



Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

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Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Hoxha	(Albania)
<i>Members:</i>	Brazil	Mr. Costa Filho
	China	Mr. Dai Bing
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Gabon	Mr. Biang
	Ghana	Ms. Oppong-Ntiri
	India	Mr. Raguttahalli
	Ireland	Ms. Byrne Nason
	Kenya	Mr. Kimani
	Mexico	Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu
	Norway	Ms. Heimerback
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	United Arab Emirates	Mrs. Nusseibeh
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Kariuki
	United States of America	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield

Agenda

Maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.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 Germany, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia 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: Ms. Pramila Patten, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict; Ms. Natalia Karbowska, Co-founder and Director on Strategic Development of the Ukrainian Women's Fund; and Ms. Sherrie Rollins Westin, President of Sesame Workshop.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I also invite His Excellency Mr. Charles Michel, President of the European Council, to participate in this meeting.

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

I give the floor to Ms. Patten.

Ms. Patten: I wish to thank the Albanian presidency for organizing this meeting and for inviting me to brief the Security Council.

In April, on the occasion of the annual open debate of the Security Council on sexual violence in conflict, I posed a question:

“What do the 10 resolutions on women and peace and security — five of which are squarely on preventing and addressing conflict-related sexual violence — mean right now for a woman in Ukraine?” (*S/PV.9016, p. 2*)

That was the question that compelled me to visit Ukraine in early May. Painfully, my visit cast into stark relief the gap that still exists between the aspiration of prevention expressed by the Security Council through the robust normative framework that has been established over the past decade and the reality on the ground for the most vulnerable.

The commitment of the Security Council is unequivocal — to bring all tools to bear to break

the seemingly endless cycles of sexual violence and impunity. The resolutions on sexual violence articulate the elements of a compliance regime to influence the conduct of perpetrators and potential perpetrators. The resolutions reinforce international humanitarian law, which makes it clear that even wars have limits, and that sexual violence is beyond the scope of acceptable conduct, even in the midst of battle. Those limits have been universally agreed upon and must be universally respected. They include a categorical prohibition of all forms of sexual violence, which can never be excused, justified or amnestied.

Yet, as the conflict in Ukraine passes the 100-day mark, we are faced with mounting allegations of sexual violence. Due to the active hostilities, mass internal displacement, the breakdown of referral pathways for services and the stigma associated with sexual violence, victims have often been unable or unwilling to report to law enforcement authorities or service providers. The referral pathways for the relevant services are not functioning in many places, especially in eastern Ukraine. For example, prior to 24 February, 20 medical service delivery points and maternity hospitals were providing assistance to survivors of gender-based violence, with the support of the United Nations Population Fund. As of 18 April, only nine such facilities were operational, due to damage from hostilities and staffing shortages. In the current context, many allegations of conflict-related sexual violence are difficult, if not impossible, to verify, making it challenging to assess prevalence.

As of 3 June, the human rights monitoring team of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights had received reports of 124 alleged acts of conflict-related sexual violence, occurring against women, girls, men and boys in the Chernihiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk, Kharkiv, Kherson, Kyiv, Luhansk, Mykolaiv, Vynnytsya, Zaporizhzhya, Zakarpattia and Zhytomyr regions.

Women constitute most of the alleged victims — 56 of 124 allegations concern women. Forty-nine of the allegations are against children — 41 against girls, 7 against boys and, in one case, the gender was unknown. Nineteen of the allegations are against men, including rape, attempted rape, forced public stripping and threat of sexual violence. The verification of cases is still ongoing.

From our experience of conflicts the world over, we know that sexual violence is the most consistently and massively underreported violation, and that available data represents only the tip of the iceberg. An active battleground is never conducive to accurate bookkeeping. But if we wait for hard data and statistics, it will always be too late. That is why we must mobilize immediately on the basis of our common conviction that even one case of sexual violence is unacceptable. We do not need hard data for a scaled-up humanitarian response or for all parties to put in place preventive measures.

In that regard, I wish to acknowledge and commend the leadership-by-example of the Ukrainian authorities in their agreement of a framework of cooperation with the United Nations on the prevention and response to conflict-related sexual violence, which was signed by the Deputy Prime Minister, Olha Stefanishyna, in Kyiv on 3 May as an outcome of my visit. That framework will serve as the basis for a comprehensive and multifaceted preventive and service response and more effective coordination of all stakeholders, including the United Nations agencies in Ukraine and neighbouring countries.

Allow me to emphasize five critical areas of the framework.

First, strengthening the rule of law and accountability must be ensured as a central aspect of deterrence and the prevention of crimes of sexual violence.

Secondly, strengthening the capacity of the security and defence sector to prevent sexual violence must be ensured. That will require specific action plans by the military, police, border guards and other Government security and defence forces, encompassing more than 100,000 volunteer forces.

Thirdly, it must be ensured that survivors of sexual violence, as well as their children, have access to comprehensive services, including sexual and reproductive health, psychological, legal and socioeconomic services and reintegration support. That will entail support for Ukraine's national health and social services systems.

Fourthly, even as we deal with the immediate challenge of unabated conflict, we must cast our view ahead to ongoing and future negotiations for the cessation of hostilities, while ensuring that sexual violence is addressed in the framework of a ceasefire agreement and that such crimes are ultimately reflected

in the specific provisions of any peace agreement, including those related to security arrangements and transitional justice mechanisms. That includes ensuring that amnesties for sexual violence crimes are explicitly prohibited.

Furthermore, it is essential that we ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in all political processes, including negotiations for peace. Ukrainian women-led organizations are active on the front lines of the sexual and gender-based violence response, yet women have been conspicuously absent from the negotiating table to date.

Fifthly, we must address conflict-related trafficking in persons for the purposes of sexual exploitation and prostitution. That will entail awareness-raising and training for military personnel, border guards, police and immigration officials and will require the action of neighbouring and receiving countries and the institutions of the European Union.

Too often, the needs of women and girls in conflict settings have been sidelined and treated as an afterthought. The framework of cooperation makes them an explicit priority, and I call for the solidarity of the Council and the international donor community to support the Ukrainian authorities and relevant United Nations entities to implement the framework. Fundamentally, that is as important for Ukraine's future as the defence and security sector expenditures, for which billions of dollars have already been mobilized.

I also wish to note that, last week, I had the opportunity to debrief the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations on my visit to Ukraine. I emphasized that my Office is at the disposal of all parties to the conflict to support the implementation of preventive measures that mitigate the acute risks of conflict-related sexual violence. Resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013) and 2467 (2019) provide a clear and unanimously agreed preventive framework that includes the issuance of clear orders through military chains of command that reinforce zero tolerance for sexual violence and the designation of high-level civilian and military focal points to engage with my Office and other relevant United Nations actors, among other measures. I look forward to further consultation with the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations on possible modalities for cooperation in that sphere,

including the facilitation of access to areas not under Ukrainian Government control.

I wish to draw particular attention to the trafficking dimension. As the Secretary-General stated in March, for predators and human traffickers war is not a tragedy: it is an opportunity. Women and children fleeing the conflict are being targeted for trafficking and exploitation, in some cases facing further exposure to rape and other risks while seeking refuge.

In addition to my engagement with Polish and Moldovan local and State authorities, I visited reception centres at border-crossing points in both countries. We must acknowledge and commend the outpouring of financial and moral support for the Ukrainian people by national and local authorities, as well as private citizens, which is perhaps unprecedented in modern times.

Yet the protection challenges related to the displacement in the past 100 days of close to 14 million people — mostly women and children, 6.8 million of whom have fled across borders — is also unprecedented. From the outset of the conflict, the heightened risks of trafficking in persons, including for the purposes of sexual exploitation and prostitution, have been alarmingly evident.

The lack of consistent vetting of accommodation offers and transportation arrangements is a serious concern, as is the limited capacity of protection services to address the pace and volume of displacement. There are also concerns regarding the multiplicity of volunteers with limited vetting and little or no training or experience.

In Przemyśl, Poland, my team and I visited the site of a Tesco supermarket that had been converted into a receiving centre for Ukrainian refugees. While the range of services being provided is exemplary, there are grave security and protection concerns in a facility run by volunteers and with only a bare-bones presence of United Nations agencies.

For example, we heard a number of credible anecdotal accounts from humanitarian staff. With minimal security screening, a man registered as a volunteer at the Tesco centre in the afternoon and entered the room where refugees were waiting for transport to France. At that time, he made contact with a 19-year-old woman, whom he later woke up in the sleeping hall at 2 a.m. to offer her a ride to France. Another volunteer became suspicious of that individual

roaming the sleeping quarters in the early morning hours and intervened.

Another man, wearing a yellow volunteer's vest and standing with a sign at the Przemyśl train station hall, was offering free transportation from Poland to Germany. Other volunteers became suspicious and informed local law enforcement when they noticed that the man was selecting only young women for transportation in his minivan.

In Warsaw, during a meeting with officials from the Ministry of Justice, a Judge of the Criminal Court shared with me how, while she was at the Rzeszów reception centre, she was personally approached by a man who sought her help to have access to eight young women and adolescent girls whom he had identified and wanted to offer transportation to Germany. She told me that, even as a judge, she was not initially suspicious until a volunteer intervened and informed her that the same man had been coming every two days to hand-pick young women and girls. The judge made an urgent appeal for awareness-raising and training for law enforcement officials and other relevant actors.

Within the humanitarian response architecture in Ukraine, a temporary task force on human trafficking has been established to strengthen coordination and foster cross-border cooperation, including among criminal justice actors. However, it is critical to ensure that effective protection systems be in place in all transit and destination countries and at all border crossings.

Strengthening the overall response to trafficking is a critical aspect of the framework of cooperation, which will also require a coherent and coordinated response at the level of European institutions. That is of the utmost urgency, as I believe that the humanitarian crisis is turning into a human trafficking crisis. It requires a concerted, integrated and holistic cross-border response by humanitarian partners, law enforcement agencies, border forces, immigration officials and political leaders.

A regional compact is urgently required. In that regard, I am encouraged that His Excellency Mr. Charles Michel, President of the European Council, is in the Security Council Chamber today, as I believe that the issue will require European leadership at the highest levels in order to address the problem.

It will also require the continued focus and leadership of the Security Council, in line with

resolution 2331 (2016), which articulates the nexus of conflict-related human trafficking and conflict-related sexual violence. I consider that dimension to be a core aspect of the conflict-related sexual violence mandate and the Ukraine crisis to be a critical litmus test for the implementation of key aspects of resolution 2331 (2016).

