



Security Council

Seventy-ninth year

9570th meeting

Friday, 8 March 2024, 3.40 p.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Yamazaki (Japan)

Members:

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| Algeria | Mr. Koudri |
| China | Mr. Geng Shuang |
| Ecuador | Mr. De La Gasca |
| France | Mr. De Rivière |
| Guyana | Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett |
| Malta | Mrs. Frazier |
| Mozambique | Mr. Afonso |
| Republic of Korea | Mr. Sangjin Kim |
| Russian Federation | Mr. Polyanskiy |
| Sierra Leone | Mr. Kanu |
| Slovenia | Mr. Žbogar |
| Switzerland | Mr. Hauri |
| United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . . | Mr. Kariuki |
| United States of America | Mr. Wood |

Agenda

Maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine

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The meeting was called to order at 3.40 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Greece, Latvia, Poland and Ukraine to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Khaled Khiari, Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations, and Ms. Lisa Doughten, Director of the Financing and Partnerships Division, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I also invite His Excellency Mr. Stavros Lambrinidis, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, 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. Khiari.

Mr. Khiari: Two weeks ago, the Secretary-General joined the Security Council in marking two years since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine (see S/PV.9557), launched in blatant violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. On that grim milestone, we heard a loud and clear message from the broad membership of the Organization — the escalatory trajectory of the war and its enormous human cost are unsustainable and dangerous, particularly for Ukrainian civilians.

In the Council and in the General Assembly, we have heard numerous urgent calls for de-escalation, peace and respect for the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. However, the past two weeks have instead witnessed an intensification of attacks on civilians across different regions of Ukraine. Strikes have also been reported inside the Russian Federation, including today in the Belgorod region, reportedly

leading to casualties. Regrettably, our repeated calls for the protection of civilians appear to fall on deaf ears.

The Ukrainian Black Sea port city of Odesa has become a frequent target of missile and drone attacks in recent days and weeks, with deadly consequences. Two days ago, a Russian missile strike hit Odesa, reportedly killing five people and wounding several. Further drone attacks were reported last night.

On Saturday, 2 March, 12 people were reportedly killed in a drone attack on an apartment block. Five of those killed were children, making it the deadliest incident for children in more than nine months. That heartbreaking incident followed two consecutive nights of drone attacks on 22 and 23 February which claimed the lives of four people.

Since February 2022, Odesa — an important hub for Ukrainian agricultural exports — has also suffered repeated strikes on its infrastructure. The cultural heritage sites of the city have not been spared.

Odesa is far from being the only Ukrainian city under constant fire. In recent days, civilian casualties have been reported in the Kharkiv, Donetsk, Sumy and Zaporizhzhya regions of Ukraine.

Last night, two people were reportedly killed as a result of a missile attack on the city of Kupyansk in the Kharkiv region.

Yesterday afternoon, a reported Russian missile strike on the city of Sumy injured one civilian, damaged the central city hospital and the region's emergency medical centre. Those are only a few of the recent incidents.

We are particularly concerned by the reports that the fighting is spreading to new residential areas in the east of Ukraine. Throughout the war, fighting that came to Ukrainian villages, towns and cities has led to complete or near complete destruction at the hands of Russian forces. That has been witnessed in Mariupol, Bakhmut, Lysychansk, Severodonetsk, Volnovakha and most recently in Avdiivka. That horrific pattern must not be perpetuated.

According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has already resulted in the deaths of 10,703 civilians, including 594 children, and 20,146 more, including 1,316 children, have been injured.

We condemn all attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure. They are prohibited under international law. They are unacceptable and must stop now.

The Secretary-General has emphasized in his recent remarks to the Council that territorial integrity and the political independence of States are fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations. They are at the heart of our multilateral order.

Therefore, the reports of the Russian Federation's plans to organize and hold its March presidential elections in the territories of Ukraine currently under its control are deeply disturbing. The attempted illegal annexations of Ukrainian territory have no validity under international law, as also declared by the General Assembly.

The United Nations remains fully committed to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine, within its internationally recognized borders.

Today is International Women's Day. I wish to pay tribute to the courageous Ukrainian women and girls who, despite the unspeakable horrors they have endured, continue to work to support their communities and to build a better future for their country. Yet, economic turmoil caused by the war is disproportionately affecting Ukrainian women's livelihoods. Their well-being is at risk owing to restricted access to essential services. They face heightened risk of sexual and gender-based violence.

We continue to work to ensure that the needs of women and girls are addressed in our efforts to mitigate the impacts of the war. We are also committed to partnering with Ukrainian women leaders and women and peace and security champions to promote women's full and equal participation in decision-making, recovery and peace efforts.

The past two years of war have come with a heavy price for Ukraine, Europe and the world. We must not allow the war to bring further loss of life, destruction and suffering. In the Secretary-General's words,

"It is high time for peace, a just peace, based on the United Nations Charter, international law and General Assembly resolutions." (*S/PV.9557, p. 2*)

The United Nations remains ready to support all meaningful efforts to that end.

The President: I thank Mr. Khiari for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Doughten.

Ms. Doughten: Two years and 13 days have now passed since the full-scale escalation of this war. The latest wave of escalatory attacks in Odesa, Kharkiv, Sumy and Donetsk regions over the past few days shows how the conflict continues to inflict immeasurable human suffering, death and devastation on the people of Ukraine. We are particularly appalled by the strike on a high-rise residential building in Odesa city this past weekend, that, according to local authorities, killed 12 civilians, including five children.

The recent attacks have left many other civilians without electricity, heat and water. Multi-story apartment buildings have been damaged or destroyed by the impact of the strikes in cities and towns in Donetsk, Kherson and Dnipro regions, rendering thousands homeless and in need of humanitarian assistance.

Amid still cold winter temperatures, that damage is threatening the lives of the most vulnerable, in particular — among them the elderly and those with disabilities. Many of those people have had to remain in front-line communities and are already suffering because of the disruption to essential services caused by the war.

The United Nations Human Rights Office reports that nearly 31,000 civilians have now been killed or injured since 24 February 2022. That prompts me to repeat that attacks directed against civilians and civilian objects are prohibited under international humanitarian law. Indiscriminate attacks are also strictly prohibited. Parties to the conflict must take constant care to spare all civilians and civilian objects, including infrastructure essential for civilians' survival.

On this International Women's Day, while we celebrate Ukrainian women as instrumental agents of change and honour the incredible work of Ukrainian women's organizations, we should also note the particularly harsh impact of the conflict on women and girls in Ukraine. The United Nations Population Fund reports that a third of households led by women in Ukraine are struggling to feed themselves, and 60 per cent of older women are unable to provide for their own basic needs.

An increase in gender-based violence against women and girls has been a shocking hallmark of this war. Tragically, a lack of sufficient resources to sustain and expand a network of medical and social care services means that many of the 2.5 million people at risk of being subjected to gender-based violence in the

coming year — notably acute for displaced women and girls near the front lines — will not have access to the services they need and deserve.

The United Nations and its partners continue to do everything we can to provide humanitarian assistance to millions of people across Ukraine, despite the ongoing and deteriorating security situation. So far, in 2024, two humanitarian workers have lost their lives and 10 have been injured, highlighting the dangers of delivering aid close to the front line.

We are grateful to the donors who have, thus far, provided 11 per cent of the \$3.1 billion needed for the 2024 Ukraine humanitarian needs and response plan. That has enabled us to address the ongoing impact of the conflict and provide life-saving assistance. But more financial support is urgently needed to sustain operations. In recent month, humanitarians have provided more than 1.7 million people with some form of direct winter assistance, including winter heating, repair and maintenance of energy and heating systems and much-needed home repair materials.

