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Seventy-seventh year

8991st meeting

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Provisional

President: Mrs. Alhefeiti/Mr. Abushahab. (United Arab Emirates)

Members:

Albania	Mr. Hoxha
Brazil	Mr. De Almeida Filho
China	Mr. Zhang Jun
France	Mr. De Rivière
Gabon	Mr. Biang
Ghana	Mr. Agyeman
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 11.05 a.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: Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, and Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

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

I give the floor to Ms. DiCarlo.

Ms. DiCarlo: The war in Ukraine is now in its third week. Fighting continues unabated. The Russian armed forces are pursuing their offensive operations and laying siege to several cities in the south, east and north of the country. A large concentration of Russian forces is reportedly massed along several approaches to the capital, Kyiv.

The situation is particularly alarming in Mariupol, Kharkiv, Sumy and Chernihiv, where there is shelling of residential areas and civilian infrastructure, resulting in an increasing number of civilians killed and injured. The utter devastation being visited upon these cities is horrific.

The numbers bear out the conclusion that civilians are paying the highest price for the conflict. As of 11 March, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has recorded a total of 1,546 civilian casualties, including 564 killed and 982 injured, since the start of the invasion on 24 February. OHCHR believes that the real casualty figures are likely considerably higher, as information from locations where intense hostilities are ongoing has been delayed and reports are still pending corroboration. Most of the recorded civilian casualties, which include children, have been caused by explosive weapons with a wide impact area, including heavy

artillery and multi-launch rocket systems, as well as missile and air strikes.

OHCHR has received credible reports of Russian forces using cluster munitions, including in populated areas. Indiscriminate attacks, including those using cluster munitions, which are of a nature to strike military objectives and civilians or civilian objects without distinction, are prohibited under international humanitarian law. Direct attacks against civilians and civilian objects, as well as so-called area bombardment in towns and villages, are also prohibited under international law and may amount to war crimes.

As of 10 March, the World Health Organization had verified 26 attacks on health facilities, health workers and ambulances, causing 12 deaths and 34 injuries. That includes the bombing of the Mariupol maternity hospital on 9 March. We condemn such attacks without reservation. They not only cause death and destruction, but also deprive people of urgently needed care and endanger more lives. We cannot emphasize it enough — the targeting of civilians, residential buildings, hospitals, schools and kindergartens is inexcusable and intolerable. All alleged violations of international humanitarian law must be investigated and those found responsible held accountable.

Millions of people in Ukraine need urgent assistance. That includes 2 million internally displaced people. We are scaling up humanitarian aid in areas where security permits. More than half a million people are now receiving assistance, including life-saving food, shelter, blankets and medical supplies. The United Nations and our partners have developed operational plans to meet humanitarian needs where they are most acute. That work needs funding. Over \$1.5 billion was pledged to the appeals launched last week. We are grateful for that generosity and encourage donors to release the funding quickly.

It is critical to urgently achieve a cessation of hostilities to allow for the safe passage of civilians from besieged areas and to ensure that life-saving humanitarian supplies can reach those who remain. On 9 March, over 51,000 people were reportedly evacuated through five out of six safe passages that had been agreed upon. Those safe passages must continue. They should be implemented with clear principles and modalities. Civilians should be duly informed and in a timely manner of the possibility to leave the concerned areas on a voluntary basis and in the direction they choose.

To expand life-saving assistance and services to those most in need, humanitarian actors must also have safe, rapid, unimpeded and sustained access to all areas. We commend the humanitarian actors on the ground who are staying and delivering in a highly volatile situation.

The number of refugees from Ukraine has reached 2.5 million. Those numbers continue increasing by the day. We also commend the countries that have kept their borders open to welcome and support refugees. All people fleeing Ukraine, including third-country nationals, need access to safety and protection, in line with the principle of non-refoulement and without any form of discrimination.

The need for negotiations to stop the war in Ukraine could not be more urgent. We note the three rounds of talks held thus far between Ukrainian and Russian delegations. We call for such efforts to intensify, including to further secure humanitarian and ceasefire arrangements as a matter of priority. We urge the sides to build on their contacts, such as the meeting yesterday between the Foreign Ministers of Ukraine and the Russian Federation in Antalya, Turkey.

The logic of dialogue and diplomacy must prevail over the logic of war. The Secretary-General is grateful to the many Member States working in pursuit of a diplomatic solution to the dangerous conflict. He is in regular contact with regional and other leaders and his good offices remain available.

Let me reaffirm the commitment of the United Nations to Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, within its internationally recognized borders. As the war grinds on, there is already much reflection about its implications, beyond the tragedy it represents for Ukraine. We increasingly hear the use of terms such as "turning point", "defining moment" and "end of multilateralism". I do not believe that is an exaggeration — indeed, some consequences are already being felt, economically and politically. Perhaps most alarming are the threats that the violence poses to the global framework for peace and security. We must do everything we can to find a solution and put an end to the war, and we must do it now.

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

I now give the floor to Mrs. Nakamitsu.

Mrs. Nakamitsu: I thank Council members for the opportunity to brief them this morning.

I am aware of reports that certain public health facilities are in areas impacted by armed conflict, putting the safety of those facilities at risk. I appeal to all parties to the conflict to ensure the safety of all such facilities in Ukraine.

I am aware of media reports regarding allegations of biological weapons programmes. The United Nations is not aware of any biological weapons programmes. That is largely thanks to the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), which prohibits the development, production, acquisition, transfer, stockpiling and use of biological and toxin weapons.

The Russian Federation and Ukraine are both States parties to the Convention. In addition, the Russian Federation is a depositary Government under the Convention. All States parties to the Convention have undertaken to never, in any circumstances, develop, produce, stockpile or otherwise acquire or retain biological weapons.

Biological weapons have been outlawed since the BWC entered into force in 1975. A total of 183 States have now joined the Convention and biological weapons are universally seen as being abhorrent and illegitimate. The BWC lacks a multilateral verification mechanism overseen by an independent organization, such as the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. Therefore, assessing compliance with its obligations is a task for its States parties.

Despite the lack of an international verification regime, the Biological Weapons Convention does, however, contain several measures to which concerned States parties can have recourse in order to address situations in which States parties have concerns or suspicions about the activities of their peers. For example, article V of the Convention states:

“The States parties to this Convention undertake to consult one another and to co-operate in solving any problems which may arise in relation to the objective of, or in the application of the provisions of, the Convention.”

Within the framework of article V, States parties have established an annual exchange of information based upon the submission of confidence-building measures. States parties must declare information about relevant facilities and activities on their territory in order to

prevent or reduce the occurrence of ambiguities, doubts and suspicions between them.

The Russian Federation and Ukraine both participate annually in the confidence-building measures. The annual reports submitted by the Russian Federation and Ukraine are available to all BWC States parties for the purposes of transparency and reassurance.

In addition, and also within the framework of Article V of the Convention, States parties have developed procedures for clarifying ambiguous and unresolved matters, including the possible convening of a formal consultative meeting to consider such matters.

Article VI of the Convention states:

“Any State party to this Convention which finds that any other State party is acting in breach of obligations deriving from the provisions of the Convention may lodge a complaint with the Security Council.”

If agreed by the Security Council, an investigation on the basis of the complaint received could be initiated. Article VI of the Convention has never been activated.