During my mission, I witnessed with awe the resilience and fortitude shown by the communities affected by the conflict, including the women forced to flee their homes with their children and nothing but the clothes on their backs and the bags of belongings they were able to carry by hand. Many survivors have braved the risk of reprisals and retaliation to tell their stories. We owe them more than solidarity; we owe them a swift and serious response.

The prevalence of sexual violence in conflicts throughout history teaches us that it is critical to reinforce prevention, protection and the delivery of services from the very beginning of any armed conflict. The Framework of Cooperation that I referred to paves the way politically for tangible support and technical advice and assistance from my Office and the wider United Nations system, and we also serve as a platform for the mobilization of resources. In order to address that challenge, it is crucial to ensure that the level of political focus, as well as the allocation of resources for a comprehensive response, is commensurate with the scale and complexity of the problem.

Lastly, I want to acknowledge that even as we focus on Ukraine, the ripple effects of the conflict are also being felt in other war zones around the world by women and girls who risk becoming forgotten victims of forgotten conflicts. From Yemen to the Central African Republic, Afghanistan to Myanmar or Tigray in northern Ethiopia, resources are being drained and attention diverted. As other crises escalate behind the scenes, we must reassure all populations at risk that they are not forgotten and that international law is not an empty promise.

The President: I thank Ms. Patten for her briefing and availability while travelling, and I hope that the minor technical glitches did not affect the entirety of her message.

I now give the floor to Ms. Karbowska.

Ms. Karbowska: I would like to thank you, Sir, for the opportunity to participate in such an important event today. My voice is the voice of my organization,

which has been working to support women in Ukraine for 22 years. It is also the voice of hundreds of other women's rights organizations that have been working 24/7 in Ukraine to support women, provide food and medicine, heal trauma and give the women whose lives have been destroyed by Russia the strength to continue — women who have been raped, whose kids have been killed and whose houses have been burned.

Every Ukrainian has a story of how the war started for her or him that each of us will remember forever. For me, the war started during our meeting on the localization of our national action plan on resolution 1325 (2000). Ukraine had adopted a second national action plan on the implementation of the resolution, and on 23 and 24 February we were meeting in Kyiv with the representatives of 13 regional coalitions to plan our work for the year. The Russian invasion forced us to end the meeting early, but it did not change our plans. The war showed that today the women and peace and security agenda in Ukraine is more relevant than ever. It has a new, very concrete and clear meaning, which is that the security of each and every woman is inseparable from the security of the whole country. None of us can feel safe when sexual violence and rape are taking place close to where we live. Women's organizations are usually the first to be approached by women who have experienced sexual violence. They provide psychological assistance. Together with law-enforcement agencies, they document the cases and support investigation processes.

I am not going to tell the stories of those women and children. The Council has heard them. But sexual violence in this war is the least visible crime, and, for every girl or woman who is willing to tell her story, there are many others who will remain silent for years. That is because of the notion of rape as a crime of shame, because of survivors' feelings of shame, because of the guilt felt by those who were not able to defend them and because of the fear of neighbours that they too may end up in the same situation. All of that weakens the social connections within communities, and that is because this is a strategy aimed at establishing control over those communities. Russia is using sexual violence and rape as a means of terror to control civilians within the temporarily occupied territories. Although the full scale of conflict-related sexual violence is not yet known, human rights activists and law-enforcement agencies estimate that there are hundreds of cases, not

just among women and girls, but also among men, boys and people of other gender identities and of every age.

I therefore have a question. If Russia is using terror against civilians in Ukraine — and there is a lot of evidence to prove that — why is Russia still a member of the Security Council? How is it possible that it can participate in United Nations peacekeeping operations? In the past three months I spent time on the border with Poland and saw the faces of women refugees. One in particular had no relatives. She was dealing with a language barrier and had no savings in the bank. It was just her, her child and a suitcase. I remember another young woman from the Chernihiv region. She did not even have a suitcase. A Russian missile had destroyed everything in her house. She said that her only family member now was her cat. According to international organizations, because of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, Europe is currently experiencing its largest displacement since the Second World War.

The majority of refugees are women and children, the two groups most vulnerable to falling victim to sexual and labour abuse. Civil society and Governments have made huge efforts to protect refugees in Europe and prevent trafficking at border crossings. I myself saw many volunteers at the border helping with registration, offering rides, providing accommodation and distributing hotline contact information. But as the war has continued, Ukrainian women refugees in Europe who had initially planned to seek only temporary shelter are finding themselves in need of more permanent housing and work. That opens up new risks of sexual and labour exploitation.

We are also hearing the stories of women and children whom Russian troops forced to go to Russia through the so-called filtration camps. Two months ago I met a 16-year-old boy named Roman in western Ukraine. He is from Mariupol. A neighbour helped him escape and brought him to western Ukraine. Roman's mother is in Russia. The last time he saw her was when she was brutally transported to a filtration camp. No one knows what has happened to her and if Roman will ever see her again. There are hundreds of stories like that. What do we call this — trafficking, slavery, terror or crime? Russia is using war crimes as a weapon in this war. Military experts confirm that the last time an aggressor behaved so brutally towards civilians in war was during the Second World War. This is an utter violation of international humanitarian law. Russia's war on Ukraine has shown that customary practices

and traditional international security systems no longer work.

We are revising our national action plan on resolution 1325 (2000) in Ukraine because realities have changed. But we still believe that resolution 1325 (2000) is a powerful instrument. We just need to create new tools that will make it work properly at different levels, and, very importantly, for the women on the ground. I urge the Council to develop such instruments, maintain pressure with sanctions, continue providing military and humanitarian support and do more every day.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Rollins Westin.

Ms. Rollins Westin: I thank the Government of Albania for inviting me to address the Security Council on behalf of Sesame Workshop, the non-profit educational organization behind *Sesame Street*, which has been reaching children with early learning for 50 years in more than 150 countries.

In the past decade we have been working with humanitarian organizations, Governments and United Nations agencies to support children and caregivers who face the trauma of conflict and displacement. To date, we have reached millions of young children affected by crises in the Middle East, Bangladesh, East Africa, Latin America and Afghanistan — and now Ukraine. Today the Council has heard about some of the most devastating impacts of war and conflict, including increased gender-based and sexual violence. The gender dynamics of the crisis in Ukraine are particularly pronounced, with women and children accounting for 90 per cent of all those who have fled the country, while for those who remain the situation is equally dire.

Today I want to draw the Council's attention to the impact this war has on children, many of whom bear witness and have been subjected to atrocities, and all of whom are deeply affected. I am here to urge the international community to prioritize young children and caregivers in its response to the conflict in order to help mitigate a crisis of generational proportions.

Young children are not only incredibly vulnerable to the immediate physical impacts of war but also have the most to lose because the early years are such a critical time in their development. There is no time in a child's life that is more fragile and more important

than the first five years, when the brain is developing faster than at any other time in life. That is also the period when the brain is most sensitive to a child's environment. Repeated exposure to traumatic events can inhibit brain development in children, with long-term repercussions for their cognitive abilities, health and productivity that extend long after they survive the immediate danger.

I ask the Council to look at this conflict through the lens of children growing up in the throes of war, shaken by bombs, forced to leave their homes and all they have ever known, without the stability that children so desperately need. Their caregivers are still tasked each and every day with providing for their children, while they themselves have been traumatized by violence. All of those effects are compounded in Ukraine in particular, because so many women and children have had to leave behind their fathers, brothers, uncles and male family members.

Right now, children are experiencing the kind of exposure to violence and stress that has the potential to derail their future if they do not receive the right support. The urgency simply cannot be overstated. However, the truth is that the international community has viable solutions to support children and their caregivers, many of which can be integrated into the existing humanitarian response. I would like to leave the Council today with three ideas for supporting young children and caregivers during crises.

First, we must directly provide mental health and psychosocial support for the immediate needs of children, as nothing less than a first-line and life-saving intervention. Advocates for mental health in crisis contexts have begun to have some success in building support into the Ukraine response, which must be continued and expanded.

Secondly, we must invest in early childhood development, from nurturing care to playful learning, and fold it into humanitarian and national response plans. Quality early childhood development has been proven to help mitigate the effects of the trauma that children experience in crisis situations. Those interventions do not necessarily add significant cost.

In fact, building early childhood support directly into existing interventions can be an effective use of limited resources. We have seen it in Jordan, where we partner with the International Rescue Committee and the Ministry of Health to integrate early childhood

support directly into visits with health-care providers. In Ukraine, we align our work with national education objectives, following the lead of the Ministry of Education and Science, which, despite extraordinary challenges, continues to reach Ukrainian children with invaluable education.

Finally, we must not forget the caregivers. We know that the most important intervention for young children experiencing trauma is more engagement with a caring adult. We must therefore structure support to meet the unique challenges of parenting in crises and help caregivers provide the nurturing care that children so desperately need.

Such early childhood interventions bolster children, communities and societies at large. Yet less than 3 per cent of humanitarian assistance funding is allocated to that critical need — a number that simply must rise to meet the challenge of Ukraine and the crises yet to come. If we do not focus on the impact of the issues discussed here today on children, prioritizing their needs and giving them the chance to thrive, how can they possibly be expected to have the skills they need to rebuild their society?

Our hopes for a prosperous and peaceful future depend on the action we take now to support young children, because our future depends on them. I urge the Council to prioritize children and their caregivers in responding to this crisis. If not, there will be lasting consequences for our future security and stability for generations to come.

The President: I thank Ms. Rollins Westin 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 thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for her commitment since the start of the Russian aggression. I welcome the signing of a framework of cooperation between the United Nations and Ukraine.

I thank Ms. Karbowska and Ms. Rollins Westin for their remarks, and I pay tribute to all civil society members working to defend the rights of Ukrainian women.

I also welcome the President of the European Council to today's meeting, which demonstrates the European Union's unshakable support for Ukraine.

Since the start of the Russian aggression, the European Union has mobilized more than €4.6 billion to help Ukrainians. Assistance has been provided at all levels — for budgetary and humanitarian purposes as well as for the fight against impunity, in particular through the establishment of joint investigative teams, coordinated by the European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation.

The sanctions adopted by the European Union have but one objective — to restore Russia's respect for the Charter of the United Nations. Such efforts are essential because, for more than 100 days, the Russian army has waged a war of aggression, whose effects on civilians are worsening daily.

France is appalled at the numerous allegations of sexual violence. If proved to be true, they would constitute crimes. We must all enforce Security Council resolutions on sexual violence. We have the responsibility to provide support to victims. They must be able to tell their stories without being stigmatized.

France supports United Nations actions on the ground to establish the facts. Those responsible for acts of violence must be prosecuted and punished. It is for that reason that France has made available to Ukraine expertise in collecting evidence and establishing accountability.

