



Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

Provisional

9470th meeting

Wednesday, 8 November 2023, 3 p.m.

New York

President: Mr. Zhang Jun/Mr. Geng Shuang (China)

Members:

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| Albania | Mr. Stastoli |
| Brazil | Mr. Moretti |
| Ecuador | Mr. Montalvo Sosa |
| France | Mrs. Broadhurst Estival |
| Gabon | Mr. Biang |
| Ghana | Mr. Boateng |
| Japan | Mr. Yamanaka |
| Malta | Mr. Camilleri |
| Mozambique | Mr. Fernandes |
| Russian Federation | Mr. Nebenzia |
| Switzerland | Mrs. Chanda |
| United Arab Emirates | Mr. Abushahab |
| United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . . | Mr. Phipps |
| United States of America | Mr. Wood |

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 Chinese*): 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 Mr. Miroslav Jenča, Assistant Secretary-General for Europe, Central Asia and the Americas, Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations, to participate in this meeting.

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

I give the floor to Mr. Jenča.

Mr. Jenča: It has been over 20 months since the Russian Federation launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, violating the Charter of the United Nations and international law. As a result, thousands of civilians have been killed or injured and millions have been displaced. The massive destruction caused by the war has impacted essential services, including access to education, health services, shelter, food and water. Nearly half of the population — an estimated 17.6 million people — is in need of life-saving humanitarian assistance.

As the war continues without an end in sight, we remain particularly concerned about the continued near-daily attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure throughout Ukraine. According to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 9,933 people have been killed and 18,302 injured since February last year. The actual figures are likely considerably higher, as many reports from areas with ongoing hostilities are still pending corroboration.

Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo briefed the Council on 9 October following the horrific missile attack that killed 59 people in Hroza, in eastern Ukraine (see S/PV.9431). Tragically, attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure have continued. Communities near the front lines in the Kharkiv, Kherson, Zaporizhzhya, Donetsk and Luhansk regions

of Ukraine remain under constant shelling. The past few weeks have seen a pattern of escalation in attacks on critical infrastructure, including attacks on energy infrastructure across the country. The impact of those attacks on the lives of civilians is of particular concern, especially at the onset of the winter period.

In the deadly wave of attacks on 18 October, 10 people were reportedly killed in strikes on the Dnipro, Kherson, Mykolayiv and Zaporizhzhya regions of Ukraine. On 1 November, Ukraine reportedly experienced the most extensive shelling of the year, with 118 settlements across 10 Ukrainian regions targeted within 24 hours. The overnight strikes reportedly killed two people, one in the region of Kharkiv and another in the Kherson region.

On 3 November, nine people were reportedly killed by a missile strike on the Ukrainian town of Chaplynka, currently under Russian control in the Kherson region of Ukraine. Nine others were reportedly injured. The same day, a massive Russian drone attack against critical civilian infrastructure reportedly injured civilians, including children, and damaged civilian residential and commercial buildings in different regions of Ukraine, including Lviv, Kharkiv, Kherson and Odesa.

On 5 November, one person was reportedly killed in an artillery strike in the Nikopol district of the Dnipropetrovsk region of Ukraine.

On 6 November, Russian drone and missile attacks once again struck port and grain infrastructure in the historic city of Odesa also reportedly causing widespread damage to the Odesa National Fine Arts Museum, one of the city's oldest, on the day it turned 124 years old.

Yesterday, one person was reportedly killed in the Kupyansk district of the Kharkiv region. Meanwhile, civilian infrastructure was also reportedly damaged in the Zaporizhzhya and Dnipropetrovsk regions.

In a reminder that such attacks continue on both sides of the front line, yesterday, in the Russian-controlled city of Donetsk in the Donetsk region of Ukraine, six people were reportedly killed owing to shelling and many were injured.

This morning, we saw reports that at least five people were killed in the shelling of residential areas in eastern and south-eastern Ukraine over the past day — three people in the Donetsk region, one in

the Kherson region and one in the Kharkiv region of Ukraine.

We continue to condemn in the clearest terms all attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure, no matter where they take place and no matter who is responsible. Such attacks are prohibited under international humanitarian law. They are unacceptable and must cease immediately.

As the war is approaching its two-year mark, we continue to be greatly concerned about the risk of further escalation and the impact that could have on the people of Ukraine and for regional and international security.