While those provisions have not been regularly used, they are nonetheless internationally agreed procedures that are available to be used to defuse tensions and to address and resolve any concerns relating to compliance with obligations under the BWC in a multilateral setting. I would therefore encourage BWC States parties to consider making use of the available procedures for consultation and cooperation in order to resolve these issues.

Situations such as this demonstrate the need to strengthen the BWC, to operationalize it and to institutionalize it. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to encourage its States parties to come to the Convention's ninth Review Conference, scheduled to take place in Geneva later in 2022, committed to a serious overhaul of the Convention to ensure that it is properly equipped and resourced to deal with the challenges ahead.

To conclude my statement, I would like to take this opportunity to address the worrying issue of the safety and security of nuclear power plants in Ukraine. An accident involving the nuclear facilities in Ukraine could have severe consequences for public health and the environment and all steps must be taken to avoid it. The possibility of an accident caused by failure of

a reactor's power supply or the inability to provide regular maintenance is growing by the day.

The forces in effective control of nuclear power plants in Ukraine must ensure their safe and secure operation. I am extremely concerned that four of the seven pillars of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for the safe and secure operation of facilities are reportedly not being implemented at Chernobyl and Zaporizhzhya. Communications must be fully restored, and operating staff must be allowed to properly carry out their duties and to do so free of undue pressure.

I would like to echo the Secretary-General's support for IAEA Director-General Grossi's efforts to develop a framework to ensure the safety and security of Ukraine's facilities and welcome the constructive meetings that he held in Turkey on 10 March with the foreign ministers of Ukraine and the Russian Federation.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for her briefing.

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

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has demonstrated how vulnerable humankind is to biological threats. It has already taken, and continues to take, an enormous toll on human life.

With the entry into force of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) in 1975, it was hoped that the world would be free of at least human-made biological threats, since all signatory countries recognized the horrendous risks posed by biological weapons and abandoned any plans to develop them.

Unfortunately, we have reason to believe that such hopes have not been fully fulfilled. We convened today's meeting because, in the course of Russia's special military operation in Ukraine, truly shocking facts have come to light regarding the Kyiv regime's emergency clean-up of the traces of the biological warfare programme being carried out by Kyiv with the support of the United States Department of Defense.

The Russian Ministry of Defence has in its possession documents that confirm that a network of at least 30 biological laboratories has been formed on the territory of Ukraine, where extremely dangerous biological experiments aimed at enhancing the pathogenic properties of plague, anthrax, tularaemia,

cholera and other deadly diseases, using synthetic biology, are being conducted.

That work is funded and directly supervised by the Office of Military Threat Reduction of the United States Department of Defense, including on behalf of the National Center for Medical Intelligence of the United States Department of Defense. A key role in implementing those programmes was played by the Biosafety Level 3 Central Reference Laboratory at the Ukrainian Anti-Plague Research Institute, named after I.I. Mechnikov, located in Odesa. Research centres in other Ukrainian cities — Kyiv, Lviv, Kharkiv, Dnipro, Kherson, Ternopil, Uzhgorod and Vynnytsya — were actively involved. The results were sent to United States biological warfare centres, including the United States Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases, the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research and the United States Naval Medical Research Center, as well as the United States Army Biological Warfare Laboratories at Fort Detrick, which were previously key sites of the United States biological weapons programme.

All the information is available on the website of our Ministry of Defence, which announces it in its daily briefings. I will highlight the most notable examples.

Our army learned the details of the UP-4 project, which was implemented in laboratories in Kyiv, Kharkiv and Odesa. Its aim is to study the possibility of transmitting particularly dangerous infections via migratory birds, including the highly pathogenic influenza H5N1, which has a mortality rate of up to 50 per cent in humans, as well as the Newcastle disease. In another project, bats are being considered as vectors for potential biological warfare agents. Priority research areas include bacterial and viral pathogens that can be transmitted from bats to humans, such as plague and leptospirosis, as well as filoviruses and coronaviruses.

According to the project documents, the United States has actively funded biological projects in Ukraine. Experiments were conducted to study the transmission of dangerous diseases by ectoparasites, such as lice and fleas. It is clear even to non-specialists that such experiments are among the most reckless, as they do not provide any means of controlling further developments in the situation. Similar research, using fleas and lice as bioweapons agents, were carried out in 1940s by the notorious Unit 731 of the Japanese army,

whose members, by the way, found refuge in the United States of America and escaped justice.

Ukraine has a unique geographical position as a crossroads of a number of migration routes for potential vectors of dangerous diseases, many of which run through Russia and Eastern Europe. The research I just mentioned was carried out in the heart of Eastern Europe and in close proximity to Russia's borders. According to the data obtained, the birds ringed and released during bioresearch in the Kherson Nature Preserve were caught in the Ivanovo and Voronezh oblasts of the Russian Federation.

The analysis of the materials confirms that more than 140 containers with bat ectoparasites were transferred abroad from the Kharkiv biolaboratory. We do not know the fate of those dangerous biomaterials nor what the consequences would be if they were to dissolve, probably over Europe, without any international control. In any event, there is a very high risk that they will be stolen for terrorist purposes or sold on the black market.

Under the pretext of treating and preventing the coronavirus disease, several thousand samples of blood serum from patients, mostly of Slavic extraction, were taken from Ukraine to the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research of the United States Army. Everyone knows how sensitive the West is about the transfer abroad of biomaterials of Western nationals. And there is good reason for that. In theory, biological agents that selectively target specific ethnic groups could be developed.

At the same time, the activities of biological laboratories, which we have tracked since 2014, and the so-called "reform" programme of the Ukrainian health-care system implemented by the United States have led to an uncontrolled increase in the incidence of particularly dangerous and economically significant infections in Ukraine. Cases of rubella, diphtheria and tuberculosis are on the rise. The incidence of measles has increased by a factor of more than 100. The World Health Organization declared Ukraine a high-risk country for polio outbreaks. There is also evidence that in Kharkiv, where one such laboratory is located, 20 Ukrainian soldiers died of swine flu in January 2016 and another 200 were hospitalized. By March of the same year, 364 people in Ukraine had died of swine flu. In addition, the outbreak of African swine fever has become a regular occurrence in Ukraine. In 2019,

an outbreak of a disease that is symptomatically similar to plague was reported.

At a time when military-biological research on United States territory has been curtailed due to the danger to the American people, the Kyiv authorities have essentially agreed to turn their country into a testing ground and to use Ukrainian citizens as guinea pigs. These experiments, with potential risks on a national scale, have been going on for years. We see in this yet another confirmation of the monstrous cynicism of Kyiv's Western handlers, who proclaim at every opportunity how much they care about the fate of the Ukrainian people.

If Reuters is to be believed, the World Health Organization recommended that Ukraine destroy their extremely dangerous pathogens in order to avoid leaks that could lead to the spread of disease among the population. We do not know whether Kyiv implemented that recommendation.

Our Ministry of Defence has materials that confirm that all serious high-risk research in Ukraine's biolaboratories was carried out under the direct supervision of United States specialists, who had diplomatic immunity. According to our Defence Ministry, the Kyiv regime is now hastily covering its tracks at the request of its Western handlers so that the Russian side does not find direct evidence that the United States and Ukraine are violating Article 1 of the BWC. Biological programmes are being urgently shut down, and on 24 February, Ukraine's Ministry of Health set the goal of fully destroying the bioagents in the laboratories. Our analysis of the instructions issued to laboratory officials reveals that the order of liquidation is aimed at their irretrievable elimination of such materials. Our analysis shows the destruction, in Lviv alone, of 232 containers of leptospirosis pathogen, 30 of tularaemia, 10 of brucellosis and 5 of plague. In all, more than 320 containers were destroyed. The nomenclature and the excessive number of biopathogens suggest that the work was conducted as part of a military biological programme.