The commitment and endurance shown by some 600 partner organizations delivering a humanitarian response across Ukraine is remarkable. They are working in the middle of tremendous insecurity and danger to provide civilians with the services and supplies they need to see them through the harsh winter and beyond.

So far, in 2024, the United Nations and its partners have had to adapt their operations to stay and deliver to the people affected by the intensification of fighting along the front line, delivering critical supplies to the nearly 13,000 war-affected residents in the front-line communities through 11 inter-agency convoys. Those convoys are a lifeline. Just last week, two much-needed inter-agency convoys reached communities in Kherson and Donetsk that have been heavily impacted by months of fighting. They delivered portable power stations, hygiene items and other essential supplies. That inter-agency support is complemented by numerous deliveries from local organizations and volunteers.

But we continue to face significant obstacles to reaching everyone in need. One of the most significant challenges remains the lack of humanitarian access to the parts of Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk and Zaporizhzhya oblasts occupied by the Russian Federation.

As hostilities continue to escalate, we are deeply concerned about the fate of civilians in those territories, whom we are unable to reach at scale. The consequences for an estimated 1.5 million people in need of life-saving assistance are unthinkable and avoidable. As we have been stating repeatedly, under international humanitarian law, all parties must allow and facilitate the rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief for civilians in need and must ensure that humanitarian personnel have the freedom of movement required for their work. That applies wherever civilians in need are located in Ukraine.

The United Nations and its humanitarian partners remain committed to safeguarding the life and dignity of the people affected by this war for as long as it takes. But it has gone on for far too long. It is time to bring the humanitarian catastrophe in Ukraine and the suffering of the Ukrainian people to an end.

The President: I thank Ms. Doughten for her briefing.

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

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

On Wednesday, Russian missiles struck the city of Odesa, killing five people. Some of those missiles impacted within a few hundred metres of a convoy carrying the Ukrainian President and the Greek Prime Minister, who were visiting the city at the time. On Saturday, drone attacks on an apartment building killed 12 people, including five children, and wounded 20 others.

The Russian authorities continue to flout international humanitarian law as they pursue the illegal war of aggression they have been waging against Ukraine for over two years.

The humanitarian toll of this war of aggression is disastrous and continues to rise. A total of 10,500 civilians have been counted since the beginning of the conflict, and the real number is undoubtedly much higher. Russian-led strikes against Ukraine's energy infrastructure in the depths of winter have left hundreds of cities and villages without electricity. More than 4 million people, including 1 million children, have been displaced, and more than 17 million are in need of humanitarian assistance.

France is mobilized to meet the needs of Ukrainians. It has committed nearly €300 million in aid since the start of the conflict and has also organized more than 50 operations to transport several thousand tons of goods.

International humanitarian law prohibits strikes against civilian populations and infrastructure not taking part in hostilities. France condemns those violations of international humanitarian law and demands that the perpetrators be punished. The Human Rights Council's Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine denounced the indiscriminate attacks on the population and essential infrastructure of Ukraine. On 5 March, the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for Sergei Kobylash and Viktor Sokolov, who are accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

This war is causing suffering far beyond Ukraine's borders. When Russia strikes grain storage and export infrastructure, it causes food insecurity that weighs on vulnerable populations around the world, particularly in developing countries. In response, France will continue to support initiatives aimed at enabling Ukrainian grain exports, such as the solidarity corridors and the Grain from Ukraine initiative.

After more than two years of aggression, Russia is banking on the exhaustion of the Ukrainian people and the fatigue of those who support them. That will not happen. We will continue to provide political, military and humanitarian support to Ukraine in order to help it exercise its right to self-defence. We will continue to call on Russia to withdraw its troops from Ukrainian territory, as demanded by the International Court of Justice on 16 March 2022. We will remain mobilized to ensure respect for the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, which — here as elsewhere — are the only basis for a just and lasting peace.

Mr. De La Gasca (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Khaled Khiari and the Director of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Ms. Lisa Doughten, for their briefings. I recognize the presence here today of the representatives of Ukraine, Greece, Poland, Latvia and the European Union.

It is regrettable that despite our collective efforts, the Council has to once again meet to hear about the devastating effects of a conflict that continues to disregard human life and international humanitarian law, and to learn about the attack that occurred on 6 March in Odesa, where a strike aimed at the city's

port infrastructure also resulted in the tragic death of at least five civilians. The fact that the attack took place during the visit of Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis of Greece underlines the recklessness with which international norms are being challenged and diplomacy weakened, and it deserves our strongest condemnation. The incident also represents a blow to crucial arteries in a city that plays a vital role in the economy of Ukraine and the region. Attacking critical infrastructure, in addition to being a direct violation of international law, has a domino effect on innocent people, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis and endangering global food security.

Ecuador reiterates its urgent call for an end to attacks on the population and on civil infrastructure. We want to highlight the responsibility of the parties to fully respect their obligations under international humanitarian law, including the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution. The continued bloodshed and destruction caused by this conflict is not only affecting civilian populations in Ukraine and Russia, but it also increases the risk of a further escalation of the conflict, with potential repercussions that are a serious threat to global security. Every act of violence, every inflammatory statement, every attack on civilian infrastructure and every life lost brings us dangerously close to a point of no return where the possibilities of a peaceful solution fade.

History has taught us time and again that armed conflicts have no winners. The only way to a lasting resolution is through the negotiating table and diplomacy. We reiterate the call on the Russian Federation to end its military operations in Ukraine, as ordered by the International Court of Justice in March 2022. The world depends on our ability to overcome conflicts. We must make use of every available means to advance towards a just and lasting peace, based on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I too would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari and Director Doughten for their briefings.

The United States condemns in the strongest terms Russia's aerial assaults on cities and critical infrastructure across Ukraine. On 6 March, its strikes against the port city of Odesa were another stark reminder of how it is daily unleashing destructive attacks on Ukraine's people and infrastructure. Unfortunately, attacks on Odesa are not new. Last weekend, reports

indicated that Russian strikes hit a high-rise residential building, leaving 12 dead and 20 injured. Among the people killed were five children, one of whom was only seven months old. Reports indicate that at least five civilians were killed on 6 March. We mourn this tragic loss of life. Every civilian death in conflict — no matter where in the world it occurs — is a tragedy.

This time, when the air-raid sirens sounded, the President of Ukraine and the Prime Minister of Greece were viewing the profound devastation in Odesa that has resulted from months of sustained bombardment. Russia's strike hit a few hundred meters from their convoy. Russia's attempts to justify the unjustifiable today do not change simple facts — the fact that Russia has continued to conduct a war of aggression against another sovereign United Nations Member State in violation of the Charter, that Ukraine would not need to call for urgent Council meetings if Russia ceased its aggression and that Ukrainian civilians are suffering daily death and destruction as a result of the Kremlin's attempts to conquer and subjugate their country.

We must not forget that after Russia suspended its participation in the Black Sea Grain Initiative, depriving some of the world's most food-insecure countries of Ukraine's grain, the Kremlin did not stop there. It launched more attacks on Odesa's ports, infrastructure and grain storage. Those attacks were not only cruel but were part of a campaign to decimate Ukraine's economy after failing to defeat its military. In those strikes, Russia destroyed more than 300,000 tons of grain and vital storage facilities. Ukraine responded with resiliency and creativity, launching a humanitarian corridor that brought Ukraine's exports back to numbers not seen since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion.

Russia is attacking energy infrastructure as well as food infrastructure. Earlier this week, the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for Sergei Kobylash, former Commander of long-range aviation for Russia's aerospace force, and Viktor Sokolov, Commander of Russia's Black Sea fleet, for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity in connection with Russia's attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure. At every turn, the Kremlin chooses the path of war and escalation. It is doubling down on nuclear sabre-rattling and brazenly procuring ballistic missiles and other munitions from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, in violation of Security Council resolutions.