We are concerned about the risks faced by displaced persons. France fully supports United Nations action that seeks to prevent the trafficking and smuggling of human beings. In that regard, we applaud the efforts of the United Nations Population Fund. The victims of violence must be protected. France calls for that protection to be strengthened.

In the light of the aggression, which has tragic consequences for the civilian population, France remains fully engaged. We will spare no effort in working to restore peace. We continue to call for the full withdrawal of Russian troops, in line with the ruling of the International Court of Justice and full respect for international humanitarian law.

Lastly, France reiterates its support for all Ukrainian women. There can be no lasting peace without the full participation of women.

Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Special Representative Patten, Ms. Karbowska and Ms. Rollins Westin for their

briefings. I also welcome the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, to today's meeting.

The testimonies we heard today reveal another dimension to the tragic consequences of the invasion of Ukraine for the civilian population. According to the information available to us, 90 per cent of the people who have left the country are women and children, and 60 per cent of the internally displaced persons are also women, which makes it clear that this conflict has an inescapable gender component. The vulnerable situation of all those women and children increases the risk of trafficking, including for sexual exploitation, as we heard this morning. A short time ago (see S/PV.9052) we heard High Commissioner Michelle Bachelet refer in the Security Council to cases of rape of women in areas under Russian control, although she also reported that there were incidents of sexual violence committed by both sides. What is truly deplorable is that the reports seem to indicate that incidents of sexual violence against women and girls are on the rise. Stigma, social conventions, stereotypes faced by victims and limited mechanisms for reporting such incidents make it difficult to report and fully investigate those crimes.

The reports of Ukrainian women being raped and subsequently murdered, which Special Representative of the Secretary-General Patten shared with us following her recent visit to the region, are extremely disturbing. We must prioritize investigations into alleged war crimes, crimes against humanity and other violations of international humanitarian law so that the perpetrators are brought to justice and the crimes do not go unpunished. Mexico is closely following the ongoing investigation by the Office of the Prosecutor, the International Criminal Court and the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine initiated by the Human Rights Council. We recognize the importance of the coordination of the Protection Cluster led by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and we will follow with special attention the important work of the sexual and gender-based violence sub-cluster led by the United Nations Population Fund.

The medium and long-term consequences of the war for the health of the entire population, and especially for women victims and survivors of sexual violence, are very worrying. It is urgent that we ensure that they have unhindered access to sexual and reproductive health services and also mental health services, which are critical in such times. We welcome

the signing of the Framework of Cooperation between the United Nations and the Government of Ukraine on preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence. We trust that it will serve as a pillar for prevention and deterrence. The United Nations system should continue to gather evidence, disaggregated data and gender-sensitive analysis on sexual and gender-based violence and work in coordination with the Independent International Commission of Inquiry. We will be watching for the results of the upcoming visit to Ukraine this month.

Women have taken on a fundamental role since the beginning of the Russian invasion, and we must ensure that they can participate fully and on an equal footing in decision-making and in the negotiations that represent a pathway to putting an end to the war in Ukraine. Once again, Mexico calls for an immediate ceasefire to end this tragedy.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): Since I was not here for the beginning of your presidency, I would like to enthusiastically welcome you, Mr. President, to your new role and to wish you the best during this month. I thank Albania for calling this very important meeting, and I would also like to give a special thanks to our briefers, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Patten, Ms. Karbowska and Ms. Rollins Westin, for their illuminating remarks. I welcome the participation of the Permanent Representative of Ukraine in today's meeting, as well as that of Mr. Michel, the President of the European Council.

Since Russia launched its illegal and unprovoked further invasion of Ukraine, the mountain of credible reports of atrocities committed by Russia's forces against civilians has grown every day. The reports include horrific accounts of sexual violence. There are more and more allegations of sexual assault of women and girls by Russian soldiers, and of men and boys as well. We have heard from Ukraine's Foreign Minister of multiple cases of sexual violence by Russian soldiers in Ukrainian cities that were under the control of Russia's forces. We have heard from Ukraine's Deputy Prime Minister that Russian soldiers raped Ukrainian women for hours and then killed them.

The corroborating evidence goes beyond Ukrainian officials. In Bucha, we have evidence of atrocities, including imagery that confirms the presence of mass graves. And just today we heard from the Special

Representative of the Secretary-General. There, in Bucha, the indications of Russia's brutality include credible reports of violence perpetrated up close and in cold blood, with individuals killed execution-style, bodies showing signs of torture and sexual violence against women and girls. There have been multiple reports from survivors of Russia's soldiers breaking down doors to basements where women were sheltering and raping them. Those terrible acts were done in front of their children, and they were filmed by the Russian soldiers. Those are bone-chilling accounts. And we know that for every account we hear, many more are unknown.

In addition to the women suffering inside Ukraine, we cannot forget that more than 90 per cent — and we have heard this mentioned several times today — of refugees from Ukraine are women and children. As we have heard before in the Security Council, women and children bear disproportionately high risks in this war. Family separation leaves girls, in particular, at increased risk for sexual exploitation and trafficking. And we have heard sobering reports of traffickers targeting women as they seek protection abroad. So we, the members of the Council, cannot stay silent. We must seek and achieve justice for victims. And we must do everything we can to prevent further violence.

The responsibility starts first and foremost with Russia. As a reminder to the Russian Federation, resolution 1820 (2008) recognized that rape and other forms of sexual violence can constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity. Furthermore, under international humanitarian law, sexual violence is prohibited. It is up to Russia to take measures within its forces and proxy forces to ensure adherence to that resolution and to international humanitarian law. It is up to Russia to stop rape, violence and atrocities from within its ranks. It is up to Russia to end this unconscionable, unprovoked war on the people of Ukraine, and we call on the Russian Federation to do just that.

And though the primary responsibility rests with Russia, I also want to talk about what the rest of us can do to address this heartbreaking situation. The Framework of Cooperation established by Special Representative Patten and her team and signed with the Government of Ukraine last month deserves our strong support. It should serve as a vehicle for United Nations alignment and coordination. We should share the key elements of the Framework, and we should do

everything we can to support the Ukrainian authorities as they follow it. The United States will continue to support Special Representative Patten's office to facilitate that important work.

The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine created by the Human Rights Council can also ensure that Russia does not get away with hiding atrocities. Last month, the Human Rights Council passed another resolution that called for the Commission of Inquiry to address the events in the areas of the Kyiv, Chernihiv, Kharkiv and Sumy regions, with a view to holding those responsible to account. Both the Commission of Inquiry and the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine are critical to ensuring accountability. Sharing information and documenting crimes is critical to ensuring accountability for crimes of rape and other forms of gender-based violence. That can be done only through effective investigations of reports of such crimes and trials in appropriate criminal courts.

All of that requires resources. Many on the Council have emphasized their political commitment to preventing gender-based violence. Now is the time to provide proof of that commitment — to match words with action. Ukraine is counting on us.

Finally, as we work to achieve accountability, we must also do right by the survivors of sexual violence. They urgently need improved and expanded comprehensive service provision, including sexual and reproductive health services, medical and specialized mental-health services, legal assistance and livelihood support.

All of that work needs to be survivor-centred and trauma-informed. Above all, it must give survivors hope. Together, let us take on the scourge of conflict-related sexual violence. Let us demand accountability and justice for survivors, and provide the resources to see it through. And let us do everything in our power to prevent more violence and end Russia's unconscionable war.

Mr. Dai Bing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Representative Patten and the other briefers for their briefings.

As the conflict in Ukraine enters its fourth month, it has taken a heavy toll on the Ukrainian people. The security risks faced by women and children are particularly worrisome. Parties to the conflict should

comply with international law and take measures to protect civilians from all forms of violence, including sexual violence against women and girls and human trafficking. People affected by the violence should have timely access to medical, psychological and social services, and parties to the conflict should ensure that hospitals and other civilian facilities are protected from attacks. The United Nations and the Ukrainian Government signed a framework agreement last month to help survivors of sexual violence and prevent human trafficking. We hope that will provide effective protection for vulnerable groups, such as women and children. The use of sexual violence as a tactic of war is a serious crime, and any allegations should be investigated impartially on the basis of facts.

Since the outbreak of the conflict, 6.8 million Ukrainian people have crossed the border into neighbouring countries for refuge, the vast majority of whom are women and children. China appreciates the humanitarian spirit shown by Ukraine's neighbouring countries in providing safe shelter and a basic livelihood for women and children refugees. Meanwhile, the increasing number of cases of human trafficking, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse targeting women and children refugees is disturbing. China calls for immediate international cooperation to identify and punish relevant criminal acts and to resolutely stop the secondary victimization of women and children. The Office of Special Representative Patten, UN-Women, UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and other international agencies should strengthen monitoring and analysis and provide professional and technical support to combat human trafficking, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse against refugees.

Eliminating sexual violence and human trafficking in conflict is not the end of our efforts. Only through a ceasefire and by restoring peace can the trauma of conflict for women and children be fundamentally avoided. The international community should work together to promote peace talks and encourage Russia and Ukraine to return to the negotiation track. We hope that the upcoming meeting among Russia, Ukraine, the United Nations and Türkiye will help the parties to gradually build mutual trust, while resolving the food issue in Ukraine.

Providing weapons or imposing sanctions and pressure will not solve the problem but will only perpetuate and expand the conflict. People in Ukraine and other developing countries have no reason to pay the price for geopolitical and bloc confrontations. At a time when human destiny is shared and global security is indivisible, no country can, or should, seek its own absolute security at the expense of the security of others. International and regional security cannot, and should not, be guaranteed by strengthening military blocs and cutting off supply and industrial chains. China once again calls on the parties concerned to put international and regional peace and security first and to play a constructive role in the proper resolution of the crisis in Ukraine.

Ms. Opong-Ntiri (Ghana): The gendered impact of conflict is of importance to peace and security and must continue to engage the attention of the global community so that appropriate and tailored responses are provided to the many women and girls who, unfortunately, fall victim to actions that constitute a violation of both their rights and international law. We are therefore grateful to Special Representative Pramila Patten, Natalia Karbowska and Sherrie Rollins Westin for their briefings and for drawing attention to the unfortunate development of conflict-related sexual violence and human trafficking in Ukraine and, more important, the protection assistance and support being provided to the women and girls.

Two months ago, in this very Chamber, the members of the Security Council and the wider United Nations membership were briefed by Ms. Patten during the open debate on conflict-related sexual violence, with an emphasis on accountability as a form of prevention (see S/PV.9016). At that open debate, Ukraine was listed among conflict environments where the scourge of conflict-related sexual violence remained a chilling reality for many.