We urge all Member States to do their part to uphold the Charter of the United Nations, to prevent further escalation and spillover of this devastating war and to lay the foundations for sustainable peace in line with the Charter, international law and relevant resolutions of the General Assembly. We remain ready to support all meaningful efforts to that end.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Jenča for his 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*): We convened this emergency meeting with regard to the latest flagrant violation by the Kyiv regime of the norms of international humanitarian law and further evidence of its intentional actions to destroy the civilian population in Donbas, namely, the mass shelling by the Ukrainian armed forces of densely populated areas of Donetsk on 7 November. In principle, we could have requested this meeting also on the subject of the consequences of the supply of Western weapons to Ukraine. The Kyiv regime attacked civilian targets in the centre of the city three times in the space of a day, launching missiles from HIMARS and Uragan multiple-launch rocket systems. In addition to residential buildings, the strikes also hit the building of the Office of Labour and Social Protection and a local bus. Here are some of the photos of the crime scene that we received from people in Donbas.

I would in particular point out the time at which the attack was carried out — that is, 4.25 p.m. — in the middle of the workday when the Office of Labour and Social Protection often had many visitors; then, at 4.40 p.m., 15 minutes after the first strike, and then, at 6.27 p.m., less than two hours later. The terrorist practice

of launching repeated strikes on the same location is firmly entrenched in the arsenal of the Ukrainian armed forces. Knowing full well that emergency services — rescuers, medics, the police and also journalists — would soon arrive at the sites that were hit, the Ukrainian armed forces are launching repeated strikes while they are working, preventing them from evacuating the dead and wounded and also preventing the Emergencies Ministry staff from fully beginning to address the consequences of the shelling. As a result of yesterday's attacks, six people died and 55 were wounded, including three children. Unfortunately, a doctor and a paramedic from the emergency medical services who came to provide assistance, as well as a road police officer, were also killed and 23 rescuers from the Emergencies Ministry were wounded.

Just a week ago, on 31 October, the Kyiv regime launched three strikes on the Budennovsk district of Donetsk. As a result of the first strike from a HIMARS multiple-launch rocket system nobody was killed, but a fire broke out. An hour later, knowing that firefighters and journalists would be on the scene, the Ukrainian armed forces intentionally launched another strike at the same location with a cluster munitions missile, which is indiscriminate. As a result, two people were killed and 15 were wounded. Eight ambulance brigades arrived to assist them, and then Kyiv intentionally launched a third strike which, by sheer luck, did not cause any further casualties. Those were undoubtedly intentional, targeted tactics.

During the active hostilities, in addition to those examples, more than 20 cases of repeated shelling by the Ukrainian armed forces on the Emergency Ministry rescuers and medics have been documented. The victims of the Ukrainian terror include 50 staff members of the emergency services, and more than 200 staff members were wounded. Given the fact that most of those strikes were carried out with Western long-range, high-precision weapons, the Ukrainian armed forces command knew exactly where the targets of the strikes were and that they were not military targets, but rather civilian objects and civilians. Those are intentional and cynical crimes that have no statute of limitations. The responsibility for those crimes will be borne by the senior political leadership of the Kyiv regime and those who execute its criminal orders and by the Western countries flooding Ukraine with weapons, which, as we well know, also agree on the targets of those strikes. Only Washington, which used to cover

up its own crimes and those of its allies in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and the Middle East, is shameless enough to refer to such tragedies as collateral damage. During the war in Iraq in 2003, the United States also often carried out repeated strikes while emergency and other services were working. That is a part of its military tactics. As we can see, the Ukrainian armed forces are diligent students of their teachers. Those desperate strikes by the Kyiv regime have no military purpose and can be explained only against the backdrop of its failures on the battlefield and the misanthropic nature of the Kyiv regime, which does not view its former fellow citizens in Donbas as human beings.

In total, since February 2022, the territory of the Donetsk People's Republic alone has been subjected to artillery and missile strikes by the Ukrainian armed forces more than 25,000 times and the territory of Donetsk has been hit by 145,000 strikes. More than 16,000 residential buildings were damaged or destroyed and almost 3,500 civilian infrastructure facilities were destroyed, including approximately 700 educational facilities, more than 200 medical facilities and more than 1,100 electricity, water, heat and gas supply facilities in the territory of the Republic. During that period, 4,755 civilians, including 140 children, have died and 5,360 people, including 357 children, were injured to varying degrees of severity on the territory of the Republic.

Moreover, as we well know, the terror against the population of Donbas did not begin in February 2022. During the previous eight years, since May 2014, the Ukrainian authorities had continued their armed aggression against their own people, who did not accept the unconstitutional Maidan coup d'état in Kyiv and stood up to defend their rights and freedoms. Forces were used against the civilian population, including aviation, heavy artillery and military hardware. The total number of dead and wounded in Donetsk since 2014 is more than 20,000 people.

Every subsequent such crime committed by the Kyiv regime confirms that we were right to launch a special military operation, a decision taken against the background of intensified shelling of the territories of the Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic in early 2022. There was no other way to stop the punishers from Kyiv.