The United States will continue to stand with Ukraine and call for accountability. The path forward is clear. Russia must cease its attacks on Ukraine and immediately and fully withdraw from all territory within Ukraine's internationally recognized borders.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari and Ms. Doughten for their briefings today.

“You see who we are dealing with. They do not care where to hit”. Those words were spoken by the President of Ukraine on Wednesday, and they could have been spoken on countless occasions during this war. We are again compelled to gather to respond to another appalling series of missile attacks on Ukraine. On 2 March, 12 civilians, including five children, died when debris hit an apartment block in Odesa. One of the victims was a baby, only four months old. On 6 March, as President Zelenskyy and Greece's Prime Minister Mitsotakis paid their respects to the dead, a further Russian strike hit the city. While the two leaders narrowly escaped the impact, five other people were not so lucky.

We have met too often in this Chamber to address the human suffering that Russia has inflicted on Ukraine. This week it was attacks on residential buildings. In other weeks it has been hospitals, schools, train stations, hotels and restaurants. Each time it is innocent Ukrainian civilians who pay the price with their lives. The day before this latest strike, the International Criminal Court announced two new indictments of senior Russian military figures for an alleged campaign of strikes against Ukraine's electricity infrastructure. Those are not the actions of a country that is interested in peace. Putin claims that he launched this war to protect Ukrainian civilians. In fact, he is terrorizing them. Russia's actions show an utter disregard for international law and the Charter of the United Nations. It is attempting to intimidate Ukraine, its people and those who support Ukraine. It will not succeed.

Russia's previous attacks on Odesa have utterly failed. Ukraine has driven much of the Black Sea fleet from Crimea and is exporting the highest volumes from its ports since the war began. As my Defence Secretary said in Kyiv yesterday, the United Kingdom's support remains unwavering, and we will provide an additional £325 million to help Ukraine defend itself. Ukrainians have shown that they will not be bullied into submission, and Russia should know that the United Kingdom stands proudly by their side. We therefore

repeat our call once again on Russia to withdraw its troops, cease the bloodshed and end the senseless war. Ukraine deserves a just and lasting peace that respects its territorial integrity. And, with our support, that is what Ukraine will achieve.

Mr. Žbogar (Slovenia): I also want to thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari and Director Doughten for their briefings.

Let me make a couple of points on behalf of my delegation.

First, the city of Odesa remains one of the most besieged cities in the war on Ukraine. Russia's aerial attacks have increased dramatically since July 2023, after Russia walked away from the Black Sea Grain Initiative. The port city has been subjected to more than a thousand drone and missile attacks since then. Those attacks have become so routine that they have become events that are completely overlooked by the international community. Air raid sirens are activated, drones or missiles appear, infrastructure is reduced to rubble, and civilians are buried underneath. In the end, the sites of the attacks are covered with flowers, candles and toys, and the vicious cycle repeats itself the following day. That has to stop. We cannot allow that to become ordinary life for the inhabitants of Ukrainian cities, such as Odesa. We cannot forget the blatant violations of international law. We cannot tolerate the indiscriminate use of highly explosive weaponry in densely populated areas.

Secondly, last Wednesday, we witnessed another low point of Russia's aggression against Ukraine. In Odesa, a Russian missile landed a couple hundred metres away from the leaders of two sovereign nations. While we are relieved that no harm was done to them, civilians died in the strike. We are appalled by that, and we condemn it in the strongest possible terms. That represents another episode in the unnecessary war, in which explosive weaponry is used indiscriminately, in flagrant violation of international humanitarian law. The Security Council needs to start fulfilling its primary responsibility and ensure prompt and effective action in order to return peace and security to Ukraine and the wider region.

Mr. Afonso (Mozambique): We are grateful to Assistant Secretary-General Khaled Khiari and Ms. Lisa Doughten, Director of the Financing and Partnerships Division of the Office for the Coordination

of Humanitarian Affairs, for their important and insightful briefings.

Two weeks ago, the Security Council convened in this Chamber to mark the two-year milestone of the ongoing conflict (see S/PV.9557). At the time, Mozambique raised deep concerns about the ominous escalation of the war, highlighting its severe economic, political and humanitarian consequences. In our statement, we advocated for a significant shift in our approach to finding a settlement by emphasizing the pivotal role of diplomacy. Regrettably, the recent spate of attacks has only served to push the prospect of détente even further away. Our apprehensions regarding the escalation of the conflict have been warranted lately. Clearly, the signals of escalatory attitudes will further undermine security and stability in Europe and throughout the world. They will heighten the threat of the retaliatory use of tactical nuclear weapons. We should not embrace positions that mark distances from the Charter of the United Nations, which compels all Member States to settle international disputes by peaceful means, even in a conflict situation.

History — and recent history, for that matter — has shown us that, even in times of confrontation and nuclear threat, there are opportunities for strong leadership to avert descent into further conflict and thread back to the path of dialogue and peace. We need to resort to the constructive spirit that, more than 30 years ago, saw European countries committed to build on their continent a common house and a peaceful space. That spirit of cooperation and negotiation is critically needed today. Mozambique remains committed to advocating for a diplomatic solution to end the war. We encourage that all avenues be explored, including the re-establishment of diplomatic channels, the exchange of prisoners and the leveraging of the good offices of the Secretary-General.

We have always believed that genuine, constructive and responsible dialogue are the correct path to resolving the conflict. In the light of that, Mozambique reiterates its call for an immediate cessation of hostilities. We urge for a return to direct negotiations between the parties, as a matter of high priority. As the Secretary-General eloquently stated at our previous meeting, the problem has been a disregard for the Charter, which abhors the scourge of war. Honouring the letter and spirit of the Charter is the correct solution. It is therefore time to recommit ourselves to the Charter and renew our respect for international law, as the pathway

to international peace and security. Today, on 8 March, International Women's Day, Mozambique would like to pay tribute to women in the world, and in particular in areas in conflict, where women are working hand in hand with men for international peace and security.

Mr. Sangjin Kim (Republic of Korea): I too thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari and Ms. Doughten for their briefings and welcome the participation of the delegations of Ukraine, the European Union, Greece, Poland and Latvia in today's meeting.

Ever since we solemnly marked the second anniversary of Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine last month (see S/PV.9557), we have seen Russia intensify its missile and drone attacks on Ukrainian cities. The attacks are claiming civilian lives and damaging civilian infrastructure such as residential buildings, schools, hospitals and granaries, and among them just two days ago was the deadly missile strike on Odesa, Ukraine's key port city, while the Prime Minister of Greece and the President of Ukraine were visiting. That extremely dangerous missile attack reportedly took place just a few hundred metres from the two leaders' convoy. Regardless of the account of the incident that Russia provides, we cannot overlook its grave implications. By putting leaders in danger, such attacks unnecessarily lead to further escalation in the context of an already perilous regional situation. This unjustifiable war has already created untold human suffering, in addition to various ripple effects at the global level. We cannot afford for it to spread any further, and it is alarming to see it becoming further prolonged and escalated.

My delegation believes that the international community's commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity is unwavering. That unwavering commitment has been reaffirmed here in the United Nations, as we vividly remember that last year an overwhelming majority of the General Assembly voted in favour of resolution ES-11/6, on a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine. We reiterate that the only way to achieve that goal is for Russia to withdraw its military forces from the territory of Ukraine. The flagrant violations of Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity must cease immediately.

The protracted conflict means immediate losses and damages, but the prolonged and accumulated destruction and suffering it creates will also make recovery even harder in the long term. In that context,

we note the alarming conclusions of the recent *Ukraine Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment*, jointly released by Ukraine, the World Bank Group, the European Commission and the United Nations, which estimates that the total cost of reconstruction and recovery in Ukraine will amount to \$486 billion over the next decade, equivalent to 2.5 times Ukraine's current gross domestic product.