Today, as Ukraine takes centre stage in our discussions on conflict-related sexual violence and human trafficking, we, who are entrusted with the details of their heartbreaking circumstances, owe it to victims and survivors to channel our dissatisfaction into action. We are reminded of our obligation as an international community to ensure that prevention, accountability and a survivor-centred approach, which are at the heart of resolution 2467 (2019), are not reduced to mere rhetoric but are translated into real and tangible action on the ground.

Ghana condemns all acts of sexual violence and human trafficking in Ukraine, including as a weapon of war, and stresses the need to hold perpetrators accountable. We reiterate our support for all ongoing accountability efforts, including the investigations by the Ukrainian authorities, civil society organizations and the International Criminal Court, among others.

We further express our support for global calls to designate such acts as war crimes and submit that conflict-related sexual violence and human trafficking should be treated as a basis for targeted sanctions against culpable actors in keeping with the importance that the Security Council attaches to accountability and ending impunity.

Ghana is appreciative of the efforts of all humanitarian and aid agencies present in Ukraine, as well as the Member States that responded to the call for real action and continue to offer a hand of hope in the parts of the country where it is most needed.

Training and capacity-building for United Nations field and humanitarian workers, civil society organizations, local women's groups and media organizations in Ukraine are absolutely essential in ensuring that such entities are adequately equipped to provide sufficient sensitization against stigma. Dealing with the problem of stigmatization would encourage an increasing number of victims not only to report violations against them, but also to support the delivery of justice on their behalf by testifying and staying engaged throughout the prosecution processes.

In accordance with resolution 2475 (2019), the United Nations must urgently reduce the risk of trafficking through the provision of effective assistance and protection to refugees and internally displaced persons without discrimination, in particular on grounds of race, gender, disability or other status, recognizing that discrimination and racism may increase vulnerability to trafficking.

No child in Ukraine should have to endure the horrible experience of being trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation. We urge all relevant United Nations agencies to ensure that child-protection systems in Ukraine are continuously and adequately resourced. There is also a crucial need to ensure access to safe accommodation and enhance the protection of displaced and refugee children, taking into consideration their best interests, to prevent them from being trafficked.

It is important to recall that the effects of conflicts on populations are innumerable. Whenever conflicts occur, innocent civilians are often exposed to unspeakable physical, mental, environmental and economic damage, with very little hope for restoration. When sexual violence and human trafficking are introduced into this already-toxic cocktail, victims experience an agony most of us can never imagine.

A ceasefire is most urgent now to eliminate the conditions within which these unbridled and gross violations of international law, international humanitarian law and human rights abuses have been manifested. Consequently, we reiterate the call on the Russian Federation to unconditionally withdraw its forces from the internationally recognized territories of Ukraine and for the two parties to commit to diplomacy and dialogue for an early and negotiated settlement of their dispute. We believe that, through meaningful and sustained engagement centred on the principles of the Charter, international law and the norms that facilitate peaceful coexistence and assure stability, the parties will be better equipped to address their mutual security concerns.

In concluding, we urge the sustained engagement of the Security Council on this important matter, with a view to ensuring freedom from sexual oppression as well as accountability for all acts of impunity against women and girls in Ukraine.

Ms. Heimerback (Norway): I thank the three briefers for their important statements.

Norway condemns in the strongest terms Russia's unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine, which is a blatant violation of the United Nations Charter. Russia must stop the war and withdraw its troops immediately. We reiterate our demand that civilians be protected and international humanitarian law fully respected and implemented. We are appalled by the forced deportations of Ukrainian citizens, including children, to Russia, Russian-controlled territories and Belarus. We call for the restoration of family links, the immediate release of Ukrainian citizens, and their relocation to safety in Government-held areas of Ukraine.

The war has a gendered impact. It affects women and men, girls and boys, and members of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex communities differently. Let me highlight three issues in this regard. First, attacks on health-care institutions

and staff are denying people, including women who are pregnant or in labour, safe access to sexual and reproductive-health services. Secondly, the number of survivor accounts of rape and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence is high. Children will be born of war. Their rights and well-being — and that of their mothers — must be ensured. And thirdly, we note the high risk of trafficking, as displaced people seek safety across borders.

The foregoing violations and risks must be addressed. In response, Norway has increased our support to the United Nations Population Fund and other humanitarian actors that provide sexual and reproductive-health services. We underline the importance of gender- and age-differentiated responses to meet the needs of the civilian population, including Ukrainian internally displaced persons and refugees. This must include access to mental-health and psychosocial support and sexual and reproductive-health services for all, regardless of the gender indicated in a person's passport. Also, unaccompanied Ukrainian children are in a particularly vulnerable situation. Child protection services must be ensured.

But first and foremost, we must take steps to prevent sexual and gender-based violence, including trafficking, from happening. We welcome the agreed framework on cooperation between the Government of Ukraine and the United Nations on prevention and response to conflict-related sexual violence. Engaging and supporting women human rights defenders and civil society in our responses is key. We insist on a survivor-centred approach. It is vital for survivors, their communities and Ukraine as a whole to be able to overcome the trauma and stigma that has been brought on them by this war and to move forward together.

Atrocities must be investigated, and those responsible held to account. We therefore support the ongoing investigations, including the work of the International Criminal Court and the Commission of Inquiry for Ukraine. Expertise on conflict-related sexual violence, gender, and children's rights are crucial in these processes. We underline the critical importance of strong and independent human rights institutions and accountability mechanisms in Ukraine.

There must be zero tolerance for sexual and gender-based violence and trafficking, and no impunity for perpetrators. Accountability is vital to ensure justice

for the survivors and prevent future sexual and gender-based violations everywhere.

Mr. Costa Filho (Brazil): At the outset, let me thank the briefers — Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict Pramila Patten, Ms. Karbowska and Ms. Rollins Westin — for their valuable accounts of the situation in Ukraine with respect to sexual violence and human trafficking.

As the conflict in Ukraine has entered its fourth month, the full extent of its humanitarian consequences is still being assessed by the international community. We know for sure that the conflict has caused immense suffering for both the people directly affected by military action and for the civilians fleeing confrontation. In the wider context of destruction and gross violations of human rights brought about by the war, we take note, with great concern, of reports of alleged cases of sexual violence directed against women and girls in the context of the conflict in Ukraine.

The numbers reported are alarming and suggest that rape is being systematically deployed as a weapon of war. Brazil reiterates its calls for urgent independent investigations. It is admittedly difficult to document sexual violence because victims often do not want to speak about it. The insufficiency of reports further contributes to the sense of impunity that surrounds such war crimes.

The use of gender-based violence as a weapon of war, as well as a tool of intimidation and social control in conflict situations, is unacceptable. Such crimes are often used to humiliate and punish innocent civilians. It is well documented that sexual violence destroys the social fabric of communities and inflicts long-lasting psychological trauma on its victims. In its aftermath, the stigmatization and discrimination of survivors can endure and contribute to further gender inequality.

Perpetrators of such acts, be they agents of the State or not, should be held accountable for committing clear violations of international human rights and international humanitarian law. Such abhorrent acts are prohibited both in times of war and peace. The proper investigation and prosecution of sexual violence cases in Ukraine are necessary not just as a means of reparation but also of delivering justice. As experience has shown us, the delivery of justice in such cases is also an important tool for consolidating peace in post-conflict situations.

Since the outbreak of the conflict, nearly 15 million people have been displaced, and humanitarian needs continue to soar. Unfortunately, human traffickers and criminal networks may take advantage of such movements of people, for the most part women and children. Such criminals attempt to exploit refugees' vulnerability and lure them with false promises of free transport, accommodation, employment or other forms of assistance. Although we do not know the exact numbers of victims who have already fallen prey to traffickers and abusers, the risks are clear and deserve the international community's attention. As Ms. Gillian Triggs, Assistant High Commissioner for Protection of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), acknowledged in April, States have a duty to prevent predatory individuals and criminal organizations from profiting from such situations. We commend UNHCR for launching an awareness-raising campaign among refugees and distributing printed material with information on how they can protect themselves and report incidents of sexual misconduct or criminal activity.

The growing numbers of reports of sexual violence and human trafficking, as well as the numbers of refugees and internally displaced people themselves, show that the situation in Ukraine is continuing to deteriorate. In order to prevent such atrocities in the region and in other countries, it is crucial that we work to establish effective strategies for avoiding unsafe and irregular routes and promoting sustainable and safe legal pathways for those in need of protection. It is our duty and responsibility to ensure that people fleeing hostilities are appropriately received and cared for. To that end, Brazil has introduced special humanitarian visas for Ukrainian nationals and stateless persons affected by the conflict in Ukraine who want to live and work in Brazil. The Brazilian Embassies in Bratislava, Budapest, Bucharest, Prague and Warsaw have been granting those visas since March, in a policy that has previously benefited Afghan, Syrian and Haitian nationals and is an example of Brazil's unshakable commitment to human rights and the protection of the most vulnerable.

The Council has already failed to prevent the outbreak of the conflict and ensure a cessation of hostilities. It must not fail to repudiate sexual crimes and human trafficking. Immediate investigation by the relevant international bodies is called for, including by

the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine of the Human Rights Council.

Mr. Ragutthalli (India): Let me begin by thanking Under-Secretary-General Pramila Patten, the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, for her remarks. I also thank our civil-society briefers, Ms. Natalia Karbowska and Ms. Sherrie Rollins Westin, for their insights.

In the past three decades, the international community has played an important role in establishing accountability for conflict-related sexual violence, thereby sending a strong message that sexual violence should have no place in the civilized world. Despite that progress, it is indeed distressing that sexual violence in situations of armed conflict continues unabated amid a culture of impunity and as a tactic of war, torture and terror in armed conflicts, especially by non-State actors. National Governments have a primary and important responsibility to prosecute and deter such crimes in conflict situations on their territories, even if they are committed by non-State actors. At the request of Member States, the United Nations must assist national authorities in developing their capabilities to strengthen their national legal frameworks and related structures for the speedy investigation and prosecution of perpetrators. We also support effective cooperation and appropriate mechanisms to combat illegal migration and human trafficking.

India remains deeply concerned about the worsening situation in Ukraine and reiterates its call for an immediate cessation of the violence and an end to hostilities. The conflict in Ukraine has resulted in much loss of life and countless miseries for its peoples, particularly women, children and the elderly, with millions made homeless and forced to take shelter in neighbouring countries. We support all diplomatic efforts to end the conflict and alleviate the suffering of the people of Ukraine. We also call for a resumption of talks between Ukraine and the Russian Federation to end the conflict.