We hope that today we will hear statements from Council members about the unacceptable nature of such

indiscriminate attacks on the civilian population. There were no military objects in the areas where yesterday's attacks took place. That is the centre of a large city. The Kyiv regime and its western backers knew this all too well. We trust that the Council will be bold enough and have enough principles today to call things by their names.

Mr. Biang (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Miroslav Jenča for his briefing.

Fighting continues in Ukraine, concentrated in the eastern regions, with several indiscriminate attacks by shelling, drones and other explosive devices targeting residential housing, public buildings and civilian sites, including essential infrastructure. Civilians continue to be the hardest hit by these daily assaults. The incessant appeals of all those who, like my country, are calling for a cessation of fighting and, above all, respect for international humanitarian law, have gone unheeded, and the prospects of dialogue to bring the warring parties to the table remain just as remote. On the contrary, we are witnessing a resupply of weapons by all sides, each sharpening its weapons and strengthening its positions.

My country is very alarmed by the questioning by certain States of certain security agreements. That reinforces a trend that has been growing steadily in recent years and is undermining international disarmament efforts and reversing the gains made after the Cold War.

My country calls on the parties to assume their responsibilities by respecting the laws of war and refraining from any action likely to fuel belligerence and undermine international security. We reiterate our opposition to war and continue to call on the parties to make use of the mechanisms of the Charter of the United Nations to solve disputes. We remain convinced that there is still time for diplomacy and dialogue to find a political solution to this war. Many human lives can still be saved. To achieve that, it is essential that the Council reconcile itself with its vocation. This is the Security Council, not a war council. The best way to avoid further deaths in Donetsk, Kherson and Mariupol is to stop the war.

Mr. Yamanaka (Japan): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča for his briefing.

We are concerned about the continuous aggression in eastern Ukraine by Russia. Let me express our

condolences for all those who have been killed since the beginning of Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

We do not need to reiterate that Donetsk is an integral part of Ukraine. That region has been under temporary occupation as a result of Russia's aggression, in violation of the sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine. That is explicitly stated in the resolutions adopted in that regard by an overwhelming majority of the General Assembly.

Russia's targeting of civilian infrastructure across Ukraine, including housing complexes, hospitals, schools, energy facilities and other essential installations for life jeopardizes the welfare and future of the Ukrainian people. Indiscriminate attacks on innocent civilian populations constitute war crimes. There must be no tolerance or impunity for war crimes and other atrocities. We urge all parties to uphold international humanitarian principles.

One thing is clear — no attacks on civilians would have occurred if Russia had not launched its aggression against Ukraine. We once again urge Russia to stop its ongoing aggression and immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraw its troops and military equipment from the entire internationally recognized territory of Ukraine.

Mr. Boateng (Ghana): I begin by thanking Assistant Secretary-General Miroslav Jenča for his briefing on the prevailing humanitarian and security situation in Donetsk.

For this meeting, we intend to make three points.

First, Ghana continues to urge the cessation of military hostilities across Ukraine and the preservation of civilian lives and civilian infrastructure. The humanitarian toll has been high, particularly for innocent children, and we must make all required efforts to comprehensively resolve the various facets of this conflict. We reiterate our call for all warring parties to fully adhere to existing obligations under international humanitarian law, without exception.

Secondly, we believe that every effort must be made, through diplomacy and dialogue, to secure a just comprehensive and lasting peace for Ukraine on the basis of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. In that regard, we must find the will to invest in peace and to rebuild the trust that has been painfully eroded as we also assist the parties to see value in peace.

Lastly, we stress that war has never been an instrument for advancing sustainable peace. The parties must therefore address their concerns not through the instrument of violence, but rather through the range of acceptable means that the principles of international law and peaceful settlement of disputes afford. As we can see, the war has brought the parties no closer to the realization of their security interests, and it is past time for the war to be stopped.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Let me first thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča for his briefing.

We again find ourselves in the Chamber, at Russia's behest, before the facts on the ground can be determined. But that does not seem to have prevented Russia from desperately attempting to point its finger at others in an effort to distract the international community from its own egregious actions. But no matter how hard it tries, Russia cannot escape from the fact that it bears the ultimate responsibility for the unfortunate and unnecessary loss of life as a result of its war of choice.

We support Ukraine taking the necessary measures to defend itself from Russia's war of aggression, in accordance with international law, including international humanitarian law. Civilians are protected under the law of war, and we continue to call for the protection of all civilians. We have been clear about the necessity of taking feasible precautions to avoid civilian harm. That is not just a legal imperative, but a moral imperative.

Civilian deaths represent lost futures. Those lost futures and tragic deaths could be avoided if Russia would heed the call by more than 140 Member States to withdraw its troops, respect Ukraine's territorial integrity and end its unprovoked and unconscionable war of aggression. Russia's war against Ukraine has undermined international peace and security — from its nuclear sabre-rattling and procurement of arms and violation of Security Council resolutions to its relentless attacks on Ukraine's critical infrastructure. It is Russia whose actions have left the world less safe and less secure.