Through their own experience of the devastating consequences of war, the Korean people are acutely aware of how tortuous and painstaking the course of reconstruction is. That is why the Republic of Korea is firmly committed to working with the international community to support reconstruction efforts in Ukraine. On top of the \$140 million in humanitarian assistance that we have already provided to Ukraine, over the next few years we will deliver a comprehensive \$2.3 billion aid package to help the Ukrainian people rebuild their nation. My Government is also actively participating in the Multi-agency Donor Coordination Platform for Ukraine to better coordinate the collective assistance from major donor countries.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett (Guyana): I too thank Assistant Secretary-General Khaled Khiari and Director Lisa Doughten for the updates they provided.

Guyana deeply regrets that civilian lives continue to be lost in the ongoing war in Ukraine. We deplore the recent attacks, including on the city of Odesa, which have claimed the lives of several civilians, including young children, and have caused widespread damage to civilian infrastructure. The war continues to inflict immeasurable suffering and destruction, with women and children bearing the brunt of the increasingly intense bombardments. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has reported that the humanitarian situation in front-line communities, including the territories occupied by the Russian Federation, is reaching severe and catastrophic levels, with more than 3.3 million people — including 800,000 children — requiring emergency assistance. It has also documented the damage and destruction wrought during the past year, including of homes, hospitals, schools and vital civilian infrastructure. That cannot be allowed to continue.

Guyana reiterates its call for an end to attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure. We urge the parties to the conflict to immediately cease all indiscriminate attacks and to take every measure possible to protect

civilians. We further demand that the parties honour their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law, in addition to guaranteeing protection for those who are most vulnerable. We further stress the urgency of resolving this conflict through peaceful means, and we urge the parties to commit to a serious political and diplomatic process aimed at ending the conflict, and for the international community's continued engagement to that end.

In conclusion, Guyana reaffirms its support for full respect for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and as we commemorate International Women's Day, we salute the women in Ukraine and Russia who are working for peace and express our solidarity with those who are grieving for the loved ones they have lost.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First of all, I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Khaled Khiari and Ms. Lisa Doughten for their briefings.

As the Ukraine crisis drags on, the aggravated attacks and civilian casualties have continued and the humanitarian situation has worsened. Today's briefings once again demonstrate the cruelty of the war and the severity of the situation, which China finds deeply concerning and saddening.

Conflicts and confrontations have no winners. All conflicts have to end at the negotiating table. The sooner the talks start, the sooner peace will arrive. Only when all the parties uphold the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and properly address one another's legitimate concerns can Europe truly establish a balanced, effective and sustainable security architecture. We call on all the parties to remain calm and exercise restraint, enhance direct engagement and dialogue, gradually build consensus and collectively explore viable solutions. The international community should also increase diplomatic efforts to facilitate a de-escalation of the situation and create conditions for a political settlement.

On the Ukraine issue, China has always held an objective and just position and has never given up on efforts to facilitate talks for peace. The Special Representative of the Chinese Government for Eurasian affairs is currently conducting mediation visits to Russia, Ukraine and relevant European countries to seek a political settlement of the Ukraine crisis. In

due course, we support holding an international peace conference that is recognized by both Russia and Ukraine and ensures the equal participation of all the parties and fair discussions of all peace plans. We are ready to continue communicating and engaging with all the parties to consolidate consensus for ending the conflict and pave the way for dialogue and peace talks. We will work tirelessly to that end and to play a constructive role in facilitating a political solution to the crisis.

Mr. Hauri (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Khaled Khiari and Director Lisa Doughten of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for their briefings.

As we enter the third year of Russia's military aggression against Ukraine, today's meeting is a reminder of its devastating impact on the civilian population. Switzerland continues to deplore the human cost and immense suffering caused by this war. Every day that hostilities continue, the number of civilian casualties rises, as the events of the past week have shown. We are disturbed by the intensification of Russian missile and drone attacks in recent days and weeks. At the end of last week, several regions in eastern and southern Ukraine, including Donetsk, Mykolaiv and Kharkiv, came under attack, causing further casualties and extensive damage to residential buildings and other civilian infrastructure, including a hospital and schools.

The attacks in Odesa on Saturday and two days ago, during the visit of President Zelenskyy and Prime Minister Mitsotakis, were tragic. As we heard, 12 people were killed in the first attack, including several children. Those are just the most recent examples of attacks on the city, which has suffered enormous damage after months of Russian strikes, destroying and damaging several important cultural sites, as well as port infrastructure and grain silos. This reminds us of the extent to which this war, through its impact on food security, is having deleterious consequences throughout the world.

Switzerland condemns the new series of attacks, which have claimed numerous civilian victims. Such attacks must cease immediately. We reiterate our call for respect for international humanitarian law and human rights. International humanitarian law prohibits attacks on civilians, including children, who must be protected at all times.

We reiterate the importance of combating impunity for the most serious crimes and support national, regional and international efforts to ensure accountability, including the efforts of the International Criminal Court, which recently issued additional arrest warrants for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity. I would also like to express my gratitude for the work of the humanitarian actors who reacted swiftly to the attacks, including in the city of Odesa. Their work, whether in first aid, psychological support or the distribution of emergency aid, remains indispensable and must be protected.

Finally, Switzerland remains committed to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine, in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Such a peace must remain our primary objective for the sake of protecting the civilian population.

Mr. Kanu (Sierra Leone): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this briefing. Let me also thank the briefers — Assistant Secretary-General Khaled Khiari and Director Lisa Doughten — for the information provided. I welcome the presence and participation of the representative of Ukraine in this meeting.

Sierra Leone continues to express grave concern about the continuing regrettable situation in Ukraine due to the conflict, with its continuing serious ramifications for international peace and security. In all meetings on this regrettable conflict, we will reiterate our call for the full respect of the Charter of the United Nations and the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, within its internationally recognized borders, and for the immediate cessation of the hostilities. In doing so, we urge good faith diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict by addressing the legitimate concerns of all parties.

Turning to the recent incidents, for which today's briefing has been convened, we take note of reports of missile strikes, including in the Black Sea port of Odesa, during the visit of Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, causing tragic fatalities and damage to vital infrastructure.

It is deeply concerning that instead of a cessation of hostilities, we are seeing signals of a more dangerous escalation of the conflict. Given this serious situation, Sierra Leone is firmly of the view that now is the time for the parties to the conflict and other involved parties

to make persistent efforts and to commit to commencing meaningful constructive dialogue and seeking a path to a peaceful resolution. The people of Ukraine and those affected in Russia need a ceasefire initiative.

Furthermore and regrettably, as the hostilities continue, we reiterate our call for the parties to comply with their obligations under international law, in particular international humanitarian law. Civilians and civilian objects must be protected at all times.

The conflict in Ukraine continues to have devastating consequences — not only for the parties to the conflict, but for the region and beyond. The conflict has persistent, far-reaching effects on the global economy.

On International Women's Day, we wish to highlight the growing cost of the conflict on women. According to UN-Women, the women and girls of Ukraine are being significantly impacted by increased trafficking and gender-based violence, the loss of crucial livelihoods and rising poverty levels. The large-scale destruction of infrastructure has left survivor services, health care and other critical forms of support out of reach for many.

Today protecting civilians and providing humanitarian aid should remain an imperative. Human rights abuses, including reported allegations of sexual violence, must be investigated, with accountability for the survivors. As women continue to bear different and additional burdens of conflict, they must be represented in all decision-making platforms on de-escalation, conflict prevention, mitigation and other processes in pursuit of peace and security for all.