I would like to address my European colleagues separately.

All these years, right next to the European Union, there has been a testing ground for extremely dangerous biological trials. We call upon them to think about the very real biological threat to the people of European countries that could result from the uncontrolled spread

of bioagents from Ukraine, which, as the experience of COVID-19 showed, is impossible to stop. In such a scenario, all of Europe will be affected.

The representatives of the United States provide confusing information about the involvement of the United States in this activity in Ukraine. During a congressional hearing on 8 March, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs of the United States Victoria Nuland basically confirmed the fact that dangerous research was being conducted in Ukrainian biolaboratories. When asked directly by Senator Marco Rubio about the presence of biological or chemical weapons in Ukraine, she replied that there were "research facilities there that should not fall into the hands of the Russian military".

At the same time, the State Department continues to insist that there are no biolaboratories on Ukrainian territory under the control of the United States. In that connection, we would like to ask the United States delegation — how does that fit with the 2005 agreement between the United States Department of Defense and the Ukrainian Ministry of Health on cooperation in the area of the dissemination of technologies and pathogens that could be used in the development of bioweapons? That document is publicly available on the Internet. According to article III of that agreement, the United States Department of Defense can

"assist the Ministry of Health of Ukraine in joint biological research, the identification of threats from biological agents and the development of a response to them"

as relates to the "dangerous pathogens located at the facilities in Ukraine".

I would like to stress that biological threats, by their very nature, know no borders. No region of the world today can feel safe. The United States supervises several hundreds of biolaboratories in some 30 countries, including in the Middle East, Africa and South-East Asia, as well as along the perimeter of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Since 2001, Washington has flatly refused to subject these labs to international verification, thus blocking a legally binding protocol to the BWC about establishing an effective verification mechanism to ensure compliance. This cannot but suggest that the United States has something to hide. I urge colleagues in those regions to think about what activities Washington is conducting on their territory and the possible consequences for their people.

I can foresee the reaction of our Western colleagues, who will surely claim today that all this information is fake and Russian propaganda. But this self-indulgence will not help the European people in the event of outbreaks in Ukraine and neighbouring countries and the subsequent spread of dangerous diseases beyond their borders. The risk of that is very real, given the interest that radical nationalist groups in Ukraine have shown in the dangerous pathogen work carried out there in the interests of the United States Department of Defense.

We also know that in the event of any such incidents, the Pentagon explicitly advised its Ukrainian protégés to immediately accuse the armed forces of the Russian Federation of allegedly targeting research and medical facilities or to link such incidents to the activities of Russian subversive groups.

The Russian Ministry of Defence continues to analyse the biological situation in Ukraine and emerging evidence. What we have described today is only a small fraction of the information we have. We will disseminate detailed information in the very near future in official Security Council documents that members will be able to examine.

We believe it is our duty to keep the Security Council informed of the situation concerning United States military biological activities in Ukraine, which pose a genuine threat to international peace and security. We intend to return to the topic in the near future. We do not rule out the possibility of invoking the mechanism of Articles V and VI of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention at a later date. In the meantime, we hope to receive answers from the United States to the questions raised.

Mr. Hoxha (Albania): Let me thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo and Under-Secretary-General Nakamitsu for the information they provided.

I would like to make the following points.

First, we are meeting at the request of Russia following allegations of an alleged programme for the development of biological weapons in Ukraine. We listened to the representative of Russia's statement very carefully.

Any issue with regard to weapons of mass destruction should never be taken lightly. As we just heard from Under-Secretary-General Nakamitsu, the United Nations is not aware of any alleged programme

inconsistent with international treaty obligations, including on chemical or biological weapons. We heard about health facilities in Ukraine.

We have also repeatedly heard a firm rebuttal at the highest levels from both the United States and Ukraine. Therefore, Russia's allegations are, in our opinion, a part of its information warfare — a false and unsubstantiated part of the usual propaganda, disinformation and conspiracy theories coming from Russia that are not worth our time. The Council should not be served with fantasies or starry-eyed stories but with independently verified and corroborated proof. That is not the case.

However regrettable all that is, it is hardly surprising, since absolutely everything we have heard from Russia concerning Ukraine has been false, fabricated or distorted. All of it is in the public space and does not deserve mentioning, but the true *Palme d'or* goes to the Russian declaration of just two days ago, according to which Russia did not attack Ukraine. Well, as we saw last week the General Assembly has a different account.

In any other situation, everyone would have thought that this was a joke, except for the fact that the joke is destroying a country, killing civilians and responsible for more than 2.5 million refugees and counting. That translates into 7,000 people per hour. Reportedly, that is also responsible for the death of several thousand Russian soldiers, but that is an issue for Russia and its people. It is all the more reason for an immediate ceasefire and making the space for negotiations.

Secondly, Russia has a long and well documented track record of using chemical weapons, including in attempted assassinations and poisoning its own citizens, like the jailed opposition leader, Alexei Navalny, or the Skripals. Bellingcat reporting has brilliantly been able to make a direct and irrefutable link of the attempted deadly poisoning with GRU high officials.

We should therefore be very worried that in spreading such disinformation, a crescendo of allegations about weapons of mass destruction could serve as yet another pretext for Russia to prepare the ground and use chemical or biological weapons during its ongoing invasion of Ukraine, while accusing others. After all, Russia has accused Ukraine of genocide in Donbas, which is ridiculous. It has also accused Kyiv of seeking to produce nuclear weapons, which is

outrageous. It has accused Ukraine of bombarding its own cities, which is preposterous.

As we have heard many times here, including yesterday (see S/PV.8990), Russia has continued to support the regime of Bashar Al-Assad in Syria, which has used chemical weapons against the civilian population.

What should retain our attention and deserves our time is the escalating situation that is wreaking havoc on two countries, threatening a whole continent and disrupting the entire world. Fifteen days into the brutal invasion, the growing armoured might of Russia, with the open complicity of Belarus, has stalled before the steel-clad and indisputable right of a nation to defend its land.

Russia's goals are as abhorrent as the means it is using to achieve them. We are horrified by the catastrophic situation in Mariupol and other besieged cities, where civilians are starved; the use of cluster ammunition in urban areas, as we heard during the Under-Secretary-General's briefing; the redoubling of blind shelling and bombardments; the more than 26 assaults on various health-related facilities, including ambulances, as confirmed by World Health Organization and at this meeting; and other outrageous and amoral acts, which constitute war crimes. Those are facts.

Nothing seems to be going as planned in Ukraine. The unprovoked, unjustified and premeditated act of aggression by Russia, once again with the complicity of Belarus, lack the legal or moral grounds that, by contrast, empower Ukrainians to fight heroically, stand ready to die for the ideals they believe in and the right to choose who they want to be — the shapers of their own destiny. In that respect, we welcome the conclusions of the European Council, which, among other things, has welcomed Ukraine's resolve to join the European Union.