We should be clear about what Russia is doing in Ukraine. Russia is purposefully attacking Ukraine's critical infrastructure and destroying the systems that provide heat and light to the civilian population during the coldest, darkest parts of the year. Russia's relentless barrage of missiles against Ukraine are intentionally

hitting schools and hospitals. Reports of sexual and gender-based violence, torture and heinous war crimes and crimes against humanity continue to mount against Russia's forces.

Russia decided to terminate its participation in the Black Sea Grain Initiative despite the Initiative's success in shipping over 33 million metric tons of grain and foodstuffs around the world, including to some of the most food-insecure regions of the globe, like the Horn of Africa, the Sahel, Yemen and Afghanistan.

Russia's brazen attempts to redraw borders by force — in a vain attempt to return to its imperial past — endanger every country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Once again, its nuclear sabre-rattling is irresponsible and clearly demonstrates the threat that Russia poses to international peace and security. It is trying to undermine the principles that have made us all more secure in the years since the inception of the United Nations. Acquiescing to Russia's demands as it tramples international law would have repercussions not only in Europe but around the world. Wars of aggression must never become a path for redrawing international borders. Russia alone is responsible for prolonging this war and the resulting loss of life. We again call on Russia to end its war of aggression in violation of the Charter of the United Nations and to withdraw its troops immediately.

Mrs. Broadhurst Estival (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Mr. Jenča for his briefing.

This meeting once again gives us an opportunity to recall the need to respect international humanitarian law and protect civilians in all circumstances, and France calls upon Russia to respect its obligations in that regard. We take note of the events reported by the self-proclaimed authorities of Donetsk, which is an illegally occupied area, and the information communicated by the United Nations. I reiterate that we regret loss of life under any circumstances.

We condemn in the strongest possible terms the manipulation of those events by Russia, which is making a cynical attempt to exploit them for its benefit. Yet again, it is seeking to deflect the attention of the Security Council and the international community from its own responsibilities and the crimes that it commits on a daily basis. For let us return to the facts, which are extensively documented: since the February 2022 invasion, the Russian authorities have perpetrated multiple violations of international humanitarian law,

which amount to war crimes, by deliberately targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure. The Independent International Commission of Inquiry established by the Human Rights Council reiterated that recently before the Council. Just last Sunday, Russian strikes targeted the Odesa Fine Arts Museum, as mentioned previously, as well as nearby residential buildings.

Regarding what is happening on the ground in the territories illegally occupied by Russia, we cannot but call on Russia once again to comply with international humanitarian law by granting access for humanitarian actors to the civilian populations within those territories and, more broadly, to the United Nations. Moreover, we reaffirm the key role of international justice, in particular the International Criminal Court, in fighting the impunity of those responsible for war crimes so as to make reparations to the victims and survivors.

Striving to manipulate the facts will change nothing about the reality of the conflict. Russia alone has decided, completely illegally, to resort to force and violate the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. It alone can put an end to the war and all the suffering resulting from it for the Ukrainian people, including in the illegally occupied territories. France will continue to stand side by side with Ukraine and work towards a peace that is in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and that respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

Mr. Phipps (United Kingdom): Let me begin by joining others in thanking Assistant Secretary-General Jenča for his comprehensive briefing today.

As you are aware, Mr. President, Russia launched a full-scale war of aggression against its neighbour Ukraine in February last year. In conducting its war of aggression, Russia has repeatedly and deliberately targeted civilians and civilian infrastructure. United Nations investigations have confirmed that Russia is responsible for gross violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, which could amount to war crimes. Russia has caused suffering and hardship for millions of people around the world by weaponizing food. Just today, it struck a Liberian-flagged civilian vessel entering the port of Odesa, killing its pilot. It has shown complete disregard for human life, including by sending thousands of its own citizens to their needless deaths.

Nine days ago, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights published its initial

report into the Hroza missile attack. Russia's attack on Hroza killed 59 people, making it the single deadliest incident for civilians since the launch of Russia's illegal invasion. The representative of the Russian delegation himself admitted before the Council that Russia deliberately struck the site in Hroza, but he claimed that it was to target military personnel (see S/PV.9431). The United Nations investigation concluded that there was no indication of military personnel or any other legitimate military target at, or adjacent to, the café at the time of Russia's attack. Russia's explanation has therefore once again proved to be a lie.

Russia has of course lied in the Council many times, both before and after it invaded Ukraine. Russia's biggest lie of all, though, is that it conducted its full-scale invasion, its annexation of Crimea and its military invasion in Donbas in 2014 for the benefit of the people there. The people of Donbas faced no threat from a democratically elected Government in Kyiv. Russia faced no threat from Ukraine, and it faced no threat from NATO. The reality is that Russia's President felt threatened by the aspirations of the Ukrainian people.