The conflict is having a destabilizing effect, with broader regional and global implications. The resulting increase in oil prices and shortages of food grains and fertilizers are having a disproportionate impact on the Global South, especially developing countries. The developed world needs to do much more to alleviate the adverse impact on the daily lives of people in vulnerable countries. India is committed to working constructively

to mitigate the adverse impact of the conflict on food security and to ensuring that vulnerable countries have a sufficient cushion against fluctuations in the global market. In order to manage our own overall food security and support the needs of neighbouring and other vulnerable developing countries, we have announced some measures that will allow for wheat exports, based on approval, to countries that need to meet their food security demands, a policy that will ensure that countries in need are given priority.

In that context, it is essential that we all adequately appreciate the importance of equity, affordability and accessibility when it comes to food grains. Regrettably, we have already seen how those principles were disregarded in the case of coronavirus disease vaccines. Open markets must not become a pretext for perpetuating inequity and promoting discrimination. India has been providing financial assistance as well as supplying food grains to neighbouring countries that are facing the consequences of the Ukraine conflict. We hope that the international community will continue to respond positively to the evolving humanitarian requirements. We reiterate the importance of the guiding principles of humanitarian assistance of the United Nations. Humanitarian action must always be guided by those principles, that is, humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, and such measures should never be politicized.

Let me conclude by reaffirming that the contemporary global order is built on the Charter of the United Nations, international law and respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): Let me start by thanking Special Representative Patten, Ms. Karbowska and Ms. Rollins Westin for their powerful briefings. I also welcome the representative of Ukraine and European Council President Michel among the participants in this meeting.

On Friday we marked 100 days since Russia launched its illegal war against Ukraine. During that time, we have witnessed death and destruction on a scale not seen in Europe since the Second World War. Thousands have been killed or injured. More than 6.6 million people have fled Ukraine and millions inside the country remain displaced, stranded in conflict-affected areas and in dire need of humanitarian support. As we have heard, women and girls are the worst affected.

We have seen evidence of serious breaches of international law, including atrocities in places such as Bucha and Irpin and attacks on schools, hospitals, railway stations, apartment buildings and journalists — even on Kyiv while the Secretary-General was visiting. We have seen a disturbing increase in conflict-related sexual violence, including horrific reports of rape and sexual violence committed by Russian armed forces, and a significant increase in human trafficking. Russia's actions, including its destruction and blockading of key ports, have also exacerbated one of the most severe worldwide food crises in recent history.

We applaud the work of the United Nations and the humanitarian and civil-society organizations seeking to address the suffering wrought by the war, including efforts to secure grain exports from Ukraine. The United Kingdom is committed to supporting those efforts in every way it can. We have pledged \$500 million to help Ukraine, including through funding to the United Nations and to civil-society organizations helping survivors of gender-based violence, including sexual violence.

Accountability is vital to upholding the rule of law and the rights of all States. The United Kingdom is assisting with the important task of evidence collection and preservation, including on sexual violence. We are collaborating closely with the Ukrainian Prosecutor-General and have deployed specialist United Kingdom experts on war crimes and conflict-related sexual violence to Poland to provide support. At the open debate on 13 April (see S/PV.9016) we launched the Murad Code, which is designed to support safe evidence collection from survivors of sexual violence. A Ukrainian-language translation has been shared with the Ukrainian Prosecutor-General. We continue to look at all international options to tackle those heinous crimes and hold the perpetrators to account.

This war is as appalling and unjustified on its hundredth day as it was on its first. Russia is ignoring all our calls for peace and continuing its attacks on eastern Ukraine, and it struck Kyiv yet again this weekend. We must not allow Russia to normalize the illegal aggression with its disinformation, distraction and lies. We must rather demand that Russia end the suffering that it is causing. That means immediately ceasing its invasion and withdrawing its forces, as the Secretary-General, Council members and the General Assembly have demanded and as the International Court of Justice has ordered.

Mr. Biang (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): As I am taking the floor for the first time since your term began, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your presidency of the Security Council and on taking the initiative to convene this important debate on sexual violence and human trafficking in connection with the situation in Ukraine. I thank Special Representative Pramila Patten for her informative briefing and Ms. Natalia Karbowska and Ms. Sherrie Rollins Westin for their first-hand accounts.

As we take the floor before the Council this morning, our thoughts are with the people in Ukraine and its neighbouring countries who have fallen prey to the ravages of the war that has been under way there for the past 100 days. We want to convey our solidarity with them in this time of trouble. On behalf of my country I pay tribute to the women and men who are working determinedly within the framework of humanitarian missions to mitigate the daily suffering of the war's survivors. We reiterate that humanitarian aid, which is so vital in such situations, must be provided unhindered to the populations in need, without politicization and in the safe and dignified conditions guaranteed by international humanitarian law.

The statistics in the most recent situation report of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs on the war in Ukraine are disturbing. They confirm the projections for an increasing toll as the fighting on the ground intensifies. Civilians continue to bear the brunt of the hostilities, with more than 7 million people internally displaced and approximately 6.8 million refugees. We are very concerned about the allegations of sexual and gender-based violence, particularly against women and children, as well as the continuing reports of emerging human trafficking networks. In that regard, we welcome the initiatives taken by the United Nations bodies and specialized agencies to prevent and counter threats to human rights and actual violations of them. We welcome the work of monitoring and awareness-raising being done by Ms. Patten's Office to that end, and we hope that the Framework for Cooperation signed with the Ukrainian Government will improve the prevention of those crimes and strengthen the operational response. We also welcome the mechanisms put in place by the United Nations Population Fund and the International Organization for Migration to provide appropriate short-, medium- and long-term responses in terms of medical care and legal support.

It is vital to stress that the international conventions protecting civilians in conflict and the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 1820 (2008) and 1325 (2000), which condemn sexual violence against women and the use of rape as a weapon of war and recognize sexual violence as a major security risk, are binding on all warring parties. The international community must ensure that sexual violence, human trafficking and all other human rights abuses during armed conflict can be independently and impartially investigated in order to establish the facts and attribute responsibility. Mafia-style networks involved in trafficking and sexual exploitation and operating along exit corridors or host centres must be neutralized and the perpetrators held accountable for their crimes. To that end, we must strengthen the coordination among the various organizations involved. Information-sharing must be ramped up in order to prevent criminal networks as far as possible from taking advantage of distressed populations fleeing war zones. The threat of exploitation posed by illegal labour, recruitment into paedophile networks and illegal adoption would undoubtedly be substantially reduced if their communication networks and means of operationalization and financing were undermined.

I would like to once again echo what has been said about the situation of those fleeing the war, especially the many African nationals. We continue to receive shocking testimony from many who have been mistreated because of their origin as they try to leave. Since the war in Ukraine began, we have repeatedly brought up the stigmatization of many African nationals. It is not merely a question of skin colour but of humanity — of the universal nature of suffering and the respect we have for the noble values of the United Nations and the peoples of the world, or rather, all peoples of the world. It is obvious that in a situation of war, all suffering should be taken equally seriously, because suffering has no face. Every tear caused by suffering should elicit our emotions and our condemnation without any prior consideration of the colour of the eyes from which it flows. Indifference before such human misery is as indecent and unacceptable as such hateful discrimination. As we take stock of the current situation, the ordeal faced by young Africans fleeing the war in Ukraine, who are being discriminated against, humiliated and incomprehensibly and inhumanely treated, must not be forgotten. We must remember the deafening silence of some and the selective pleas of all who know how to make their voices heard and could

take action, but who have remained unresponsive to the cries of distress of young Africans who have found themselves marginalized by protection mechanisms and at greater risk of exploitation.

As we have just heard from Ms. Patten, the humanitarian situation in Ukraine is extremely worrying and requires urgent action to meet the major needs of the civilian population. We owe a response to the women and children trapped amid the fighting. We owe a response to those who are abused and exploited. We owe a response to all the separated families who have been stripped of their dignity. And our response must transcend our differences in order to meet the needs of all the victims. My country calls for a ceasefire and the opening of humanitarian corridors in every area in order to provide humanitarian aid in optimal security conditions.

In conclusion, on behalf of my country, I reiterate our call for good-faith negotiations to end the war. It goes without saying that the most effective way to eliminate the risk of sexual and gender-based violence and exploitation is to end the conflict.

Mr. Kimani (Kenya): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Pramila Patten, Ms. Natalia Karbowska and Ms. Sherrie Rollins Westin for their briefings. I also welcome the participation of the Permanent Representative of Ukraine and the Permanent Representatives of the countries affected in the region.

It was with a heavy heart this morning that the Kenyan delegation conveyed its condolences to the people and the Government of Nigeria following the brutal murder of dozens of worshippers at the Catholic church of Saint Francis in the town of Owo in Ondo state. Such acts of terrorism are crimes against humanity, which we condemn in the strongest terms. We urge the Council to redouble its efforts to ensure that terrorist groups are met with the strongest possible condemnation and opposition.

Wars of aggression are transgressions of international law that open the floodgates to serious violations against civilians, particularly when they are wars in breach of the Charter of the United Nations. Even as we justly condemn war crimes, we must not forget that war itself is the greatest crime. Sexual violence against women, children and men is a frequent outcome of war and is also used deliberately and sometimes systematically as a weapon of war. We

recognize with the deepest concern the women, girls and boys in Ukraine who have suffered this uniquely horrifying crime. We condemn the violations against them and the violations of international law, the laws of war, the United Nations Charter and the most basic human decency. We call on all military commanders to ensure that those responsible for such atrocities are held accountable. Soldiers in the field should be subject to severe discipline for abusing civilians or captured combatants. Political leaders should also be aware that using ideology to label entire populations increases the risk that rank-and-file soldiers will commit atrocities. Leaders should uphold the human dignity, worth and equality of all of the people of Ukraine in all public communications.

We urge all the United Nations agencies concerned and those in Ukraine and neighbouring countries to do their utmost to deliver medical and psychosocial support to the survivors of sexual violence and trafficking. More should be done to ensure the establishment of humanitarian corridors and to protect the millions who remain vulnerable in besieged cities and villages from military targeting. We say that in the full understanding that the truest protection is stopping the war and demonstrating respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine. In the meantime, there is a crucial need for effective cross-border coordination between border-security personnel, early-warning mechanisms and national and regional women protection advisers, as well as humanitarian actors, to protect those in danger of abuse. In that regard, we commend the signing of the United Nations Framework of Cooperation in early May to assist the survivors of sexual violence, with a purview that also covers the prevention of conflict-related trafficking amid increasing displacement.

We also commend all the individuals, institutions and Governments helping in every possible way. We especially thank United Nations bodies and agencies, including the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UN-Women, UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Development Programme, for their reports and action briefings highlighting the plight of civilians, especially women and children, and for spearheading the response of the United Nations.

We applaud the brave women of Ukraine who are fighting for peace and for their country. We

recognize with admiration the women who are leading in Government and civil society. We are pleased to see women playing a role as agents of change and we advocate for their participation in decision-making at all levels and in all aspects, including diplomatic efforts to find lasting peace and security in Europe and globally.