Our hearts are fortified by the Ukrainian resistance — perhaps incomprehensible to the invader — which should be seen as an inspiration and a reminder that freedom always prevails over tyranny.

Let us not forget: if Russia makes its way into Ukraine, it will not stop there; it will want more; and as history reminds us, aggression works like a drug. That is why David must and will prevail.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): I thank our briefers for their remarks this morning.

Russia asked the Security Council for today's meeting for the sole purpose of lying and spreading disinformation and that is exactly what members have heard from the Russian Permanent Representative. Members also heard from Mrs. Nakamitsu that the United Nations is not aware of any biological or chemical weapons programmes in Ukraine.

Last month, Secretary of State Blinken (see S/PV.8968) laid out with tragic accuracy what Russia was about to do. He specifically warned that Russia would manufacture a pretext for attack and even cautioned that Russia would fabricate allegations about chemical or biological weapons to justify its own violent attacks against the Ukrainian people.

Today the world is watching Russia do exactly what we warned it would do. Russia is attempting to use the Security Council to legitimize disinformation and deceive people to justify President Putin's war of choice against the Ukrainian people. And China too has been spreading disinformation in support of Russia's outrageous claims. I will say this once: Ukraine does not have a biological weapons programme. There are no Ukrainian biological weapons laboratories supported by the United States — not near Russia's border or anywhere.

Here are the facts. Ukraine owns and operates its own public health laboratory infrastructure. Those facilities make it possible to detect and diagnose diseases like the coronavirus disease, thereby benefiting us all. The United States has assisted Ukraine to do that safely and securely. That is work that has been done proudly, clearly and out in the open. That work has everything to do with protecting the health of people. It has absolutely nothing — absolutely nothing — to do with biological weapons.

In fact, it is Russia that has long maintained a biological weapons programme in violation of international law. It is Russia that has a well-documented history of using chemical weapons. It is Russia who is the aggressor in this situation. It was Russian operatives who poisoned Aleksey Navalny and Sergei and Yulia Skripal with nerve agents. It is Russia that continues to support the Al-Assad regime in Syria and shield it from accountability when the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

have confirmed that Al-Assad has repeatedly used chemical weapons over the past several years.

And we are deeply concerned that Russia's calling for this meeting is a potential false flag effort in action — exactly the kind we have been warning about, including in the statement by Secretary Blinken in the Security Council last month (see S/PV.8968). Russia has a track record of falsely accusing other countries of the very violations that Russia itself is perpetrating. And given that and consistent with our previous statements, we have serious concerns that Russia may be planning to use chemical or biological agents against the Ukrainian people.

The intent behind these lies seems clear and it is deeply troubling. We believe Russia could use chemical or biological agents for assassinations, as part of a staged or false flag incident or to support tactical military operations. From the beginning, our strategy to counter Russia's tactics has been to share what we know with the world transparently. And candidly, we have been right more often than we would like.

We are not going to let Russia get away with lying to the world or staining the integrity of the Security Council by using this forum as a venue for legitimizing Putin's violence. Russia has attacked homes, schools, orphanages and hospitals. Russia has attacked civilian infrastructure, including water and sanitation facilities. Their forces are laying Ukrainian cities under siege. Hundreds of thousands of civilians now do not have access to electricity for heat or drinking water to stay alive. Russia is the aggressor in this situation.

And despite Russia's best efforts, the media and everyday Ukrainians are documenting this truth on the ground. Russia cannot paint over the front page of the *New York Times*, which on Monday featured the bodies of a Ukrainian mother and her two children who died while trying to cross a bridge outside Kyiv in their attempt to flee to safety. Russia cannot cover up the work of Associated Press news reporters, who captured a doctor attempting to resuscitate an 18-month-old, Kirill, who died from Russian shelling in Mariupol.

Russia cannot suppress the social media post, confirmed and amplified by CBS News, that told the story of the 11-year-old Ukrainian boy who fled to Slovakia, by himself, with only a passport, a plastic bag and a phone number scrawled on his hands. Russia cannot silence the Al-Jazeera report of Russian soldiers terrorizing Ukrainian cities. And Ukrainian journalists

are risking their lives every day to deliver to the world the latest on-the-ground facts, such as *Novoe Vremye* reporting on the reckless behaviour of Russian forces towards Ukraine's nuclear facilities.

Russia is failing in its quest to create an alternative reality. In fact, not even Russian diplomats can keep their propaganda straight. Just yesterday, the Kremlin's spokesman said he didn't have clear information about the Russian forces who fired on a maternity hospital. Then the Foreign Minister himself denied that Russia attacked Ukraine at all, right before admitting that Russia deliberately targeted this maternity hospital in Mariupol. Their fabrications did not matter, because the world had already seen the searing images broadcast on CNN of bloodied pregnant women being evacuated from the scene of Russia's attack on the hospital.

Even Russia's own citizens are tiring of such lies. Russian athletes are writing "no war" on their shoes and on television cameras. Russian citizens are marching in the streets and protesting Putin's war of choice. And even Russian state television pundits — Putin's own propaganda arm — have called for Putin to stop the military action.

That is why we did not object to holding today's meeting. Today's meeting has confirmed our predictions, revealed Russia's objectives to the world and exposed Russia's lies for what they are — a malicious effort to cover for the atrocities being committed by Russia as part of its illegal and unprovoked attack on Ukraine. It is a page directly out of the Russian playbook, and it will not convince us one bit.

The world is watching. Photographic and video evidence is mounting, and Russia will be held to account for its actions. We will not let atrocities slide. Unlike the Russian Government — whose first instinct is to silence — we are confident that truth and transparency will prevail.

We call on President Putin to end this unprovoked, unconscionable war against the Ukrainian people.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Ms. DiCarlo and Mrs. Nakamitsu and for their briefings.

I want to denounce in the strongest possible terms the unfounded allegations made by Russia. Russia would have us believe that chemical attacks are being prepared in Ukraine and that there are biological weapon research laboratories.

Let us be serious. Russia's lies are not fooling anyone. They are part of a cynical disinformation strategy and smokescreen, which Russia has turned into a veritable weapon of war. We denounced those irresponsible provocations just a few days ago at the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, along with 46 other States parties.

This is not the first time that Russia has spread lies to create confusion, sow fear and above all cover up its own responsibility. We must remember the facts: it is Russia and not Ukraine that has used weapons of mass destruction in recent years on European soil. It is also Russia that is trying to cover up the Syrian regime's chemical attacks with disinformation.

France is very concerned that this disinformation campaign may be a prelude to the use of a chemical or biological weapon by Russia in Ukraine. Those weapons are banned under international law. They must never be used, in any context, by anyone. Russia has committed itself to that by ratifying the Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The briefings we have heard this morning are clear. The reality is that Russia premeditated its aggression against a sovereign State and violated the Charter of the United Nations. The reality internationalists that Russia has driven millions of Ukrainians into the streets, causing the most serious humanitarian crisis in Europe since the Second World War. It is Russia that has been bombing Mariupol and many other Ukrainian cities and civilian facilities on a daily basis for the past 15 days, in violation of international humanitarian law. It is Russia that is killing more innocent Ukrainians every day.

Neither disinformation nor vetoes can mask that harsh reality, nor will Moscow's laws to muzzle the press and the voices in Russia that are speaking out against the war. Neither Russians nor the world are fooled.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): Russia has today brought into the Security Council a series of wild, completely baseless and irresponsible conspiracy theories. Let me put it diplomatically. They are utter nonsense.