Ten years ago this month, Ukraine's pro-Russian President, Yanukovych, abandoned an Association Agreement with the European Union that triggered peaceful protests in Kyiv. Just this week, the European Commission recommended that the European Council open accession negotiations with Ukraine. It is clear, therefore, that President Putin has catastrophically failed to achieve his objectives, and he will continue to do so.

Russia's claims about what may have happened in Donetsk yesterday have not been verified, and they will remain unverified unless the United Nations or other independent bodies are given access. Up to 5 million civilians in Russia-controlled areas of Ukraine need urgent aid, but Russia continues to block access, including to the United Nations.

Complex human tragedies continue to unfold all over the world — in the Sudan, Myanmar, Israel and Gaza. The solutions are often equally complex. Too often, Russia has attempted to distract the Council with spurious meetings aimed at deflecting and distracting from its own crimes. Too often, Russia is not interested in solutions, but instead undermines the Council's work. But perhaps most egregious of all, Russia, a permanent member of the Council, continues to inflict suffering on Ukraine and across the globe, when the solution

is simple — Russia should withdraw from Ukraine's internationally recognized territory and end its war of aggression now.

Mr. Moretti (Brazil): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča for his briefing.

We deeply regret the civilian casualties in Donetsk. We would like to offer our condolences to the families of the victims and to express our solidarity to those injured in the incident. This episode, as with many previous episodes, demonstrates yet again the urgent need for the parties to de-escalate the conflict. It is clear that continued fighting will not bring about peace. Rather, it will only aggravate the suffering imposed on millions of civilians on both sides. That is the only way to put an end to the senseless loss of human life, the destruction of Ukraine's infrastructure and the many dire consequences for the entire world, especially for developing countries.

Brazil's position on the war in Ukraine is well known. Strikes against civilians and civilian infrastructure affront international law, human rights law and international humanitarian law. We urge the parties to adopt all the necessary measures to protect the population in conflict zones from the consequences of indiscriminate shelling, as well as the widespread use of land mines that will affect vast swathes of territory for decades to come. Also of particular importance is the protection of nuclear facilities.

Brazil reaffirms its respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all States and its commitment to the peaceful settlement of disputes. We once again urge both parties to engage in the search for a political solution to the crisis in accordance with Article 33 of the Charter of the United Nations, and to do so either directly or through third parties. Brazil remains willing to contribute to all efforts to bring about peace as soon as the parties are ready to engage in negotiations. We reiterate our commitment to a just and lasting peace based on a political solution that takes into account the purposes and principles of the Charter and the legitimate security concerns of all parties.

Mr. Abushahab (United Arab Emirates): I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča for his valuable briefing, and I welcome the participation of the representative of Ukraine at today's meeting.

The United Arab Emirates is concerned about reports of civilian deaths and injuries following the

attack in Donetsk on 7 November, and we offer our condolences to the families of all victims and wish a speedy recovery to all those injured. We are also concerned about the continued widespread damage to Ukraine's critical infrastructure. Since the war began, we have seen damage to hospitals, train stations, dams and energy infrastructure, including nuclear power plants. That infrastructure provides vital services to the people of Ukraine, and its damage places the civilian population at risk.

The provision of electricity and heating during the coming winter months will be critical to ensuring the health and safety of civilians. The civilian population should not bear the brunt of the conflict, and they must be protected. With regard to that, international humanitarian law is unequivocal: civilians and civilian objects must never be the target of attack, and the fundamental principles of proportionality and distinction must be respected. We further recall international humanitarian law's emphasis on the protection of objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population and call on the parties to the conflict to refrain from attacking, destroying, removing or rendering useless objects that are indispensable to the survival of the civilian population. The law is clear, and we reiterate that compliance is not optional.

Around the world, we are confronted by the unacceptable consequences of the war, as is the case in Gaza, where the scale of civilian suffering shocks the conscience. In such situations, the Security Council is being called upon to act. The maintenance of international peace and security requires all of us to do our utmost to find pathways forward, no matter how difficult. The United Arab Emirates supports a just and lasting peace in Ukraine, in line with the Charter of the United Nations, that respects its sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

Mrs. Chanda (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča for his briefing.

Switzerland once again condemns Russia's military aggression and underscores its tragic consequences for the civilian population in Ukraine. We call on all parties to the conflict to strictly respect international humanitarian law and international human rights law, which apply to all armed conflicts, as we remind everyone regularly. We are appalled by the waves of unrelenting attacks to which the civilian population

has been subjected for more than 20 months. We condemn the high number of civilians killed and injured, which continues to rise with every passing day of the war. We also recall the serious damage that has been caused to civilian property and infrastructure, as well as the disruption of essential services to the population, including water, electricity, heating and telecommunications. The damage is particularly alarming as the winter season approaches.