Let me conclude by calling once again for meaningful steps to be taken towards the immediate cessation of hostilities, ceasefire initiatives and for the parties to the conflict to engage constructively in good faith in order to find a political and diplomatic solution, as envisaged in Article 33 of the United Nations Charter.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Today the entire world commemorates a great holiday — International Women's Day. As everyone knows, in our country, since as early as the times of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, we have laid a solid foundation for actual — not merely claimed — equality and equal professional opportunities for women. No matter how Western colleagues try to spoil this day by spreading their fake news about Russia, for which they have called today's meeting, I would like to congratulate

all women in the world on International Women's Day, including my colleagues on the Security Council, and wish them professional success and prosperity. They are contributing to the maintenance of international peace and security through action, not words.

We have repeatedly shown, through specific examples, that precision strikes by the Russian Aerospace Forces against facilities in Ukraine associated with the military capabilities of the Kyiv regime do not pose a danger to the civilians, who are not at those facilities. Ordinary Ukrainians are also well aware of that. They have repeatedly seen for themselves that their lives are threatened solely by the actions of unprofessional Ukrainian air defences, which are on top of that deployed in residential areas of Ukrainian cities, in violation of the norms of international humanitarian law. We all remember how an air defence missile that went off course destroyed the Transfiguration Cathedral in Odesa. Similar errant missiles or missile debris have damaged residential buildings in Kyiv, Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Odesa itself and other Ukrainian cities. I repeat — ordinary Ukrainians know that. Moreover, the nature of that destruction, as anyone with minimal knowledge of modern weaponry can confirm, is inconsistent with the damage caused by direct missile strikes.

However, the representatives of the Kyiv regime and their Western puppeteers are trying — with manic and baffling insistence — to pass off the results of Ukrainian air defences as targeted Russian strikes against civilian objects. Today's meeting also seeks to affirm that impossible claim.

Indeed, from 2 to 8 March, the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation carried out 34 group strikes with high-precision weapons, multiple-launch rocket systems and uncrewed aerial vehicles on targets in Ukraine that were involved in the assembly and preparation for combat use of uncrewed boats, arsenals, fuel depots for military hardware, the deployment location of units of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, nationalist formations and foreign mercenaries. As is confirmed by data from objective monitoring and numerous posts by Ukrainian users on social media, all the intended targets were successfully hit. In those clips, which can be easily found on the Internet, one can clearly see indiscriminate fire by Ukrainian air defence systems from residential districts, missiles and shells hitting areas that were not initially targeted. Also telling are

the comments of users under those and other posts saying people should be more afraid of unpredictable air defences than Russian missiles.

That topic has also found its way into the reports of Western television channels, which are finding it increasingly difficult to conceal the truth. During a CNN report from the impending liberation of Chasiv Yar, the following emotional admission was made by one of its residents:

“Ukrainian soldiers are taking all the water. They are coming right up to the houses where civilians are living, and they are firing directly from those houses. They are hiding behind the backs of civilians.”

From the same coverage, it has become clear that the residents remaining in Chasiv Yar are eagerly awaiting the arrival of Russian forces, and it is clear why. A situation in which units of Ukrainian nationalists are using civilians as human shields is forcing even the staunchest supporters of the Zelenskyy regime to rethink their values.

However, our Western colleagues remain blind and deaf to those signals. They have not given up the hope that the Kyiv regime, which is fighting for their interests, will be able to resist the Russian army. It is true that the stakes have already been lowered considerably, and instead of calls to help Ukraine to win, we increasingly hear exhortations that Russia must not be allowed to win. However, given that the initiative on the front line has fully shifted to the Russian army, the only question is what the Western sponsors of Zelenskyy and his clique are willing to do to try to save their geopolitical project of creating an anti-Russia on Russia's border from total collapse.

Weapons deliveries are clearly not enough. As has become clear in recent days, the vaunted American Abrams tanks burn just as well as the much-touted German Leopard tanks do and almost as well as their predecessors — the German Tigers and Panther tanks — burned on the steppes of Ukraine 80 years ago. It is obvious that no new arms supplies to Ukraine will end the agony of the bankrupt Kyiv regime; they can only prolong it at the cost of tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of Ukrainians' lives — the lives of the same Ukrainians whom the Kyiv authorities are now rounding up on the streets and throwing into a senseless slaughter. What is at stake is the survival of the

Zelenskyy regime and the prestige of those who were behind the anti-constitutional coup d'état in Kyiv 10 years ago.

That prospect is apparently making a number of irresponsible European politicians want to escalate the Ukrainian conflict and bring it to a new level of direct, rather than proxy, confrontation between Russia and NATO. How else could we interpret the position of French President Macron with regard to the need to send NATO forces to Ukraine to prevent the collapse of the Kyiv regime? It is a shame that we did not hear anything about those plans, which threaten to trigger a third World War, in the statement by the representative of France. It is also a shame that we do not see, among those who have requested to speak at today's meeting, the representative of Germany who is normally active. It would be interesting to hear his comments in connection with the leaked conversation by high-ranking German military officers discussing how to help the Ukrainians destroy the Kerch Bridge to Crimea and launch strikes deep into Russian territory. During the same conversation, we heard confirmation that American, British and European military advisers were present in Ukraine and helping the Ukrainian armed forces to choose targets for its strikes. That confirms what we have been saying for a long time — every use of Western long-range weapons against civilians makes their suppliers complicit in the crimes violating international humanitarian law of Zelenskyy and his clique.

Thanks to *The New York Times* investigation, we also learned that Project Ukraine is the largest operation of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in history, beginning long before 2014, and that immediately after the coup d'état, vast CIA intelligence stations were set up on the border with Russia. It is a shame that, in his statement, the representative of the United States was modest and did not tell us anything about that.

In general, it would be good if the representatives of NATO States in the Security Council could explain to us the cunning logic of the Alliance. At first, its leaders said that NATO needed expand into Ukraine because Russia would not attack a NATO member State. Today, however, we hear that Russia must not be allowed to win in Ukraine because, if it did, it would move forward and attack NATO. Where is the common sense in those statements? Where is the consistency? Consistency is actually shown in how Western countries are shaping Russia into the image of an enemy and an aggressor,

omitting the fact that their aggression against Russia, using Ukraine, began at least 10 years ago. We will talk in detail about all those issues, which are inconvenient for our Western colleagues, at a separate Security Council meeting that we have requested for 22 March.

As the well-known Turkish saying goes, when a clown moves to a palace, he does not become a king, but rather the palace becomes a circus. Of course, we could see everything that is happening in Ukraine as a circus, if the consequences were not so tragic and catastrophic for that country. However, circus acts are still quite popular there. We all know about the air sirens ringing out in Kyiv and other cities during the visits of high-ranking foreign delegations and in the absence of any shelling. That act has already become part of the circus playbill for foreign leaders visiting Ukraine. It is noteworthy that, in Odesa, the sirens were not heard when military facilities were struck during the visit of a high-ranking Greek delegation. Apparently, that act was not included on the circus playbill that time.

I now turn to all those who today have and will continue to whip up passions over this episode. They should ask themselves a simple question. Do they really think that, if we wanted to hit Zelenskyy's motorcade, we would not have been able to do so? They should answer that question honestly, especially considering that they know very well that the strike destroyed a facility used in the production of marine drones or rather assembling of these drones from United Kingdom-supplied components. That target is much more important to us than Zelenskyy, who is crisscrossing the front-line areas, taking selfies in cities before they are liberated by the Russian army.

If any Council members are hoping in their heart of hearts to get rid of the leader of the Kyiv regime in this way, then I must disappoint them. We have no such plans. The reincarnation of Mr. Goloborodko from the television series "Servant of the People" was elected to the presidency by Ukrainians who believed his campaign promises to establish peace in Donbas and to protect the Russian language and Russian-speaking citizens of Ukraine. He deceived his voters, so now the Ukrainians and his Western puppet masters must deal with him. We have a more important task — to fulfil the goals of our special military operation. And since Council members do not want to talk about how to achieve those goals by peaceful means, we must use military force to

do so, with all the attendant consequences for Ukraine and the Western sponsors of the Kyiv regime, which have already become quite clear.