There is not a shred of credible evidence that Ukraine has a biological weapons programme. Ukraine is a State party to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, in good standing. As we have heard, its research facilities are established facilities, set up to deal with public health hazards. Today's briefers have

confirmed that point. That is yet another lie in Russia's disinformation campaign.

They said they would not invade Ukraine; they then invaded. Foreign Minister Lavrov then said they had not invaded, and he repeated that absurdity yesterday. It is a whole pack of lies. They said Ukraine was preparing a dirty bomb. That, too, was a lie. They said yesterday that a pregnant woman staged her injuries in the Mariupol hospital bombing. That was a grotesque lie.

Russia is sinking to new depths today, but the Security Council must not be dragged down with it. Let us get back to the facts. Russia is invading Ukraine, in violation of international law. Russia is killing hundreds of civilians through the indiscriminate shelling of Ukrainian cities. It is using cluster munitions and thermobaric rockets — weapons designed to inflict maximum damage wherever they are deployed. It is targeting hospitals and schools and committing war crimes.

Thousands of Russian and Ukrainian soldiers are dead — deaths that will shatter the lives of the families they have left behind. Some 2.5 million Ukrainians have become refugees and 1 million children have been forced to flee from President Putin's invasion. This is a war of choice that Russia needs to end.

Russia has broken its commitments under the Charter of the United Nations, but we must not let it subvert the multilateral system itself. As the United Nations said today, Russia is now putting at risk the global framework for peace and security. The Security Council is responsible for addressing many serious conflicts around the world. We have important work to do. We do not sit in the Chamber to be an audience for Russia's domestic propaganda, and we should not allow Russia to abuse its permanent seat to spread disinformation and lies and pervert the purpose of the Security Council.

Let us resolve today that the Council will remain focused on the real threats to international peace and security.

Mr. Tirumurti (India): I thank Under-Secretary-General Nakamitsu and Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo for their briefings.

We have noted the recent statements made by the representatives of States and wider information regarding the biological activities relating to Ukraine. In that context, we would like to underline the

importance that India attaches to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) as a key global and non-discriminatory disarmament Convention, prohibiting an entire category of weapons of mass destruction.

It is important to ensure the full and effective implementation of the BTWC, in both letter and spirit. We also believe that any matters relating to obligations under the BTWC should be addressed as per the provisions of the Convention and through consultation and cooperation between the parties concerned.

We have repeatedly expressed serious concern about the ongoing situation in Ukraine. We sincerely hope that the ongoing direct negotiations between Russia and Ukraine will lead to the cessation of hostilities. There is no alternative other than the path of diplomacy and dialogue.

The dire humanitarian situation needs immediate and urgent attention. We once again call upon Member States to adhere to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law and to respect the sovereignty and integrity of States.

Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo and High Representative Nakamitsu for their briefings and take note of the information they shared.

We also listened closely to the statement made by the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General, informing us that the World Health Organization has no knowledge of any activities conducted by the Ukrainian Government that would be contrary to its obligations under the Biological Weapons Convention. The High Representative for Disarmament Affairs reiterated that point in today's meeting.

Mexico is committed to adhering to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction. It is a key treaty in the United Nations disarmament regime and, when disputes occur, they must be settled using the mechanisms established by the Convention itself.

There is still no external verification mechanism in place, as is the case for chemical weapons. For that reason, we should recall that article V of the Convention stipulates that the States parties to the Convention undertake to consult one another and cooperate in solving any problems that may arise in relation to the

objective of, or in the application of the provisions of, the Convention. Consultation and cooperation pursuant to that article may also be undertaken through appropriate international procedures within the framework of the United Nations and in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

Mexico categorically opposes the use of biological weapons by any actor under any circumstances, as well as any attack on medical, scientific or care facilities in Ukraine.

In conclusion, we reiterate the urgent call for a ceasefire and, until that occurs, we call for the establishment of a sustainable humanitarian pause that ensures protection for the civilian population and access to humanitarian assistance for those who need it, without restrictions or exclusions.

Mr. Agyeman (Ghana): Let me begin by thanking the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu, and the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Rosemary DiCarlo, for their briefings to the Council this morning. I also welcome the participation in this meeting of the representative of Ukraine.

Ghana has taken due and careful note of the briefings and the remarks of the delegations that have spoken before us. We believe that on account of the information before us, a determination of Ukraine's biological programmes can be made only after further assessment by relevant institutions such as the World Health Organization to establish the situation of the biological laboratories under consideration and the state of the infectious-disease research that was being undertaken therein.

It is in that regard that we urge the parties to respect the call for an unconditional and immediate ceasefire and for the Russian Federation to withdraw all its invading troops from the internationally recognized borders of Ukraine, bearing in mind the incalculable consequences that an accidental or deliberate release of chemical or biological agents in the conflict theatre could have not only for the populations in and around Ukraine but also for global stability and an already fragile security environment.

The weaponization of chemical or biological agents in the war in Ukraine or anywhere else would be wrong and should not even be contemplated.

As a State party to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), we believe that the call for a verification regime for the BWC continues to be valid and that the elaboration of such an additional protocol could be done in a manner that is reasonable and sensible, especially in the light of recent global developments, including the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

Ghana remains deeply concerned about the escalation of military bombardments in several cities of Ukraine, which have given rise to a rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation described by many as the worst in Europe since the end of the Second World War. We are also concerned by the transmission of the shocks of the war in Ukraine within the global economy and by the disproportionate impact that developing countries and small economies are having to bear on account of this war, many of which are already in the throes of the COVID-19 pandemic and are contending with the deaths of several thousand people from the socioeconomic consequences of the pandemic, beyond the scope of global attention. International solidarity is therefore important even as we maintain global cohesion and stability.

We remind the warring parties of their obligation to respect and comply with their commitments under international law, international humanitarian law and human rights law. In particular, we call for the protection of civilians and humanitarian workers in Ukraine in accordance with the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

In concluding, let me recall Ghana's long-held view that the possession or proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, including chemical and biological weapons, ensures neither international peace nor national security. We all therefore have a responsibility to ensure that we eliminate such weapons from the present civilization that we are seeking to build.

Ms. Byrne Nason (Ireland): I would like to thank High Representative Izumi Nakamitsu and Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo for their sober briefings this morning.

Ireland deeply regrets the decision of the Russian Federation to call for today's meeting. It has done so for no other reason than to advance baseless claims against Ukraine and the United States.

Ireland has a long-standing and clear policy on biological, chemical and other weapons of mass destruction. It is intolerable that Russia, as part of its attempts to excuse its unjustifiable and unlawful aggression against Ukraine, is making unsubstantiated and unfounded claims against Ukraine regarding the alleged development and possible use of biological and chemical weapons. The prohibitions on biological and chemical weapons must not be undermined.

Given the reckless disregard for nuclear safety and security shown by Russian forces since the start of the invasion, there are fears for chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear safety arising from the invasion. This in no way, however, supports the claims of the development of weapons of mass destruction in Ukraine.

We are familiar with this approach by the Russian Federation. It forms part of a long-standing pattern by the Russian Federation to use disinformation in multiple multilateral forums to distract, deny and cover up its own transgressions and aggressions.