We echo the warning made by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs concerning the major impact on civilians of ongoing attacks, including this weekend in southern and central Ukraine, particularly in the cities of Odesa and Kherson. Daily attacks have caused serious damage to energy facilities, schools, hospitals and other public services, affecting in particular the regions in southern and eastern Ukraine. And we take note of Russia's reason for requesting this Security Council meeting today. Military strikes may be directed against only combatants and military objectives. The impact of hostilities on civilians and civilian objects must be taken into account in all military operations. Every feasible precaution must be taken to spare them. Disproportionate attacks are forbidden. Furthermore, we call for the humane treatment of all non-persons *hors de combat*.

We reiterate our gratitude for the tireless work of humanitarian actors in Ukraine and recall the need to facilitate and guarantee rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access throughout Ukraine, including to territories under Russian military control, including the occupied city of Donetsk. Switzerland does not recognize the integration of Ukrainian territories into the Russian Federation and condemns the grave violation of Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty. We once again call on Russia to immediately de-escalate the situation, cease all combat operations and withdraw its troops from Ukrainian territory without delay.

Mr. Camilleri (Malta): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča for sharing his insights with us today.

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and its people continues to bring with it horrific atrocities on a daily basis. Just last week, Russian missiles and drones struck Odesa, injuring at least eight people, setting grain warehouses ablaze and damaging one of the city's principal cultural sites. Furthermore, since the start of the aggression, Russia has destroyed more than 200 of Ukraine's medical facilities and has

damaged almost 1,500 others in the Donetsk, Kherson and Kharkiv regions. For more than 20 months, Russia has continuously destroyed civilian and essential infrastructure, killing and injuring thousands of civilians and threatening food security worldwide. The Russian Federation's ongoing campaign of systematic shelling against civilians and critical infrastructure in Ukraine must stop. We condemn in the strongest possible terms attacks committed by the Russian armed forces against cultural, health and educational infrastructure, as well as grain storage facilities.

Our position on the protection of civilians in armed conflict and the need to ensure compliance with international law, including international humanitarian law, remains unchanged. We reiterate that the parties to the conflict must take constant care to spare all civilians, including humanitarian personnel and civilian infrastructure. Indiscriminate attacks are strictly prohibited under international humanitarian law. We remain firmly committed to ensuring full accountability for war crimes and the other most serious crimes committed in connection with Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

In conclusion, I reiterate our condemnation in the strongest possible terms of Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Malta reaffirms its strong and long-standing support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, within its internationally recognized borders, as well as its legitimate right to self-defence, as enshrined under Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations. We once again urge the Russian Federation to end its illegal war and withdraw its military forces and proxies from the entire internationally recognized territory of Ukraine.

Mr. Fernandes (Mozambique): I wish to start by thanking Assistant Secretary-General Miroslav Jenča for his briefing.

Mozambique has consistently urged the parties to this conflict to fulfil their obligations to protect civilians, particularly women and children, in strict adherence to international humanitarian law. We have also consistently expressed our strong condemnation of the indiscriminate shelling of civilians and the deliberate destruction of civilian infrastructure and property—actions unjustified by any military necessity. Those actions are serious breaches of the Geneva Conventions, which mandate the humane treatment of individuals in war and, specifically, the safeguarding

of civilians during conflict. They also contravene the Charter of the United Nations and numerous Security Council resolutions on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, including resolutions 1265 (1999) and 1296 (2000).

Mozambique condemns the increasingly common and disturbing practice of targeting civilians, including women and children, as well as humanitarian workers, in conflicts throughout the world — a trend that violates the long-held principle of their protected status and immunity. If left unaddressed, the deliberate and unjustified targeting of civilians could undermine the norms and principles established by the international community after the two World Wars, signalling a significant erosion of the contemporary system of international relations, which relies on mutual adherence to those laws.

When the rules of war are abandoned, the result can be a spiral of finger-pointing, victim-blaming and escalation into increasingly genocidal rhetoric, making conflicts ever-more intractable. We therefore reiterate our call to the conflicting parties to strictly adhere to the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution in their military operations and to fulfil their legal obligation to protect civilians.

In conclusion, as the drums of war continue to drown out the calls for peace, Mozambique once again calls on all parties to address their security concerns and interests through peaceful means and to immediately silence the guns.

Mr. Stastoli (Albania): I extend my gratitude to Assistant Secretary-General Jenča for his informative briefing.