I must once again bring up the plight of the Africans who are trapped in the war. Unfortunately, we continue to see reports of racial discrimination directed at people of African descent who are also seeking safety in Europe, like other fleeing Ukrainians. We recently heard Gerald Ezeani's heartfelt story of his experience crossing the border from Ukraine to Hungary and then to Berlin. Although as a valid resident of Ukraine he was aware of his rights and the laws outlined in the Charter that allow him right of passage, he experienced discrimination on the train, from which between 15 and 20 German police officers asked him to disembark and demanded that he undergo further processing to be allowed to leave, based on the fact that he was not born in Ukraine. Based on those appalling justifications, every black person on the train was made to disembark and held for 23 hours, enduring unjust and inhumane treatment by law enforcement. We simply have to repeat that people of African descent are equally human and deserving of equal protection and facilitation in line with the Charter.

The war in Ukraine continues to worsen food insecurity in many countries, particularly in the Global South. As a mitigating measure, we support the urgent call by the World Food Programme for the opening of Ukrainian ports on the Black Sea to allow for the export of food. The humanitarian and development response must leave no country or region behind. We commend the efforts of the Chairperson of the African Union and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for their engagement with leaders who are in a position to enable food to be moved from Ukraine and out into the world.

In conclusion, I reaffirm Kenya's support for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Ukraine and our continued call for prioritizing dialogue as the only plausible avenue for resolving serious disputes.

Mrs. Nusseibeh (United Arab Emirates): I would like to join others in thanking Ms. Patten, Ms. Karbowska and Ms. Rollins Westin for their very insightful briefings. I also welcome the participation of

Charles Michel, President of the European Council, as well as the representative of Ukraine, in today's meeting.

Before the most recent crisis in Ukraine, the world was already in the midst of the worst refugee crisis since the Second World War. That in turn has been the cause of almost unfathomable levels of sexual violence and human trafficking. In 2016, the International Labour Organization estimated that 28.7 million women and girls around the world were in a condition of forced labour, debt bondage, forced marriage, slavery or trafficking. The Secretary-General's report on human trafficking (A/75/289) in 2020 noted that 70 per cent of all identified trafficking victims were women and girls, 77 per cent of whom were trafficked for sexual exploitation.

My region, the Middle East, has been at the epicentre of that crisis for more than a decade, with millions displaced and exploited. The conflict in Ukraine is therefore making an already horrifying global crisis worse. In just over 100 days, almost 14 million people have been displaced, more than a quarter of Ukraine's population. The majority of them are women and children. We have already seen disturbing reports of conflict-related sexual violence and of women and children falling victim to organized criminal gangs operating human trafficking rings. As we have heard today, this conflict demands a serious, gender-centred international response that prioritizes the needs and safety of women and children in times of conflict. Like our colleagues from Kenya and Gabon, we are also very concerned about the issue of ensuring that all refugees are treated equally and without racism.

Based on the topic chosen for today's discussion, I would like to focus on the following points. First, we commend the Framework of Cooperation that Special Representative Patten's Office signed with the Government of Ukraine on preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence. Cooperation between the United Nations and the relevant authorities in Ukraine and their human trafficking task force in various areas, including regarding improved access for survivors of sexual violence to health and social services, is critical. We support the Special Representative's plan to deploy an expert on trafficking to cooperate with the authorities in Ukraine and its neighbours because we believe it will help mitigate the horrific exploitation of women and children across the region. Such initiatives are positive and necessary steps that can boost the capacity and efforts of neighbouring countries to

prevent exploitation and combat trafficking. We note Ms. Patten's message that a regional compact is urgently required and that the Security Council should continue to provide its support in the humanitarian context of this conflict. The United Arab Emirates supports both suggestions.

Secondly, we already know how essential yet difficult it is to collect sex-disaggregated data in conflict situations, including in order to better understand the impact of a conflict on human trafficking and conflict-related sexual violence. Initiatives such as the rapid gender analysis carried out by UN-Women and CARE International provide insight into the gender dynamics of the conflict in Ukraine and are the type of analysis that can guide a better and more tailored response to the needs of Ukrainian women and girls. They should continue to be well funded.

Thirdly, the conflict continues to undermine food security globally, which disproportionately affects women and girls. While it is mostly men who take part in conflict, it is women who are forced to put food on the table for their families by any means necessary. We know that food insecurity exacerbates vulnerabilities and can result in women facing violence and exploitation as they seek to support their families, especially in rural areas. Because of such knock-on effects, the Security Council must keep the issue of the exacerbation of global food insecurity by the conflict at top of its agenda. To that end, the United Arab Emirates commends the Secretary-General for his efforts to facilitate the shipment of grain from Ukrainian ports and encourages all ongoing efforts in that regard.

There are many actions that can be taken to mitigate, prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence and human trafficking in Ukraine. But there is only one real way to stop it. That is by ending the conflict with a diplomatic solution in which women are full, equal and meaningful participants and are included in all mediation and dialogue efforts. We hope to see that happen and without delay, in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

Ms. Byrne Nason (Ireland): I too would like to welcome the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, to the Chamber today and, as always, to welcome our colleague the Ambassador of Ukraine. I extend our sincere thanks to our briefers this morning — Special Representative of the Secretary-General Pramila Patten, Natalia Karbowska and Sherrie

Rollins Westin. We are very grateful for their deeply sobering accounts of the suffering and destruction caused by Russia's senseless and illegal war in Ukraine, which as we all know has now surpassed 100 days. Every day since then we have been watching the fallout of this abhorrent war, with civilians attacked and killed, schools and hospitals targeted, mass displacement and family separation — and the subject that brings us to the Chamber today, conflict-related sexual violence and human trafficking. I want to make it clear that this is no special military operation. It is an illegal war, causing intentional damage and suffering.

More than 15 million people have now fled their homes, the vast majority of them women and children. The speed and scale of this displacement are unheard of in modern times. When the Russian Federation further invaded Ukraine in late February, the alarm about human trafficking was raised immediately. We know that conflict and displacement exacerbate human trafficking. We know that they provide fertile ground for those who trade in human beings — the organized criminal networks looking to take advantage of the most vulnerable in our societies, as Pramila Patten, the Special Representative, sadly and very graphically highlighted this morning. Civil society, national authorities and the United Nations agencies on the ground have mobilized quickly to respond, raise awareness and provide information to refugees and training to service providers and border police. I want to express our sincere gratitude today for their work. It has undoubtedly prevented harm. But more needs to be done to ensure that prevention efforts are robust.

As the war rages on, the vulnerability of those fleeing has only increased. Members of marginalized groups, such as unaccompanied children and those with disabilities, face particular risks. The groundswell of volunteers who have mobilized to support those fleeing represents humankind at its best. It speaks to the foundation on which human rights, and indeed the United Nations, were built, which is that all people are born with inherent dignity. But we must ensure that rigorous vetting and registration procedures are in place to prevent exploitation and to protect against trafficking. As Special Rapporteur Siobhán Mullally and others have highlighted, expanded international protection measures and safe migration routes are also essential to reducing the risk of trafficking. In welcoming more than 30,000 Ukrainians to Ireland

under the European Union's Temporary Protection Directive, we have sought to mitigate such risks.

We also know that conflict and displacement exacerbate sexual and gender-based violence. The Security Council has heard the horrifying reports of sexual violence perpetrated by Russian soldiers against women and girls and men and boys. Rape is not an inevitable by-product of war; it is an act that may constitute a war crime and that leaves victims and their communities with lifelong effects and trauma. As Special Representative of the Secretary-General Patten said earlier, even one case of such abuse is one case too many. The Security Council has condemned conflict-related sexual violence and recognized that it can constitute a war crime. But now is the time for the international community to do more and to ensure that such crimes do not go unpunished.

As Ms. Patten stated while she was in Kyiv, international law will not be an empty promise. It cannot be. The efforts under way to gather evidence and investigate these crimes, including through the United Nations Framework for Cooperation, will help bring those responsible to account. We fully support Special Representative Patten in her work in the context of the Framework for Cooperation with the Government of Ukraine, and we echo the calls she made this morning for cooperation from the Russian Federation. There will be justice for victims and survivors.

The reports of an increase in domestic violence in Ukraine are also very worrying. The survivors of gender-based violence now face a double crisis, as services are not fully able to provide protection and respond to their needs. In addition to justice, all survivors of sexual and gender-based violence and of trafficking deserve protection and assistance. Comprehensive survivor-centred services must be provided at every stage — within Ukraine, on the borders and in transit and host countries. That means taking account of the particular needs of groups and individuals in vulnerable situations. Sexual and reproductive health services and psychosocial supports must be prioritized.

Let me conclude by speaking directly to the Russian Federation. There should be no doubt that this war will end. They all do. Light always overcomes darkness. If Russia has any compassion for the millions of victims and any respect for international law and can still show humanity, it should end this war now and stop

the senseless suffering. It is never too late to do the right thing.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank the briefers for the information they provided.

The ratcheting up of accusations that Russian service personnel have committed crimes of a sexual nature has been a favourite tactic of the Kyiv regime and our Western colleagues since the very beginning of our special military operation in Ukraine. We all recall how in the Ukrainian and Western media and in this Chamber our soldiers have been repeatedly accused of sexual violence, with references to certain reports containing allegedly reliable information. However, no evidence has been provided. Nor have the briefers and representatives who have spoken today offered a single example. But such accusations fit well with the image of Russian soldiers as beasts and brutal barbarians carefully created by Western political strategists, just as Goebbels's henchmen did in the final stages of the Second World War. Members probably remember the Permanent Representative of Ukraine, using the same fascist handbook, telling us how Russian soldiers stole home appliances, and even toilets, when leaving Bucha because "many people do not have toilets in Russia"?

The staging in Bucha, which our British colleagues considered not to be enough reason to convene the Security Council meeting that we had requested, has so far been the climax of that lies-based and groundless smear campaign. By now, so many inconsistencies and refutations of the official version have surfaced that our Western partners have become wary of mentioning it. At the same time, the baseless accusations of sexual violence do not become fewer, as we have had the opportunity to see today.

I would like to address the colleagues who were particularly vocal about that today, and recommend that they be careful, because none of Kyiv's allegations is backed by any proof. That was best demonstrated lately by the Ukrainian Commissioner for Human Rights herself, Ms. Denisova. As it turned out, she overstepped the mark and was dismissed by the Kyiv regime on an interesting pretext — because of her inexplicable focus on the numerous details of sexual crimes and the rape of children in the occupied territories, which could not be confirmed by evidence. In other words, the Ukrainian Commissioner had been lying to the entire world all that time, which was shocking news,

even for the authorities in Kyiv. I urge those who, out of habit, have been relishing the accusations against Russian soldiers to think carefully about whether they can trust the information, or rather disinformation, that is propagated by Kyiv — and it is not only Denisova.

