



Security Council

Distr.: General
7 March 2022

Original: English

Letter dated 7 March 2022 from the Permanent Representative of Poland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit a statement of the Republic of Poland in relation to the Security Council briefing, to be held on 7 March 2022, on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine (see annex).

I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Krzysztof **Szczerski**
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Poland



Annex to the letter dated 7 March 2022 from the Permanent Representative of Poland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Security Council briefing on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine under the agenda item “Threats to international peace and security”

Statement by Krzysztof Szczerski, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Poland to the United Nations in New York

New York, 7 March 2022

I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths and Executive Director Catherine M. Russell for their briefings.

The humanitarian situation in Ukraine is deteriorating at an alarming rate. First and foremost, we pay tribute to the fearless soldiers and civilians alike who defend their homeland and freedom. They fight also for those who were forced to flee.

Poland condemns in the strongest terms attacks against civilians and civilian objects, such as schools, hospitals and orphanages. On Friday, an 18-month-old boy, Kirill, died after shelling in Mariupol. The images of this tragedy lay bare the devastation wreaked by the Russian army in residential areas. On Sunday, Russia attacked Vinnytsia, another peaceful city in Ukraine, where many humanitarian organizations, including United Nations agencies, are operating from to bring relief. This is a clear manifestation that Russia deliberately creates a humanitarian catastrophe in Ukraine and blatantly disregards the principles of international humanitarian law.

Since the beginning of the Russian invasion, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has reported more than 1,207 civilian casualties in Ukraine, including 406 people killed. Real numbers are likely much higher. It must be halted. The General Assembly resolution, adopted last week by an overwhelming majority of Member States, demands that Russia immediately withdraw its forces and abide by international law. It is high time that it listens to the voices of the world.

We are particularly worried about the challenges to effective protection of those in vulnerable situations, namely, women, children, elderly persons and persons with disabilities. Everything possible must be done to set up and respect humanitarian corridors to ensure the evacuation of the civilian population. This is even more pressing as we have started to notice an increasing number of patients being evacuated from Ukrainian hospitals, including oncological wards, and dozens of terminally ill children have already arrived in Poland. Among those fleeing Russia's war were also children from Darnytsky orphanage in Kyiv – 216 persons altogether, children with their chaperones, were escorted and taken to the city of Opole, Poland, where they would be settled and receive further care.

With as many as half of all refugees being children, the war in Ukraine has turned into a children's crisis. The everyday lives of Ukrainian children are no longer defined by school and leisure but rather by flight and bomb shelters. Thousands of them are already out of school because of fighting, and some may no longer have a school to go back to. Attacks on medical and education facilities and cutting off food and medical supplies threaten the health and lives of millions of children. An entire generation of young Ukrainians will bear the scars of the atrocities of this war on their bodies and souls.

There are 2.7 million persons with disabilities registered in Ukraine, including children. Many of them found themselves trapped at home, owing to the challenges of evacuation. We appeal to all humanitarian partners and Member States providing help to Ukraine to include persons with disabilities in humanitarian action.

At least 1 million people have been internally displaced and more than 1.7 million have been forced to leave Ukraine as a consequence of Russia's military aggression. We are witnessing the fastest growing refugee crisis in Europe since the Second World War. Within 10 days, more than 1 million refugees from Ukraine fleeing the horrors of the war brought on them by the Russian attack were welcomed in Poland, and we will continue to admit and provide shelter, food, health care and – most importantly – safety to every person in need, regardless of their nationality, race or religious creed. To compare, during the 2015 migration crisis, the same number of refugees arrived in Europe in a whole year. Among those who have already found refuge in Poland are citizens of more than 150 countries. To give you the scale, 100 people per minute cross our border.

As a neighbour and close friend of Ukraine, we see first-hand the dramatic humanitarian consequences of this war. Aside from institutional care, thousands of Polish people are organizing in a bottom-up way, showing solidarity with Ukraine, opening up their homes to refugees and volunteering at welcome centres. Every day on the Polish-Ukrainian border, we are witnessing heart-breaking images of women and children, their eyes are full of fear, sadness and despair. Providing them with safety and hope is not only our human obligation, but a natural reaction of solidarity. Many observers ask where are the refugee camps? There are none, as, for the time being, all those coming are accommodated by families. But these resources might be exhausted soon. More people coming now to Poland are ill or traumatized, and we see growing needs for medicines and first aid equipment, followed by specialized treatment and psychological assistance. We believe that the involvement of United Nations bodies and agencies experienced in dealing with this kind of needs, together with the continued efforts of the Polish authorities, will bring rapid and appropriate solutions.

Poland is grateful for the work done by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the International Committee of the Red Cross and its partners for maintaining their presence across Ukraine and continuing the delivery of assistance. As humanitarian needs are multiplying by the hour, it is uplifting to see that the United Nations flash appeal for Ukraine was met with record generosity from the international community.

This morning, the Polish Government urgently adopted a draft law, which is to be voted on later this week, legalizing the stay of citizens of Ukraine in order to enable them to take up employment and provide them with health care, education and accommodation.

The law encompasses regulations regarding: stay, work, education, health care as well as financial regulations. The Polish labour market will open further to those Ukrainians who arrived in Poland in the aftermath of the Russian aggression. It also offers temporary financial help to Polish citizens who welcomed refugees into their homes. Ukrainian citizens may apply for a one-time subsidy to meet their basic needs. The Government will allocate funds for schooling of Ukrainian students. Every Ukrainian citizen fleeing the war has guaranteed access to the public health-care system in the same way as Polish citizens do. According to estimates, the yearly cost of the implementation of the said law for 1 million people will amount to 2 billion United States dollars.

Today, Ukraine pays a high price for defending its independence, territorial integrity and democracy. The determination and courage of the Ukrainian people inspire the world. We cannot fail them. It is crucial to show our solidarity with Ukraine and its people by acting now.