Ireland considers it unacceptable to levy such accusations against Ukraine, a State party in good standing to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention. Those instruments are doing their vital job of ensuring the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and no evidence has been advanced to support such allegations in these forums. Earlier this week, 48 States, including Ireland, challenged those unsubstantiated claims by Russia in the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

I urge the Russian Federation to cease its campaign of disinformation and not to use the Council as a platform to spread disinformation. Such harmful actions demean this body and its role in maintaining international peace and security.

The Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine has created a humanitarian catastrophe. In another effort to mislead and misinform, we have been told by the Russian Federation that the humanitarian crisis we are seeing in Ukraine is not a result of its actions. However, as United Nations briefers confirmed again today, it is clear that the Russian offensive is causing the suffering of millions, resulting in a rapidly rising toll of internally displaced persons and refugees in need of humanitarian assistance. Millions of people in Ukraine

are struggling with the humanitarian consequences of this senseless aggression.

Whatever is agreed or not agreed on humanitarian safe passage, civilians and civilian infrastructure must be protected. Compliance with international humanitarian law is not optional. It is an obligation. Full, safe and unhindered access to provide humanitarian assistance is urgently needed.

One more time, Ireland urges the Russian Federation to immediately cease hostilities, unconditionally withdraw from the entire territory of Ukraine and refrain from further threat or use of force of any kind against Ukraine. It is beyond time to choose dialogue and diplomacy as the only pathway to resolve this conflict.

Ms. Juul (Norway): I thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo and High Representative Izumi Nakamitsu for their statements.

Two weeks ago, the Russian Federation, in blatant violation of international law, chose to wage an outright war against its peaceful neighbour Ukraine. We reiterate our condemnation of that act of aggression.

A few days later, Russia misused its veto to prevent the Security Council from fulfilling its mandate to maintain international peace and security. And today Russia has called for a meeting based on an uncorroborated narrative, insinuating that Ukraine is developing biological weapons. That impacts the credibility of the Council.

Let us not forget the real threat to international peace and security that we are witnessing: an illegal war waged by the Russian Federation against another sovereign State Member of the United Nations.

We condemn the use of cluster munitions by the Russian Federation, confirmed here today.

The Russian invasion was preceded by fabricated claims and unfounded allegations. It is intolerable that Russia is now making the unsubstantiated claim that Ukraine was preparing aggressive action with the use of biological weapons. Similar allegations have also emerged when it comes to the production of chemical weapons. As we heard from the United Nations briefers, they are not aware that Ukraine has developed or planned to use either chemical or biological weapons.

Norway remains a staunch supporter of the Biological Weapons Convention, which remains one

of the pillars of disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction regimes, together with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Chemical Weapons Convention. We condemn any use of such weapons, which would constitute a clear violation of these conventions.

Those Conventions have established a total ban on chemical and biological weapons. All States parties were obliged to destroy their stocks of such weapons when they entered into these two agreements. Universal adherence to and full implementation of the Conventions by all States parties are key. I would like to remind the Council that, as a party to both conventions, Russia must uphold its international obligations, just as all States parties must. Chemical and biological weapons cannot and must not be used in war.

I am deeply concerned by the growing humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, and we are appalled by the blatant lack of respect for international humanitarian law displayed by the Russian military forces, in particular the blatant disregard for their obligation to protect the Ukrainian civilian population. Every day we see numerous reports of the Russian shelling of homes, schools, hospitals and other critical civilian infrastructure. This is unacceptable and must stop.

The horrifying reports from this week's attack on a medical facility in Mariupol are yet another example of the disrespect for international humanitarian law. The space for humanitarian action must be restored, and it must be protected in a way that ensures continuous and sustained humanitarian access.

Russia must end this war now. We need a withdrawal of all forces and engagement in good faith towards a political solution. Diplomatic solutions must prevail.

Mr. Zhang Jun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The situation in Ukraine is still rapidly evolving, with growing complexity and acuteness. What is most needed now continues to be to intensify diplomatic efforts, reduce tensions and bring the Ukrainian issue back to the political-settlement track as soon as possible while making efforts to prevent a massive humanitarian crisis.

Stopping the fighting and hostilities is a widespread desire of the international community. Peace negotiations are the only viable means to achieve that goal. Recently, Russia and Ukraine held multiple rounds of direct talks, and their two Foreign

Ministers held a high-level meeting yesterday. All these are positive steps towards achieving peace. The international community should continue to encourage and support Russia and Ukraine in their negotiations and create the environment and conditions needed for such peace talks to succeed. China will continue to work with the international community and play its part in de-escalating the situation and seeking peace.

China attaches great importance to biosafety and biosecurity and consistently stands for a complete prohibition and thorough destruction of all weapons of mass destruction, including biological weapons; firmly opposes the development, possession and the use of biological and chemical weapons by any country and under any circumstances; and encourages those countries that have not yet destroyed their stockpiles of chemical weapons to do so as soon as possible. The purposes and principles of the Biological Weapons Convention should be strictly upheld.

Biological weapons are weapons of mass destruction. Any information or leads on military biological activities should trigger great attention from the international community. China has noted with concern the relevant information released by Russia. It is an obligation for all State parties to the Biological Weapons Convention to uphold it. The concerns raised by Russia should be properly addressed.

China urges relevant parties to effectively implement their obligations under the Convention, provide comprehensive clarification and accept a multilateral verification. We have taken note of the press report that the World Health Organization has advised the Ukrainian Government to destroy the pathogens located in the relevant laboratories in order to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. We look forward to receiving more specific information on this matter. Under the current situation and for the sake of public health, ensuring the safety and security of relevant laboratories is of the utmost importance.

In her statement, the representative of the United States made groundless allegations against China, which we firmly reject. The international community has been raising concerns about the United States military's own biological activities. Around the world, the United States has 336 laboratories. This number comes from the information provided by the United States to the Conference of the States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention.

The United States has said that it favours transparency. If it believes that the relevant information is fake, it should provide us with relevant data and provide clarification so that the international community can draw a conclusion for itself.

Mr. De Almeida Filho (Brazil): Biological weapons were the first category of weapons of mass destruction to be subject to a comprehensive prohibition. Article I of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), adopted in 1972, binds all State parties to the obligation to

“never in any circumstances ... develop, produce, stockpile or otherwise acquire or retain [such weapons]”.

Brazil believes that any accusations with regard to violations of the basic prohibitions set out by the BWC are extremely serious and as such must be thoroughly substantiated by solid evidence. Such evidence must be presented to and confirmed by an independent and impartial authority, as foreseen in Article VI of the Biological Weapons Convention. It is unfortunate that such investigative mechanisms are not strong enough at the moment.

Brazil also believes that if we wish to preserve the BWC regime, legitimate scientific and technological research on biosafety and biosecurity should be kept distinct and separate from possible violations of the prohibition against the development and production of biological weapons. Research into new and dangerous pathogens should be subject to strict transparency mechanisms.

Brazil has long favoured the negotiation of a multilateral verification protocol as a complement to the BWC, with additional measures to guarantee protection from and security against emerging biological threats. The situation before the Council today only reinforces the urgency and the necessity of such a mechanism.

Brazil strongly condemns the use or threat of use of weapons of mass destruction, including biological and chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone, under any circumstances.

Mr. Kiboino (Kenya): I thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo and High Representative Nakamitsu for their briefings. I also welcome the participation of the representative of Ukraine.