For more than 21 months, Russia has continued to inflict daily suffering and death upon civilians in Ukraine, causing immense destruction to civilian infrastructure and exacerbating the humanitarian crisis. Tragically, more than 10,000 lives have been lost, and thousands of people have been wounded. More than 5 million people have been internally displaced, and another 5.8 million have sought refuge in various European countries. Those figures merely scratch the surface of the profound consequences of the ongoing Russian aggression.

The relentless armed aggression by the Russian Federation has taken a severe toll on Ukraine's critical infrastructure. According to the World Bank, the cost of

reconstruction has soared to an astonishing \$35.7 billion since the onset of the full-scale war. The Russian Federation's aggression has resulted in the obliteration of 25,000 kilometres of roads and 344 bridges and overpasses. The long-term implications of that damage are evident. The legally elected mayor of Mariupol recently said that it would take 20 years — nearly a generation — to fully revive that city to its pre-war population size.

Russia convened this meeting today under a pretence of concern for the situation in Donetsk, yet we are still waiting for a satisfactory explanation from Russia as to why it is relentlessly attacking and bombarding civilians in Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhya and other Ukrainian territories. Why is it striving to erase every trace of Ukrainian national identity and make life unbearable for the people there? Instead of heeding the calls to end the war, the Kremlin is resorting to a relentless propaganda campaign that defies all logic, while promoting absurdities without restraint. We firmly believe that those responsible for those actions must be held accountable and face justice. Justice is indeed a logical and indispensable component of any meaningful and lasting peace efforts.

As this war enters its second full winter, it is imperative to recognize that the outcome in Ukraine will significantly shape whether our world is governed by laws or sheer violence. We owe immense gratitude to the extraordinary sacrifices made by Ukrainians in their unwavering defence of justice, liberty and the rule of law.

I would like to end by reiterating our call on Russia to halt the war, withdraw all its troops from Ukraine's internationally recognized borders and engage earnestly in a genuine and just peace process.

Mr. Montalvo Sosa (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Assistant-Secretary General Miroslav Jenča of the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations for his informative briefing.

Ecuador remains consistent in its support for the principle of safeguarding and protecting civilian populations anywhere, under any circumstances. We will continue to deplore any loss of human life and any attack — wherever it may come from — against civilian infrastructure, including critical infrastructure. We reiterate our recognition of the right of peoples to self-defence, in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations, including its Article 51.

We stress the need for the parties to respect unreservedly their obligations under international humanitarian law, including the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution, with a primary focus on the protection of civilians.

Finally, we must move away from the mindset of domination and force to the logic of diplomacy and the peaceful settlement of disputes, as outlined in General Assembly resolution ES-11/6, on the principles of the Charter underlying a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine. In order to achieve that, we once again call on the Russian Federation to definitively stop its already protracted invasion of Ukraine, which continues to cause destruction and claim innocent lives, including in the Donetsk region of Ukraine.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of China.

I thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča for his briefing.

The missile attack in the Donetsk region yesterday damaged municipal and civilian infrastructure and caused dozens of civilian casualties. China is gravely concerned about that. The protection of civilians is a red line under international humanitarian law. Civilian infrastructure should not and must not be allowed to become military targets. Whether on the Ukraine issue or on other issues, China opposes all violence and attacks against civilians.

China once again calls on the parties to the conflict to remain calm and exercise restraint, strictly abide by international humanitarian law and make every effort to protect civilians and key civilian facilities. Wars can be won by relying on weapons, but that will not bring about peace. The relentless flow of weapons onto the battlefield serves only to exacerbate and perpetuate the Ukraine crisis, causing more innocent people to suffer from the war. We call on all the parties, especially the countries with major influence, to play a truly positive role instead of intensifying confrontation, prolonging the war and exacerbating tensions. We should all work to foster an environment conducive to peace.

China's position on the Ukraine issue is crystal clear. We have always stood on the side of peace and dialogue. We remain committed to facilitating peace talks and seeking a political settlement of the Ukraine crisis. The international community should step up

diplomatic efforts with a greater sense of urgency. We urge the parties concerned to respond to the international community's call for peace, strengthen their engagement and build consensus in order to achieve a ceasefire and cessation of hostilities and to restore peace as soon as possible.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The representative of the Russian Federation has asked to make a further statement.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to all our colleagues who found the strength to give a worthy assessment of yesterday's latest crime by the Kyiv regime, or to at least express their sympathy and condolences to the families of those killed or injured.

At the same time, I feel compelled to note that our Western colleagues on the Security Council have taken the fact that we requested today's meeting only as an excuse to repeat their well-worn out mantras that Russia is to blame for everything. Those colleagues cannot even imagine how hypocritical and two-faced they appear against the backdrop of what has happened. Today, as we heard, it turns out that it is cynical to convene a meeting about attacks on civilian infrastructure and civilian deaths. Does it not seem to them that it is that statement that is actually the height of cynicism and hypocrisy?