Many cases of alleged sexual violence, which Western media trumpeted from Kyiv's propaganda machine, have already been refuted by either officials or the so-called victims themselves. For example, the Kherson authorities reported that there was no evidence to prove that Russian troops used sexual violence against 11 female residents of the city, as some dubious online platforms had reported.

Nastya Savchishin, who made the globe-circling news headlined "Girl raped and killed by Russians just for being a Ukrainian", herself admitted that she was fine and that it was just a very strange photo shoot.

Another example: the girl who, according to Oleksiy Arestovych, an adviser at the Office of the President of Ukraine, was raped and tortured by Russian troops in Hostomel and died. But it happened in Mariupol, not Hostomel, and the perpetrators were neo-Nazis from the Azov Battalion, not Russians. There is evidence of that crime.

While our opponents limit themselves to baseless allegations, I will provide specific examples of crimes committed by Ukrainian nationalists.

As reported by the Investigative Committee of Russia, criminal charges were brought against the Deputy Commander of a fire support company responsible for morale building in the A-2777 military unit of the 36th Marine Brigade of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, Senior Lieutenant Sergey Batynsky, who committed an appalling crime. At the beginning of April, Ukrainian troops from the Brigade detained two civilian cyclists in Mariupol, a husband and wife, on suspicion of separatism, and confined them in a basement. Later on, Batynsky, in a state of intoxication, raped the woman in the presence of her husband while threatening to kill her. When the husband tried to stop the crime, the Ukrainian soldier shot him dead in plain view of his wife. Batynsky himself confessed to what he had done during a video-taped interrogation, which is publicly available.

On 7 March, military of the Donetsk People's Republic, when mine-clearing in the vicinity of the Kommunar mine in the Donetsk region, discovered

a grave containing four female bodies. Forensic tests showed that before their deaths they had been tortured and raped. One of the victims was pregnant. The nationalist Aidar Battalion was based in that area.

On 28 March, nationalists from the Azov Battalion raped and tortured a young woman to death in a building of school No. 18 in Mariupol. Her disfigured body, with severed hands and a swastika burned onto her stomach, shocked everyone who saw it. We mentioned that tragedy at the Security Council meeting on 11 April (see S/PV.9013).

Currently, work is under way in the liberated territories of Ukraine and the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics to uncover facts and evidence of crimes by the Ukrainian armed forces. It is being documented by the investigative authorities of Russia and the Donbas Republics.

Ukrainian nationalists are notorious for their cruelty, but they also include units whose atrocities, even in the eyes of the authorities in Kyiv, have exceeded all acceptable limits. For example, in the summer of 2015, there was a scandal in Ukraine around the nationalist Tornado Battalion. The Ukrainian authorities accused its combatants of acts of pillaging, torture, violence against both men and women, paedophilia, murder and abductions of Ukrainian civilians. Many of the perpetrators were prosecuted, including battalion commander Onishchenko. However, in March this year, all those culprits were granted amnesty by President Zelenskyy.

After almost 2,500 fighters of the nationalist neo-Nazi Azov Battalion and Ukrainian military surrendered in Mariupol, ending the meaningless resistance at the Azovstal steel works, their crimes are now being investigated. Residents of liberated Mariupol are playing an active role in that.

Soon enough the international community will learn the truth about the crimes, including sexual crimes, committed by Ukrainian nationalist units and armed forces, whom the Kyiv authorities and their Western sponsors are trying to glorify.

There is abundant evidence of how such scum shot at civilians, doctors and volunteers who were trying to help the wounded. Ukrainian tanks and artillery directly targeted residential buildings. Prisoners from Azovstal testified to those orders from their commanders; indeed, they took shelter from Russian bombardments

in the residential buildings. The Azov fighters would not let the sick and wounded out of hospitals; they set fire to premises and intimidated and humiliated civilians. A grave with up to 300 bodies was discovered in Mariupol, where eyewitnesses say the Azov forces dumped the bodies of the people they had killed while they were in control of the city.

The conflict in Ukraine has boosted the exploitation of Ukrainian refugees in European countries. Ms. Patten touched on that earlier today. Judging by the available information, the European Union's specialized agencies assess the threat of trafficking in Ukrainian refugees as pretty high, taking into account the fact that, in recent years, Ukraine has ranked among the top five countries in terms of the number of victims of human trafficking and sexual exploitation in Europe. It is important to remain vigilant regarding that issue and prevent violence against, and the exploitation of, refugees in Europe.

It is no secret to anyone how the West receives female refugees from Ukraine, who have suffered a great deal. In Las Vegas, there are billboards inviting strippers from Ukraine to auditions. In Germany, the Kentucky Fried Chicken fast-food chain displayed an advertisement with the inscription "Chicks from Ukraine are welcome" against the image of a bed as a background. It is hard to believe that it is only harmless advertising. That is clearly only the tip of the iceberg, showing how great the risk of sexual exploitation of Ukrainian refugees is in the West. We all have seen the terrifying footage of the sadistic treatment of Russian detainees and prisoners of war by the Ukrainian military, which has been widely circulated on the Internet. Ukrainian nationalists are just as cruel to the peaceful populations of Donbas and south-eastern Ukraine in general, whom they perceive only as separatists, who opted for autonomy from the Maidan authorities in 2014. That is also how the Ukrainian thugs treat women, whom they do not consider it necessary to spare.

We would once again like to categorically refute all allegations of sexual abuse by Russian soldiers. That is a lie that we firmly reject. We would like to say with all responsibility that the actions of the Russian military are subject to a set of stringent rules. The law prescribes severe penalties for attempted violence against civilians. Compliance with the norms of international humanitarian law is an absolute priority for us. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for members of the Ukrainian armed forces and nationalist

battalions. Therefore, if we really want to combat the practice of sexual crimes in Ukraine, we must not turn a blind eye to the numerous cases of such crimes committed by the Ukrainian military, even though political considerations encourage members to ignore such a shameful practice.

In conclusion, I would also like to address subjects that are not directly linked to the subject of today's meeting. We have taken note of the intention of the United States of America and the United Kingdom to supply long-range artillery and multiple-launch rocket systems (MLRS) to Ukraine. Leaving aside the entirely unconvincing explanations of such an irresponsible step, I would like to point out that the Kyiv regime has already taken this as *carte blanche* to continue and to intensify the shelling of civilian targets in Donbas, which, after a number of recent defeats, the Ukrainian artillery was no longer able to reach.

The American munitions that were recently delivered to the Ukrainian armed forces are already being actively used to attack Donbas, including schools and other educational facilities. There are casualties, including among children. We already spoke about this at the 2 June meeting (see S/PV.9052). There is no military expediency for this sort of shelling, and Kyiv knows this fully. I would like to point out to my American and British colleagues that their countries are becoming directly complicit in the crimes of the Ukrainian armed forces in Donbas, with all the attendant consequences. The fact that, in the eyes of the Kyiv regime, there are no limits in the use of these long-range artillery and MLRSs is demonstrated by the recent statements of their representatives, which deviates from the assertions made from Washington, D.C., and London that there are restrictions in place.

Against this backdrop, such statements by a number of Western officials, in particular United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken, to the effect that Kyiv will not use American MLRSs against targets on the territory of Russia, do not sound convincing. Thus the head of American diplomacy is essentially trying to legalize strikes by Ukrainian armed forces on the territory of the Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic, which are killing civilians, including children. In that regard, we not only reserve the right to move the line of the threat that neo-Nazis pose to the Russian Federation and the Donbas republics beyond the possible range of those new long-range munitions, but also to launch strikes

on the centres where the criminal decisions to use these forms of weapons are made.

I also must note that thanks to the well-known incredible corruption of Ukrainian officials, the arms being supplied from America and Europe are virtually openly being sold on the Ukrainian black market. A very simple Internet search shows that American Stingers are being sold for \$7,000 apiece, and Javelins for \$30,000 each. The choice of Western small arms and ammunition is simply more than abundant. Of course, international terrorists, including those that act in Europe and America, will not miss out on those bargains. I therefore warn my British and American colleagues that, when their own citizens start to ask them discomfiting questions, they should not try to shift the blame onto us.

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

I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Patten for her insightful briefing. Ms. Karbowska brought us a painful but much-needed civil society perspective on what is going on in Ukraine today. I thank Ms. Rollins Westin for the tremendous work that Sesame Workshop is doing for children throughout the world. We took note of her recommendations and thank her for highlighting the critical importance of early-childhood support.

I welcome the participation of the President of the European Council, His Excellency Mr. Charles Michel, at this meeting, which is further proof of the importance and pertinence of the issue under discussion.

The so-called Russia special mission operation in Ukraine — in reality, an unprovoked and unjustified aggression which is turning into a war of attrition — has entered its fourth month. Some 103 days have passed since this unacceptable and totally avoidable war of choice began. It continues to destroy the country and is having a devastating impact on the entire population.

With every day that goes by this war brings its lot of new victims, and every time we meet on this issue in this Chamber, we hear about civilians being caught in conflict, mounting significant human rights abuses and crimes committed, and the unprecedented number of displaced people. Nine thousand victims have been documented by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights so far, keeping in mind that the real number is always much higher.

Some 6.8 million people have crossed the border out of Ukraine. They did not ask for it; they were forced to abandon their lives and their routines overnight, which makes it the quickest and most massive displacement in Europe since the Second World War. These are facts, not fiction. Such massive displacements have created an environment that exacerbates inequality and vulnerability, in particular for those first and most affected, as is the case in every conflict — women and children, who face sexual and gender-based violence, human trafficking and exploitation.

As the devastating escalation continues in eastern Ukraine, conditions worsen for civilians to find shelter without basics, including water, and, in many cases, these people cannot be reached with aid or evacuated safely. We have witnessed the depth of inhumanity in Mariupol. We hope not to see it elsewhere.

We would like to also express our deep concern about thousands of children who, according to reports, have been deported to Russia and are being held in filtration camps. International humanitarian law is clear. It classifies the forced mass deportation of people during a conflict as a war crime. We call for full clarity and an independent investigation into this issue.

Various assessments from actors on the ground have revealed that the top concerns for women and girls include threats to physical safety from active conflict and continued bombardment, food insecurity, lack of access to health care, including the full range of reproductive-health services and care for survivors of rape and mental health. Growing evidence of sexual violence is emerging daily from the de-occupied areas. We know now from the findings in the liberated towns and cities of Kyiv oblast that civilians have been targeted, tortured and killed on a large scale and that women and girls have been subject of rape as a weapon of war.