The conflict in Ukraine continues at an unacceptable cost to the people of Ukraine and, increasingly, to the

entire world, as the prices of essential commodities rise sharply. Our hearts go out to the families that have lost loved ones, as well as to the millions of refugees and internally displaced persons. We are also gravely concerned that the armed conflict has not spared objects indispensable to the survival of civilian populations, including residential homes and health facilities, as well as power and water infrastructure.

We have listened with deep concern to the serious allegations of the development of biological weapons, in contravention of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Biological and Toxin Weapons. The Security Council, as mandated in the Biological Weapons Convention, is obliged to consider complaints brought forward by any State party to the Convention regarding a breach of the Convention. The Convention endows the Security Council with the responsibility to consider whether to carry out an investigation.

Should a State party formally lodge a complaint to trigger such a process, we must make the obvious observation that there would need to be a halt to the armed conflict to enable an investigation. That would then bring us to precisely the same situation we are in today, even as Ukrainian and Russian diplomats have just met in Antalya to explore an agreed basis for a ceasefire. We urge them to redouble their efforts and to make use of the willingness of many countries to lend their every assistance to those talks.

The risks of the conflict broadening and escalating should be taken with extreme seriousness. Its effects are already being experienced far outside Ukraine. The sanctions and counter-sanctions are threatening the world food supply, and rapid energy price increases will drive millions more people into poverty as they struggle to recover from the impact of the coronavirus disease. Humankind is teetering on the edge of a precipice. The coming economic shock, if a ceasefire is not imminently announced, will be accompanied by political crises and more conflict situations.

With regard to the serious allegations we have heard, whatever action is undertaken by the Security Council should be matched by a newfound commitment by all States parties / to the Biological Weapons Convention. We urge its 183 States parties to seize the opportunity of the ninth Review Conference later this year to strengthen the biological weapons regime and

the norms that safeguard humankind from the threat of use of those abhorrent weapons.

Ultimately, the only way out of the crisis is to pause the armed conflict and give to dialogue a chance to shape a stable European security order in which the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all members are protected. I reaffirm Kenya's recognition of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders.

Mr. Biang (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo and High Representative Nakamitsu for their briefings and the information provided. I also welcome the participation of our Ukrainian colleague in this meeting.

The meeting is being held in a context marked by the risk of the use of weapons of mass destruction. The serious reciprocal accusations from all sides of this table regarding the continuing risk of the use of chemical weapons in connection with ongoing testing programmes do not bode well for humankind. My country calls on the parties to adhere fully to the relevant provisions of the Biological Weapons Convention, which strictly prohibits the use of broad-spectrum weapons, as well as their development, production and stockpiling.

As a State party to the Biological Weapons Conventions, my country reaffirms its opposition to the use of any form of biological weapons whatsoever. We call on the belligerents to refrain from using such weapons and to respect international humanitarian law.

Gabon reiterates its commitment to the peaceful settlement of disputes between States Members of the United Nations. We continue to call on the parties to de-escalate and to engage in the ongoing negotiations in order to put an end to the suffering of the civilian population, which has paid a heavy price since the hostilities in Ukraine began.

It is essential that the Council rise above the logic of confrontation and condemnation to seek a credible solution in order to avoid a conflagration with unpredictable consequences. Diplomacy must regain the upper hand. That is a requirement and, indeed, a matter of urgency if we want to restore peace and security in Ukraine.

We must offer a genuine alternative to the deafening language of weapons and threats of the use of

unconventional weapons. The Security Council cannot and must not be the place for exchanging invectives and reaffirming rivalries. It is now more crucial than ever that the Council reconcile itself with its vocation as a solution-maker for the settlement of conflicts and crises.

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*): What conclusions can be drawn from our discussion today? As we expected, first and foremost of our Western colleagues, not one of them addressed the substance of the issue we put forward. While my American colleague was throwing thunderbolts and accusing us, as we expected, of spreading propaganda, two things came to mind.

First, I wish to recall a Russian proverb, according to which a guilty mind is never at ease. The louder the voices that attempt to shift the blame onto us, the greater our conviction that we hit the nail on the head when discussing their rather nefarious activities in Ukraine.

Secondly, I remember another story that has been mentioned on various occasions and in various contexts about the notorious vial presented by Mr. Colin Powell here in this very Chamber (see S/PV.4701), which became the foundation for the United States invasion of Iraq. That led to untold levels of suffering, leaving behind many victims and great destruction, which then reverberated throughout the entire region, including in the form of a terrorist organization known as Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant.

That is the real *Palme d'or*, as our Albanian colleague said today. Many members stated that they were unaware of military biological programmes in Ukraine. That does not mean that they do not, in actual fact, exist. A military development is a secret enterprise, and those who involved would not report on it to Mrs. Nakamitsu.

I also recall that Iraq and Mosul were razed to the ground, leaving thousands of civilians buried under the rubble. That was done by the forces of the coalition, headed by the United States. The bodies remained there for several months. I do not recall righteous ire on the part of colleagues about that. We raised this issue many times in the Security Council, but it died and was buried. People prefer not to recall that.

On the other hand, every day we hear about the atrocities of the Russian army, its daily attacks on hospitals, kindergartens and maternity hospitals, using cluster bombs, which had been repeatedly refuted by our Ministry of Defence. Maternity Hospital No. 1 in Mariupol has become common parlance in that regard.

Let me ask those present this: did they listen to what we said here in the Chamber on Monday, 7 March, when we said that militants and radicals had converted that building into a firing point (see S/PV.8988). We warned about that even then. Apparently, they did not listen, or they do not want to hear what we said. Did they see the photographs of the building of the maternity hospital, allegedly destroyed by a bomb? What can be seen there is a building without windows, but it is not destroyed. Here are the photographs.

Can they imagine what would have happened to a building, as well as to those inside it, if it were struck by a bomb or missile? What would have happened to it? We have the photos and videos from inside the building. Here they are. They show just that there is disorder, overturned furniture and untouched, intact chairs. Once again, can they imagine what kind of destruction would have remained in the wake of a building hit by a rocket or a bomb? They can ask military specialists. They will tell them. They have already said that they show the pictures of a crater near the building that resulted from an exploded mine. Here is this photo.

At the same time, we are being told about the 17 wounded in the building — and, incidentally, not a single death. By way of evidence, what is shown here is a fabricated picture of a Ukrainian blogger, Marianna Podgurskaya. It was taken by an Associated Press stringer, Evgeniy Maloletka. That female blogger is using two different kinds of make-up to present herself as two different women in the photographs. The network users themselves revealed that.

We are dismayed by the dirty campaign to blame us for intentionally shelling civilian infrastructure. We are being accused of propaganda and fakes, while the accusers ignore a huge number of fakes that are being turned out in special centres in Ukraine and in the West so as to conduct a special psychological operation. Meanwhile, they are coyly silent about the fact that they have basically shut off their access to Russian sources of information. These days, we are discovering a great deal of new things about the freedom of speech that they allegedly champion.

I would now like to respond to my United Kingdom colleague, who, as usual, quoted Minister Lavrov incompletely when he said that we did not start the war. She was not the only one to mention that. Those are the exact words: we did not start this war; we want to end it. It is true that the war was not started by us. It was started eight years ago by the Kyiv authorities in Donbas.