Turning to the grievances of the representative of the United Kingdom regarding what happened in Ukraine in 2014, I will not waste any time revisiting that but will simply say that his hollow, false, banal assessments are not worth commenting on. Their selectiveness and double standards are well known, and over the course of the past month, the residents of Gaza and even the Palestinians living in Israeli-occupied territories have been able to attest to that. As for the inhabitants of Donbas, they have been living in that paradigm since 2014, when the victims of the Kyiv regime's aggression against its own citizens simply ceased to exist for our former Western partners.

We are constantly hearing the same refrain — that this war would not have happened had Russia not started it. Once again, I would like to point out their intentional blindness in that regard. They turned a blind eye over eight long years, starting in 2014, when that war began — a war that the Kyiv authorities unleashed

against what were then their own citizens. They turned a blind eye to the methodical bombing and shelling of the peaceful towns of Donbas by the Kyiv regime and its nationalist battalions. Where was their fake and hypocritical humanism back then?

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

Mr. Dvornyk (Ukraine): I recognize here Putin's envoy in the permanent seat of the Soviet Union.

I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča for his comprehensive update on the devastating impact of the Russian aggression on Ukraine and the Ukrainian population.

We again draw the Security Council's attention to the aggressor State's unacceptable practice of misusing its presence in a United Nations organ — a presence that is itself already dubious from both a legal and a moral standpoint — to evade responsibility for the war of aggression and to blame the victim of aggression. We reiterate that the only root cause of the enormous suffering, high toll of casualties, destruction and environmental disaster throughout Ukraine, and far beyond, is the unprovoked and full-scale Russian aggression, an aggression inconceivable in the region after the Second World War.

Moreover, instead of the floods of crocodile tears that Putin's representatives have shed in this Chamber, their country could take a very simple step that will immediately stop the atrocities, namely, to withdraw its troops from another sovereign country, to give up plans to invade that country and to stop attempts to deprive that country of its independence. In a nutshell, Russia must stop violating the Charter of the United Nations and the General Assembly resolutions adopted in response to the aggression and — at last — to start behaving as any State Member of the United Nations is obliged to behave, according to Article 4 of the Charter of the United Nations — as a peace-loving State.

As long as Russian troops remain on the territory of my country and as long as they persist in killing Ukrainians, we will continue to exercise our right to self-defence, in strict accordance with Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations. All Russian troops and the sites of their deployment, military, service and training facilities and logistical objects are legitimate military targets subject to elimination, in full accordance with the Geneva Conventions.

That is what happened in the occupied Ukrainian city of Donetsk, where the so-called “Vladimir Zhoga Republican Centre for Unmanned Systems” was destroyed by a high-precision strike. The centre was a military training facility used by the occupation forces to train the operators of combat uncrewed aerial vehicles (UAV) and assemble kamikaze drones. Ample footage and numerous pictures clearly attest to the fact that the strike hit a building precisely at 49 Chelyuskintsev Street in Donetsk, where the centre was located. The Russian media itself, including the State-run TASS agency, had revealed earlier this year that the very same building was an UAV training centre and reported on the military training and assembly activities there. Another of the Russian military facilities targeted in recent days was the Askold cruise missile carrier, which underwent final testing work in the Zaliv shipyard in the occupied Ukrainian city of Kerch. That warship, designed to carry eight Kalibr missiles, had been nearly ready to be commissioned and to take part in missile terror against Ukraine, in particular against its energy infrastructure.

According to our intelligence, over the past month Russian terrorists have accumulated more than 800 missiles to be used against our critical infrastructure as soon as the frosts come. Depriving terrorists of the means to attack is a noble goal, and we reiterate our gratitude to all nations that support Ukraine in defending itself and its people.

Furthermore, it is not only Ukraine that is suffering. We just received a disturbing report today

that a Russian missile hit a civilian vessel under the Liberian flag entering a Ukrainian port in the Odesa region. One person was reportedly killed, and another four were wounded. We strongly condemn this act of terror and reiterate that accountability for the crimes of aggression, war crimes and crimes against humanity is inevitable.

We reiterate that a comprehensive, just and lasting peace can and should be achieved, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. That is the logic of General Assembly resolution ES-11/6, of 23 February, and of Ukraine’s peace formula plan. In that regard, we welcome the fact that 66 countries and international organizations took part in the meeting regarding key principles of peace for Ukraine, held in Malta on 28 October. The statement by the co-Chairs of the meeting states:

“Achieving such a peace for Ukraine would be a significant contribution to strengthening international peace and security. Peace must be based on the principles of the United Nations Charter, respect for Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and international law.”

We reiterate our invitation to all peace-loving nations to translate that noble vision into reality.

The meeting rose at 4.10 p.m.