Mrs. Frazier (Malta): I also thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari and Ms. Doughten for their important briefings. And I welcome the participation of the Ukrainian Permanent Representative in our meeting today.

On 6 March, the official delegations of Ukraine and Greece, headed by the President of Ukraine and the Prime Minister of Greece, respectively, visited the Ukrainian city of Odesa. Talks were aimed at discussing assistance in restoring civilian infrastructure. That includes churches, educational institutions and cultural heritage sites in Ukraine that were damaged or destroyed in Russia's war of aggression. While that visit was taking place, the city was attacked with deadly explosives, including in nearby port facility. Repeatedly Russian forces showed indifference as to whether targets were military or civilian.

Since last week we have seen a significant escalation in violence in Ukraine. Russian forces have increased their brutal attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure in the port city of Odesa, destroying residential buildings and damaging others essential facilities. Sadly, 12 citizens, including five children, were killed in an attack on 2 March. Further civilian casualties due to Russia's aerial attacks were also reported in the Kherson and Donetsk regions.

We underscore once again that attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure are prohibited under international law. They are unacceptable and must stop immediately. The civilian population has suffered immensely during this brutal war and must be protected by all means. These actions against civilians are deeply troubling and unacceptable. Malta strongly condemns these continuous heinous attacks, and we express our deepest condolences to the families of the victims.

Let us be clear, the persistent nature of these attacks and the escalating violence resulting in civilian casualties demonstrate Russia's total lack of commitment to peace, its disdain for international law and its complete disregard for human life. Russia's aggression has entered its third year, and, unfortunately, we are no closer to the end of this illegal, unjustified and unprovoked war. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, at least 10,000 civilians have been killed, and more

than 18,500 injured. With each passing day, the damage and humanitarian consequences that this conflict is causing to Ukraine and international security become increasingly evident.

Malta will continue to seek justice and full accountability for all crimes committed in connection with Russia's war against Ukraine, including for the crime of aggression. Malta fully supports the important work of the International Court of Justice, the International Criminal Court and the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine in their investigation efforts. We must restore international peace and security to shape a better future for our children.

In conclusion, Malta reiterates that the only step towards a just and lasting peace would be for Russia to immediately cease all hostilities and unconditionally and completely withdraw all its forces and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

Mr. Koudri (Algeria): I also thank Assistant Secretary-General Khaled Khiari and Director Lisa Doughten for their insightful briefings.

We are meeting urgently today to discuss yet another series of attacks that have reportedly caused casualties among civilians in Ukraine. I can imagine how horrific it is to feel endangered and unsafe, but I cannot imagine how civilians might feel when their security is continuously under threat. That is, unfortunately, a situation in which many civilians are living every single day on both sides of the border. And no prospects for peace are foreseen so far.

This should remind us all how urgent and critical the de-escalation of tensions and the cessation of hostilities are. This should also prompt the parties to favour a peaceful settlement of the crisis. This should also encourage them to engage in an inclusive and constructive dialogue, with a single aim: to reach a just and lasting political solution. That solution must be guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the legitimate security concerns of both parties. This should also increase our determination to intensify diplomatic efforts towards a peaceful settlement of the dispute.

We once again call on the parties to prioritize the path of peace and dialogue. Escalation, polarization and confrontation are only leading to more tensions,

more destruction and, most importantly, a higher death toll, especially among civilians.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Japan.

I too thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari and Director Doughten for their briefings.

Just two weeks ago, in this Chamber (see S/PV.9557), we once again condemned Russia for its unprovoked aggression against Ukraine, which has persisted for two years now, in flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations, and continues today, on International Women's Day, causing women and girls in Ukraine to suffer. Russia, as usual, attempted to justify the unjustifiable today, but the international community remains unconvinced by such excuses.

Russia's relentless attacks on Odesa continue, resulting in civilian casualties and the destruction of civilian infrastructure. We have learned that the President of Ukraine and the Prime Minister of Greece narrowly escaped, but civilians in the area did fall victim to the attack.

Today we heard detailed briefings from the briefers regarding the grim reality of the death and destruction wrought by Russia's actions. Given these countless atrocities, who on earth can believe that Russia is seeking peace? We reiterate our commitment to the principle that peace in Ukraine must be based on the Charter of the United Nations, as demanded by the General Assembly. We must confront those who continue to launch drones and missiles at civilians. We must uphold the Charter and the rule of law, and we must hold those responsible accountable under international law, without any impunity.

Once again, we urge Russia to stop its ongoing aggression and to immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraw its troops and military equipment from the entire internationally recognized territory of Ukraine. Our unwavering commitment remains steadfast in supporting Ukraine, which is valiantly defending its people, independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. Our Government, together with the Japanese private sector, will continue to support Ukraine and its resilient reconstruction. Japan has been with Ukraine and will stand by Ukraine for as long as it takes.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

Mr. Kyslytsya (Ukraine): I must recognize the female representative of the Russian Federation on this International Women's Day. I venture that, while the female Russian colleagues continue to work, the male Russian representative is heavily engaged in celebrating Women's Day in Moscow's particular anti-gender way, with something stronger than bubbly. That is, of course, with the exception of the Russian men who are continuing to kill Ukrainian women and girls today.

As a representative of an original United Nations Member, I can state that the nearly 33 years of Russia's presence in the Organization has been a history of territorial seizures, wars and aggression in neighbouring countries and on other continents. Neither the Security Council nor the General Assembly ever considered the letter of the then Russian President Yeltsin dated 24 December 1991 on his desire to continue the Soviet membership, nor did they ever vote on that matter.

Now we are again seeing that Russia perceives the occupation of the Soviet seat as indulgence for violations and crimes. It keeps terrorizing Ukrainians by attacking civilian infrastructure and residential areas with missiles, drones, guided aerial bombs and various artillery weapons. Over the past week alone, from 26 February to 3 March, Russian forces used approximately 400 guided aerial bombs, more than 50 Shahed drones and more than 40 missiles against Ukrainian cities and villages. The city of Odesa has been a particular target, enduring almost daily shelling. The most tragic consequences were registered following the night-time drone attack on Odesa on 2 March. One of the drones hit a high-rise residential building, destroying 18 apartments. Twelve residents, including five children, were killed while sleeping peacefully in their beds. Eight other residents of the targeted building were wounded.

It is important to note that injuries caused by missiles and drones are often severe and difficult to recover from. The actual number of casualties following Russian air strikes could be higher than reported immediately after the conclusion of rescue operations. For instance, the day after that drone attack, on 3 March, a victim of another Russian act of terror in Odesa, a 61-year-old woman, succumbed to severe injuries sustained 10 days earlier during the Russian strike of 23 February.

The bloody murder of children in Odesa on 2 March did not stop, but rather encouraged Russians to intensify their attacks. During the night of 5 March,

the Russian drone attack on the Odesa region lasted for three hours. Ukrainian air defences managed to intercept 18 drones. On the following night, 6 March, Odesa was attacked by 22 drones; 18 of them were shot down by our forces. However, the remaining four damaged civilian infrastructure. In total, overnight the Russians launched 42 Shahed drones and fired five S-300 missiles, attacking not only Odesa but also the Dnipropetrovsk, Kherson, Khmelnytskyi, Cherkassy, Kharkiv, Vinnytsia and Sumy regions.

Later on 6 March, Russian forces launched missile attacks on the port of Odesa. During the strike, the city was hosting the President of Ukraine and the Prime Minister of Greece, who were in close proximity as one of the missiles detonated approximately several hundred metres away from the official delegations. Unfortunately, five people were killed and another five were wounded on the grounds of the port as a result of that strike. On 7 March, a missile attack was again carried out in Odesa on the grounds of the second berth of the port. Five people were killed and seven were injured. Destruction and damage to four buildings was also registered.

