure, and obstacles to the safe departure of Ukrainians and foreign citizens.

The Government of Ukraine is working 24/7 to set up mechanisms to ensure reliable supplies of food, medications and essential commodities throughout the country. On 2 March, President Zelenskyy established the Coordination Office on Humanitarian and Social Issues. Ukraine has received more than 3,500 tons of humanitarian aid, and we are grateful to all our partners for this manifestation of support.

Despite enemy attacks, all systems ensuring the proper functioning of the State are intact. There is undeniable stability in the work of the Ukrainian

Government. Despite the war, the Ministry of Social Policy and the Pension Fund have paid all pensions to almost 13 million retired citizens of Ukraine. The Government has prepared an assistance programme for all Ukrainians who have lost their jobs as a result of war. Private businesses and employees who have lost their jobs due to the war will receive financial support in March.

Ukrainian Railways has started procuring food, fuel, medicine, electricity and other important goods and services for the population. The enterprise will be in close contact with military administrations to address the most pressing needs of the people and the State.

People in Ukraine value the words of support they have received. At the same time, they require concrete actions to save their lives, their health and their property. It is also already clear to everyone that the fragility of the situation reaches beyond Ukraine, into Europe and across the world. We expect the Council to be decisive in responding to the worst humanitarian crisis we have seen in Europe since the end of the Second World War.

Before I conclude, after the last Security Council meeting on this issue (S/PV.8986), one of my colleagues said, "You know, it looks like group therapy. We are all here trying to bring one member to sanity." And indeed, when I listen to the representative of that country, I think it is absolutely right that the Department of Health of New York City is called the "Department of Health and Mental Hygiene", because it is very difficult to cope after these meetings, at which we listen to the persistent lies, delusions and delirium coming from that particular country.

I think it is not only Russian diplomats in New York who need mental assistance, but also those who today posted this tweet:

"Foreign Minister Lavrov: 'The goal of Russia's special military operation is to stop any war that could take place on Ukrainian territory or that could start from there.' (Russian Embassy in London. Retweeted by the Russian Foreign Ministry.)"

Let me remind Russian diplomats that in London, in case of need of mental help, they can dial the National Health Service hotline 111.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I have not taken the floor again to engage in controversy with the Ambassador of Ukraine. I have a different task, to which I will revert.

However, I cannot help saying a few words with regard to some remarks made by the Permanent Representative of Ukraine. He interpreted the letter “Z” on the Russian military equipment currently deployed in Ukraine to be the first letter of the Russian word “zvyeri” — meaning beasts. But we have our own opinion as to who the real beasts are. In particular, they are the representatives of the armed forces of Ukraine and nationalist battalions that have been crushing the civilians of Donbas for eight years and are still doing so to this day. As we speak, Luhansk is being bombed and oil reservoirs are on fire. The same is true in Donetsk. This has not stopped.

We have been accused of undermining evacuations via humanitarian corridors, but the situation is the exact opposite. It is the Ukrainian side that rejected our proposal for a ceasefire and to evacuate people through peace corridors. As we have already said, it is nationalist battalions that are keeping people in the cities, using them as human shield and deploying equipment in residential quarters.

I have just received a video from a Telegram channel. It shows nationalists from the Azov Battalion shooting at civilians during an attempted evacuation through a humanitarian corridor from Mariupol to Novoazovsk on the M-23 highway. This is available on the Internet.

I have taken the floor to inform the Council that I have received an emergency statement from the Joint Coordination Headquarters for Humanitarian Response in Ukraine, dated 7 March. I will not read out all of it now. We will circulate this statement shortly among Council members. It says that the Russian side has offered to establish a ceasefire tomorrow, 8 March, at 10 am Moscow time, and to open a humanitarian corridor for the evacuation of civilians from Kyiv, Chernihiv, Sumy, Kharkiv and Mariupol. My Ukrainian colleague said that Ukraine is ready to work on that. Let us see what response Ukrainian authorities give to our proposal.

I must say that this proposal does not stipulate that all evacuated Ukrainian citizens must head to the territory of Russia. The proposal also envisages evacuation towards Ukrainian cities to the west of Kyiv. That will be the choice of those who are going to evacuate.

Let me leave the last remark of the Ukrainian representative unanswered. I do not quite understand where he has acquired such a thorough knowledge of the addresses of mental health facilities in New York. I would be grateful if he could elaborate on that.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I will now adjourn the meeting so that the Council can continue its discussion on the subject in closed consultations.

The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.