Yesterday, a video was uploaded on the Internet in which Ukrainians in military uniform near Kharkiv, as it is said in the video, are reportedly shooting down what is supposed to be a Russian military aircraft, using a mobile rocket launcher. Right next to it is a car, which they apparently used to get there. Here is a picture — a white Toyota bearing a United Nations logo. We already asked the representative of the Secretariat this question, and the answer was that United Nations cars are not being used by the Ukrainian Territorial Defence Forces. United Nations vehicles were previously reported to be used in Kramatorsk. We insist that that incident be investigated by the United Nations. Even if it turns out that it was not a United Nations vehicle, using a United Nations logo on a car that is being used for military activities is unacceptable.

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

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): I know that the Russian representative expects me to respond, but we are not going to give any more air time to the lies that those present are hearing today. It is beneath the Security Council. There is only one aggressor here, and that is Russia. We hope that it will be able to find it in its conscience to end the attacks and stop the suffering of the Ukrainian people.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

Mr. Kyslytsya (Ukraine): I thank you, Mr. President, Council members, Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo and High Representative Nakamitsu. I should also acknowledge the presence of a separate category here — a representative of the aggressor State who sits in the seat of the Soviet Union in the Security Council, the status of which was recognized by General Assembly resolution ES-11/1, and that is the status of aggressor State.

There is already a long record of Russian lies established here in the Council. The recollection of the items of lies over the past two weeks alone will perhaps take an hour or so. But let me mention just a couple — the lowest of the lowest. I will not hesitate to mention them again after the representative sitting in the Soviet seat just referred to them. Let me quote his kingpin, Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov, who, indeed, yesterday said:

“We do not plan to attack other countries. We did not attack Ukraine either.”

Yesterday, an outlet of the Russian lies, the Russian Embassy in London, tweeted that a pregnant woman in the maternity hospital attacked in Mariupol was wearing make-up and was playing the roles of pregnant women. Indeed, Moscow and the Russian Ambassador here are struggling to get the story straight. In the immediate aftermath of the strike on Wednesday, Kremlin spokesman Peskov told Reuters: “Russian forces do not fire on civilian targets.” On Thursday, he told reporters that the Kremlin would look into the incident “because you and I do not have clear information about what happened there”. Following a meeting with the Foreign Minister in Turkey on Thursday, Foreign Minister Lavrov took a different stance, as he claimed, without evidence, that the hospital in Mariupol was a warranted target because the building had been seized long ago by Ukrainian armed groups.

Let me share some very good news. Ms. Mariana, the pregnant woman, gave birth to a healthy daughter last night. Her name is Veronica. Here she is, with her father — regardless of the Russian lies about her, her family and the incident.

Whatever the gentleman in the Soviet seat may say in reply, he knows that it is probably useless. We need to hear directly from the mastermind of the war crimes committed thus far. As we established, he was out of the loop on many occasions, with no clue of what was happening on the ground.

We know quite well that the manic obsession with which Putin fantasizes about non-existent biological or chemical weapons or hazards in Ukraine is very dangerous. It may actually point at Russia preparing another horrific false-flag operation.

What else is he going to use against Ukraine — cruise missiles, multiple rocket launchers, heavy aerial bombs? We have already experienced all of those. What

is next? Ammonia? Phosphorus? And what will be the next target? Another residential building? Another maternity hospital? Another school? Or maybe another cultural heritage site? Russian troops have already hit all of those sites.

By calling this meeting, the aggressor State has once again shot itself in the foot. Ukraine runs a health system that is in full compliance with its international obligations and cooperates fully with all international organizations. The rest is the insane delirium of Putin and his henchmen, including the Russian Mission to the United Nations. Russia does not give a monkey's about the safety of its own citizens, including thousands of decomposing bodies of Russian soldiers sent by Putin to Ukraine to this ongoing carnage.

I regret that the Security Council is now being manipulated by the Russian Federation to promote such an insane delirium. This reflects the Russian Federation's total disregard of the members of the Security Council. In addition, it is detrimental to the Council's credibility.

What indeed has to be addressed by the Council are the war crimes and crimes against humanity that Russia is committing on a daily basis since 24 February — the day when the war in Europe, unleashed by Russia, started. Among the most recent examples that shocked the world is the Russian air strike that destroyed the maternity hospital, which has been mentioned many times today.

Russia's indiscriminate shelling and air strikes have almost destroyed Mariupol, one of the most beautiful cities on the Sea of Azov, and have killed 1,582 civilian residents of that city, according to the local administration. For the first time since the Second World War, people are being buried in mass graves in Ukrainian cities.

I would like to ask the gentleman in the Soviet seat — if he is really connected to Moscow, to please ask for the release of the kidnapped mayor of the city of Melitopol and to help us get him back from the arms of the invaders.

Kharkiv, Chernihiv, Sumy, Izyum, Okhtyrka, Volnovakha and many other Ukrainian cities are being razed to the ground. Documents and maps seized by the Ukrainian troops from Russian prisoners of war confirm that bombardments of residential areas had been planned in advance. Captured Russian pilots at

today's press conference in Kyiv have confirmed that they deliberately dropped bombs on residential areas. The number of civilians killed by Russian troops exceeds military losses. Many people have lost their homes. More than 1.5 million have left Ukraine — almost 2 million — across the western border. Hundreds of thousands, if not millions, became internally displaced persons. From Kharkiv alone, 600,000 people were evacuated by train.

The main efforts are now focused on ensuring the safe passage of civilians through humanitarian corridors. Unfortunately, the arrangements are often violated by the Russian troops. Awful pictures and footage taken near the destroyed bridge in Irpin showing dead civilians, including entire families who tried to flee the occupied areas have circled — and horrified — the globe. Russia must not use civilians as hostages and human shields. By exposing cities to indiscriminate shelling and creating a dire humanitarian situation and then deliberately shelling civilians during evacuation from besieged Ukrainian cities, Russia is forcing civilians to flee their homes and providing only a corridor to its territory or to Belarus. The so-called "green corridors", proposed by the aggressor for sending people to Russia and Belarus could be considered forcible deportation of protected persons, in accordance with international humanitarian law.

Ukrainian people are being killed and Ukrainian cities are being destroyed while we are compelled to listen to the absurd Russian fabrications in the Security Council — created in a desperate attempt to whitewash the war against Ukraine. Russian aggression threatens us all, and there is an urgent need to be resolute in countering Russia's uncivilized, barbaric and mean actions. The sooner the aggressor is stopped and held accountable for its crimes, the safer our world will be.

I cannot end my statement without reading several paragraphs from an open letter from 194 Nobel laureates:

"The undersigned Nobel laureates voice our support for the Ukrainian people and the free and independent state of Ukraine as it faces Russian aggression.

"In a move that recalls the infamous attack of Nazi Germany on Poland in 1939 (using similar tricks of feigned provocation) ... the government of the Russian Federation, led by President Putin, has launched an unprovoked military aggression — nothing else but a war — against its

neighbour, Ukraine. We choose our words carefully here, for we do not believe the Russian people have a role in this aggression.

“We join in condemning these military actions and President Putin’s essential denial of the legitimacy of Ukraine’s existence.”

It goes on to say:

“We respect the calm and the strength of the Ukrainian people. We are with you. Our hearts go out to the families and friends of all, Ukrainians and Russians, who have died and been injured already. May peace come to this piece of our beautiful world.”

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.