It is evident that, by choosing Odesa as one of the main targets for their air strikes, the Russian aggressors are trying to disrupt the functioning of the maritime corridor established by Ukrainian naval forces after Russia undermined the Black Sea Grain Initiative. Russia failed in its attempts to blackmail the international community by withdrawing from the Initiative. However, Ukraine, steadfast in its commitment to ensuring global food security despite the ongoing war, has launched a maritime corridor and continues to develop its efficacy.

Since August 2023, almost 30 million tons of cargo have been exported to 42 countries across the globe from the ports of Odesa, Pivdennyi and Chornomorsk. Of that amount, more than 8 million tons were exported in February alone. Those shipments constitute 80 per cent of our agricultural exports. In fact, exports from Ukrainian Black Sea ports have reached levels comparable to those before the full-scale invasion. The steadily diminishing Russian Black Sea fleet no longer dares to appear in the north-western part of the Black Sea, let alone to consider the possibility of a blockade of Ukrainian ports.

All that remains for Russia is to launch missiles in an attempt to intimidate Ukraine and our trade partners. Therefore, enhancing air defence capabilities will

expedite ship loading time and provide better protection for the ports. According to expert assessments, the modernization of the relevant infrastructure, coupled with proper security conditions, would allow volumes to be increased by at least a quarter, thereby further reducing the threat of food insecurity.

Together with international insurance companies, Ukraine implements projects aimed at reducing the cost of war-risk insurance for exporters of all Ukrainian products. In January, the first vessel insured against war risks headed for loading in the ports of the Odesa region. The cost of insurance for that vessel was much lower than during the period of the Black Sea Grain Initiative.

The humanitarian consequences of the Russian war against Ukraine continue escalating with each passing day of the aggression. To date, Ukrainian law enforcement agencies have launched investigations into 143,508 war crimes and 16,650 crimes against national security. They include the killing of 11,973 civilians, including 534 children, and the wounding of more than 19,200 civilians, including more than 1,200 children. Those figures do not take into account the temporarily occupied areas.

Russia not only inflicts deliberate harm upon civilians — attacking critical civilian infrastructure, schools and hospitals in Ukraine — but it also continues its abhorrent practice of abducting Ukrainian children. To date, Ukrainian authorities have identified 19,546 children who have been deported to the Russian Federation. So far, only 388 of them have been successfully returned and reunited with their families. Separately, it has also been possible to return dozens of children from the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine.

One of the most pressing challenges is the release of all illegally detained Ukrainian civilians. According to the Ukrainian Ombudsperson, over 28,000 civilian Ukrainians are held incommunicado in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine or in Russia, enduring inhumane conditions.

Russia must be brought to justice for civilian infrastructure facilities damaged or destroyed in Ukraine. Their number, as registered by Ukrainian law enforcement agencies, has exceeded 151,000, including 121,855 residential buildings, 3,047 educational facilities and 738 medical institutions, 537 cultural and 172 religious buildings and 5,771 water and

electricity networks. More than 200 schools have been destroyed, and over 1,600 others have been damaged. That means that one in seven schools in Ukraine has suffered damage, and that has severely limited access to education for children.

The window of opportunity for Russia opens only when Ukraine is running out of the weapons required to defend itself. Russia immediately exploits the situation to seize more Ukrainian land, as witnessed in Avdiivka, and to kill more Ukrainian children, as happened in Odesa. Millions of Ukrainians have lost their relatives and friends since the beginning of the Russian aggression. All of them were killed by Russia. At this very moment, while we are meeting in this Chamber, Russia continues to kill Ukrainians on the territory of Ukraine.

And it is important to remember that Russia is not just a big stain on the world's political map: Russia has a face. And it is not just the face of Putin, a murderous dictator who is about to reappoint himself this month. It is also the face of his representative in this Chamber. For millions of people, that face embodies those who killed their loved ones. That is how those faces will be rendered in all history textbooks — the face of a person who continues, monotonously and day by day, to spread torrents of lies, and not only at Ukraine-related meetings. And I am not addressing my intervention to Putin's envoy. That would be absolutely futile. I address this statement to the legitimate members of the Security Council. The conclusions are clear. The defending party should receive adequate support in exercising its inherent right to self-defence under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. As for the aggressor, the international community should maintain pressure in order to ensure adherence to the path charted by Ukraine's peace formula and the General Assembly resolution of February 2023 entitled "Principles of the Charter of the United Nations underlying a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine" (resolution ES-11/6).

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Lambrinidis.

Mr. Lambrinidis: The representative of Russia thought that this occasion today was funny enough to share a joke with us. He said, "when a clown enters a palace, the clown does not become king, the palace becomes a circus". Remarkably, the irony of the fact that the only one who entered Ukraine — and by force

for that matter — is President Putin somehow escaped the Russian representative. The fact remains, however, that Russia's aggression is not a laughing matter.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Georgia, and the European Free Trade Association country Liechtenstein, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Andorra, Monaco and San Marino align themselves with this statement.

When the Secretary-General visited Kyiv in 2022, Russian missiles hit the city. When a delegation of African leaders travelled to Ukraine on a peace mission last year, Russia again struck. And on Wednesday, when the Greek Prime Minister joined Ukrainian President Zelenskyy in Odesa to pay tribute to the victims of a Russian drone strike, of which many were children, Russia once again carried out air attacks, which struck perilously close to the two leaders. For over two years now, the Ukrainian people have endured such attacks on a daily basis.

The EU reiterates its resolute condemnation of Russia's illegal, unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression, which constitutes a manifest violation of international law, including the United Nations Charter and the resolutions of the General Assembly. Russia's systematic air strikes against civilian objects and critical infrastructure in Ukraine are unacceptable and must stop. Such intentional attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure add to the growing evidence of war crimes, as reported by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine.

Russia and its leadership must be held fully accountable for waging a war of aggression against Ukraine and for other most serious crimes under international law, as well as for the massive damage caused by their war. We reiterate our support for the work of the International Criminal Court and condemn Russia's continued attempts to undermine its independence, international mandate and functioning. Earlier this week, the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants against two Russian military officers, Sergei Ivanovich Kobylash and Viktor Nikolayevich Sokolov, for alleged war crimes of directing attacks against civilian objects and civilians. We also recall the legally binding order of the International Court of Justice of March 2022 for

Russia to immediately suspend its military operations in Ukraine. All of us must keep reaffirming, at every opportunity, and decidedly when Russia bombs and threatens civilians, our unwavering support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, as well as its inherent right to defend itself.

In a few days, Russia will hold elections in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. In fact, it already started to do so in some areas — on 25 February — with mail voting. Russia has no legitimate basis for any such action on the territory of Ukraine. We unequivocally condemn and reject Russia's illegal attempts for the annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol, and parts of Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk and Zaporizhzhya oblasts. We urge all United Nations Member States to do the same, in line with the United Nations Charter and the General Assembly resolutions, which were adopted by an overwhelming majority of Member States. The path to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace is for the aggressor to immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraw all its troops and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine, respect its sovereignty and territorial integrity, in line with the decision of the General Assembly, and stop at once its continued and brutal bombing of the country and its people.

In conclusion, the European Union will continue its global outreach to ensure the widest possible international support for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace and the key principles and objectives of Ukraine's peace formula, with a view to a global peace summit.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Greece.

Mr. Sekeris (Greece): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari and Director Doughten for their briefings.

Greece aligns itself with the statement just delivered on behalf of the European Union (EU), and I would like to make the following comments in my national capacity.

On 6 March, Russia launched an aerial attack on Ukraine's Black Sea city of Odesa, while Greek Prime Minister Mitsotakis and President Zelenskyy were visiting the city's port. The blast occurred just a few hundred metres away from the leaders' motorcade.

There was no time to go to a shelter. Fortunately, neither was hurt, and despite the explosion, they continued with their scheduled programme in Odesa, a city of particular historical and cultural importance for Greece. Unfortunately, that very Russian strike caused the death of five people. A couple of days before, Russia had launched yet another drone attack on Odesa, hitting a multistorey residential building and killing 12 civilians, including five children. Prime Minister Mitsotakis and President Zelenskyy visited together the damaged housing complex and laid flowers at the memorial in honour of those innocent victims.

Greece condemns in the strongest possible terms the deliberate attacks on civilians, especially women and children, and civilian infrastructure committed in Ukraine in the context of Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression. All attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure must stop immediately. They are prohibited under international law and are simply unacceptable from a moral, as well as humanitarian, point of view. Prime Minister Mitsotakis' visit to Odesa was organized to show our solidarity with the Ukrainian people, who are fighting for their freedom and the territorial integrity and sovereignty of their country, and to demonstrate Greece's continued and solid support for Ukraine.

Greece reiterates its resolute condemnation of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, which constitutes a manifest violation of the United Nations Charter, and reaffirms its unwavering support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders and its inherent right to self-defence against the Russian aggression. Greece confirms its steadfast commitment to continue to provide strong political, financial, economic, humanitarian, military and diplomatic support to Ukraine and its people for as long as it takes.

As a position of principle, my country condemns in the strongest terms any breach of international peace and security effected through military action by any State against the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of another State. It is impossible in that respect to not see the correlation between Ukraine and Cyprus, whose people are still suffering from the consequences of foreign aggression and invasion. It is impossible to not display the same solidarity in both cases. Greece stands ready to contribute to Ukraine's resilience through northern Greece ports, offering the port of Alexandroupolis as a hub for the dispatch of aid,

and through the involvement of the substantial Greek merchant fleet in the transport of goods, foodstuffs and energy resources. Greece supported the establishment of the EU Ukraine Facility and remains committed to assisting Ukraine as regards its reconstruction efforts and organized towards that end an international conference on the reconstruction of Ukraine on 15 February in Athens, which had broad participation. I wish to highlight the importance we attach to the Odesa region by also exploring ways to contribute to the restoration of the city's historical centre, which is one of UNESCO's sites of cultural heritage.

Greece supports Ukraine's initiative for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace. Along with our partners, we will continue working with Ukraine on its peace formula, including on ensuring the widest possible international support for its key principles and objectives.

Before concluding, I want to emphasize that Greece in its current capacity, and hopefully as a future elected member of the Security Council, will continue to stand against any illegal use of force in international relations in flagrant violation of the basic principles of the Charter. We will continue to advocate for respect for international law and justice, as well as for safeguarding the principles of territorial integrity and the inviolability of borders, national sovereignty and freedom of navigation.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Poland.

Ms. Skoczek (Poland): Poland aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union.

We thank the Japanese delegation for convening this meeting, prompted by Russia's barbaric attacks of 2 and 6 March on the city of Odesa. We reiterate our strongest condemnation of Russia's illegal, unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression, which constitutes a blatant violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. We also pay tribute to the thousands of Ukrainian civilians, including hundreds of children, who have lost their lives due to Russia's pursuit of its neo-imperial and neocolonial ambitions.

Less than a week ago, on 2 March, Russia used a drone to attack a residential building in Odesa — the deadliest such incident in months. On 6 March, when another attack nearly hit the President of Ukraine and the Prime Minister of Greece, it was hardly the

first instance of a foreign dignitary having to seek shelter from Russian attacks during an official visit to Ukraine. Those can be added to the long list of war crimes committed against the civilian population by the Russian Federation since the very first day of its full-scale aggression against Ukraine. Russia uses such attacks as a tool of war, in complete disregard for the protection of civilians and international humanitarian law. A State that is determined to crush another sovereign country in order to assure itself of its own power must be stopped. The Ukrainians have tirelessly defended their territory, homes, lives and dignity for the past two years. But what should the international community do? Should we allow ourselves to be intimidated by the aggressor, or should we support the victim in its desperate but heroic fight? Russia will not stop until it is stopped.

The Russian economy has switched into war mode, with around 30 per cent of its budget directed at military expenses. Freezing the war will not bring back stability. It will only give Russia time to recover and continue its imperial and aggressive policy. Inactivity, indolence and indifference on our part will only encourage violence. We must therefore continue to provide concrete assistance to Ukraine. It is the only way to stop the aggression. The attacks in Odesa remind us that we cannot tire of the war against Ukraine. We must bring to justice those responsible for the heinous crimes, or we risk the constant repetition of similar acts of violence around the world. Poland welcomes the issuance of new arrest warrants by the International Criminal Court against two high-ranking Russian commanders, Lieutenant-General Sergei Kobylash and Admiral Viktor Sokolov, for their alleged responsibility for the war crimes of directing attacks at civilians and civilian objects.

As we commemorate International Women's Day, let me commend the incredible bravery, resilience and determination of the women of Ukraine. They refuse to give up and are relentless in their work and fight for a better future for their country, at a time when they are caught up in a war that is being waged in total disregard for human life and dignity. The international community should remain committed to supporting them and ensuring that they can play a leading role in Ukraine's economic and social recovery.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Latvia.

Ms. Pavļuta-Deslandes (Latvia): I have the honour to address the Security Council on behalf of the three Baltic States — Estonia, Lithuania and my own country, Latvia.

We align ourselves with the statement made on behalf of the European Union, and I would like to add a few remarks.

I thank the briefers for their insights today.

Russia's brutal war has claimed the lives of countless innocent Ukrainians and continues to cause enormous human suffering and destruction. Russia's attacks on the Ukrainian port city of Odesa on 2 and 6 March are clear evidence that Russia is deliberately targeting Ukraine's civilians and critical infrastructure. That is yet another blatant violation of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations. At least 12 civilians, including five children, were killed by a Russian drone that hit an apartment block. Another missile launched at Odesa fell dangerously close to the Prime Minister of Greece and the President of Ukraine during their visit to the city, as well as killing five civilians and destroying port-related facilities. As a key Ukrainian port, Odesa plays a crucial role in the shipment of food supplies to the countries of the global South. More than 30 million metric tons of agricultural products have been exported out of Odesa since August 2023, through a shipping corridor established by Ukraine after Russia unilaterally withdrew from the Black Sea Grain Initiative. By targeting the port, Russia is harming global supply chains and food security worldwide, affecting the world's most vulnerable populations and aggravating food shortages.

We once again condemn Russia's criminal actions in Ukraine. Its attacks on civilians and critical infrastructure constitute a war crime. Russia's full-scale, illegal and unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine is being carried out with the complicity of Belarus and with military support from Iran and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We continue to call on the aggressor to immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraw all of its troops and military equipment from the territory of Ukraine, within its internationally recognized borders. Russia's criminal actions are not compatible with its status as a permanent member of the Security Council.

Accountability is a prerequisite for a lasting and just peace. Russia and its leaders must be held accountable for the crime of aggression before a fully fledged international tribunal that enjoys broad support and legitimacy from the international community. In that regard, we welcome the recent arrest warrants issued by the International Criminal Court for two Russian officers for crimes committed in Ukraine. A just and sustainable peace cannot be achieved at Ukraine's expense. Any half-solutions or Russian gains from the war will merely encourage further aggression. We support Ukraine's peace initiative and encourage other members of the United Nations to join it. The Baltic States reaffirm their full solidarity with Ukraine and unwavering support until its victory. On this International Women's Day, let us pause to reflect on all the women who have been killed and raped in Ukraine and other wars.

The meeting rose at 5.25 p.m.