There have been multiple reports and accounts of Russian soldiers breaking down the doors of cellars and basements where people were sheltering, and raped women. Some of these despicable actions have taken place in front of these women's children. Also, Ukrainian authorities have repeatedly reported cases of rape and sexual violence in the non-Government-controlled areas of Ukraine. Human Rights Watch has documented alleged war crimes, including rape.

As other towns and villages remain occupied — actually, almost 20 per cent of the territory

of Ukraine is occupied — only limited evidence reaches the outside world. What was discovered in Bucha and Irpin raises concerns for the safety of women and girls in other Russia-occupied towns that are cut off from the outside world. We reiterate our call for a detailed investigation on what amounts to be a systematic element of attacks on civilians committed by soldiers.

Conflict-related sexual violence is a despicable act. It is a war crime. All documented cases of sexual violence must undergo rigorous investigation. Accountability cannot and should not be an option, but a must. We strongly support the work of the International Criminal Court, which has deployed teams on the ground for the purposes of collective evidence of serious crimes, war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity, including sexual abuse of women and children. We also look forward to the visit of the Commission of Inquiry that begins tomorrow.

The documentation of sexual violence should be a standardized process. Everything must be done to collect credible, relevant and reliable information on sexual violence in a manner that empowers survivors and strengthens accountability mechanisms. It is vital that all efforts are made to ensure protection and the provision of life-saving and recovery services for survivors of sexual violence in Ukraine, including access to sexual and reproductive health and rights. We need to adopt a survivor-centred approach so as to empower survivors and address problems related to their stigmatization.

Increased risk of vulnerability goes hand in hand with human trafficking. Reports are showing that there is a high risk of trafficking for sexual exploitation at borders, especially for children and young women who are often not accompanied by their family members, where perpetrators take advantage of the human drama and also use aggression. As we heard from Special Representative Patten, traffickers proliferate with false promises of all kinds in efforts to lure victims into situations of exploitation. Greater collaboration is therefore needed with border agencies and Government partners to strengthen prevention mechanisms.

The Ukrainian people want the war to stop. They want to return to their homes, reunite with their loved ones, rebuild their lives safely and securely and in peace. We wish for the same. Let us help Ukrainians, particularly women and girls, go from nightmares

to normal life — and, why not? — to dreams. Only Russian tanks, missiles and soldiers stand in their way.

This war should never have started, and it must stop. However, as long as our calls go unheeded, we must prioritize and ensure the protection of civilians, women and children, gather evidence and ensure accountability. Let us not forget that one day proof will reach the Court and the perpetrators will be held accountable.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

Mr. Kyslytsya (Ukraine): Let me start by expressing my gratitude to Special Representative Pramila Patten, as well as Ms. Natalia Karbowska of the Ukrainian Women's Fund and Ms. Sherrie Rollins Westin of Sesame Workshop, for their comprehensive presentations. I would also like to thank the Albanian presidency for organizing this meeting. We appreciate the commitment to keeping the issue of Russia's war of aggression on Ukraine at the top of the Security Council's agenda. Even if the Council is unable to take effective steps to respond to what is currently the most dangerous threat to international peace and security, it is still important that we are gathered here today. In that regard, I want to reiterate that there is no option other than resolving the problem of Russia's squatting in the Soviet permanent seat, the sooner the better. As an aggressor and a violator, that squatter threatens the stability of the entire construct. We need a credible Council and efficient solutions.

I also want to recognize the representative of Putin's regime in the permanent seat of the Soviet Union. It is important that the Russian delegation continues to show up to Security Council meetings on Ukraine. They constitute a form of pre-trial meeting and are valuable because they are on the record, which means that everything that those accomplices to crimes say can and will be used against them in court. Of course, for their own sake, they have the right to talk to a lawyer for advice before they speak here, and perhaps they are already doing so.

All of Ukraine is bleeding now, especially on the front lines, where the Russian army continues to use the most barbaric and inhumane methods of warfare. In the occupied territories, Russians are consolidating their practices of terror, neo-colonialism and genocide. All

and any Ukrainian cities and villages could be targets for Russian rockets, as was the case in Kyiv yesterday.

Any war means that the most vulnerable suffer the most — that is, women, children, the elderly and people with disabilities. Russia's invasion of Ukraine is no exception. The savage cruelty of the invaders has turned the lives of millions of Ukrainians into an endless nightmare. As many as 5 million people have been recorded across Europe as individual refugees from Ukraine, most of them women and children, and remain abroad. Almost 12 million people have become internally displaced persons (IDPs). We thank each and every friend providing shelter for Ukrainians until the Russian forces are pushed out of Ukraine.

We remain extremely concerned about the destiny of the Ukrainians who have been forcibly transferred to Russia. As Russia has itself admitted, more than a million Ukrainian citizens have been transferred to various regions of Russia, including more than 234,000 children, several thousand of whom are orphans or deprived of parental care. We strongly condemn the decision by Russia to simplify the procedure for obtaining Russian citizenship for Ukrainian orphans and children left without parental care, in a gross violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the protection of civilian persons in time of war, which obliges an occupying Power not to change the civil status of children, as well as the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child. Russia refuses to provide any information to Ukrainian authorities or international organizations about the people who have been forcibly transferred, and we see a real danger that they may become victims of human trafficking or exploitation and abuse. We call on the United Nations agencies to explore ways and means by which they can contribute more effectively to protecting Ukrainian children affected by armed conflict and facilitating the rapid and safe return to Ukraine of children who have been forcibly displaced or transferred to the Russian Federation.

Ukrainian law enforcement, non-governmental organizations and the media continue to record numerous cases of sexual violence committed by Russian troops in Ukraine. Complaints about sexual crimes committed by the invaders have been received in the Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, Kyiv, Luhansk, Kharkiv, Kherson and Chernihiv regions of Ukraine. According to our Ministry of Internal Affairs, minors and elderly women have been among the victims of Russian rapists. Fatalities have also been registered. The investigation

of sexual crimes in the temporarily uncontrolled territories of Ukraine is complicated. The Russian occupiers continue to remove the traces of such crimes by burning the bodies of tortured and raped civilians. We commend the first mission to Ukraine of the members of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, which starts tomorrow. The Commission is to visit several locations in Ukraine to obtain first-hand information on alleged human rights violations and abuses, as well as to meet with victims, witnesses and IDPs.

Ukraine remains committed to finding solutions to prevent a global food crisis and is ready to work to create the necessary conditions to resume exports from the port of Odesa. The issue is how to make sure that Russia does not abuse the trade route to attack the city itself. That issue has become even more relevant following Sunday's missile strike on Kyiv, where four rockets hit the facilities of the Darnytskyi car repair plant. As always, Russia claims it destroyed military hardware, including tanks sent by our allies. In reality, however, the plant was focusing on repairing grain-carrier freight cars, used for railway transfers of grain to Ukrainian seaports. What that shows is that all of Putin's fairy tales — which he so eloquently tells his rare interlocutors — about his readiness to facilitate Ukrainian wheat exports are far removed from reality. When we listen to Putin saying that he will not use trade routes to attack Odesa, we should not forget that he is the same person who told Germany's Chancellor Scholz and President Macron of France that he would not attack Ukraine, just days before launching a full-scale invasion. The shared international response to Putin's empty promises must be greater pressure rather than premature and unjustified gratitude. We are continuing our work with the United Nations and other partners to ensure that the maritime routes for the export of Ukrainian agricultural products are functioning. As a first step, Russia has to withdraw its naval forces in the maritime waters around Ukraine and provide security guarantees against attacks on ports and commercial convoys.

Russia has never considered local residents to be trustworthy, and its attitude to the population in the part of Donbas that has been occupied since 2014 speaks volumes in that regard. Conscription raids on streets and apartments and the forced mobilization of all men who fail to hide are the sad realities of Donetsk, Luhansk and other cities in the occupied

part of Donbas. Ill-equipped and without any means of protection, those men are thrown against the Ukrainian positions on the front lines, serving as cannon fodder and a shield for Russian soldiers. There can be no doubt that the same practices will be used on the population of the territories that have been occupied since February. If they are not liberated, Russia will turn them into new strongholds for renewed attacks. We therefore reiterate that any concessions, as some well-wishers are currently advising, will only pave the way for a new war — with the same scope for violence, and closer to our Western borders.

As a nation, Ukraine and its genetic pool have been devastated multiple times in the course of the past 100 years at least, beginning with the Bolshevik invasion and Ukraine's incorporation into the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in the first quarter of the twentieth century. That was followed by the genocide ordered by Stalin during the great artificial famine of 1932 and 1933, widely known as the Holodomor, in which as many as 10 million Ukrainians starved to death when the Soviet Army confiscated their crops. And that was followed by the Soviet Army's invasion of western Ukraine in 1939, as agreed between Stalin and Hitler, when hundreds of thousands fled their homes to Europe and the Americas, and thousands were executed if they chose to stay or could not run. That continued with the annihilation launched when the Second World War started and the Soviets were withdrawing, burning everything down and doing everything they could to prevent the advancing Nazi troops from taking advantage of the situation. Next came the withdrawing Nazis, who set fire to everything and destroyed it before the Soviets regained control. Millions were killed during the war in both Nazi and Soviet camps. The Russification of Ukraine followed until it was finally able to re-establish its independence.

The invasion of 2014 was followed by eight long years of war and the eventual full-scale invasion of 2022, since when millions have fled abroad and a couple of million more have been deported or moved to Russia, where children have been fostered or adopted en masse in violation of international humanitarian rights. Scarcely any other European nation has experienced the deep devastation wrought by the Bolsheviks, Stalin, Hitler and eventually "Putler" within such a short period of time. Most, if not all of it, has been man-made and executed on purpose. The lack of empathy, or the hypocrisy, of some politicians in this context, is

appalling and is seen by many as the final nail in the coffin, as Ukrainians might say.

Seventy-seven years ago, humankind united in its struggle to destroy evil. Dozens of millions of lives were lost so that we could understand that appeasement and concessions to the aggressor do not work. History tends to repeat itself if its lessons are not learned. I hope that it is not about us or the United Nations. Putin's Russia must be defeated for the sake of international peace and security; for the sake of the Ukrainian people, who are paying the ultimate price; for the sake of people all over the world, especially those depending on grain supplies from our region, and for the sake of the people of Russia, which should return to the family of democratic nations following its de-Putinization.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the European Union in its capacity as observer.

Mr. Michel: I would first like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this meeting and giving me the opportunity to address the Council.

I was born in Belgium in the 1970s. At school, we studied the great European artists, including names like Victor Hugo, Leonardo, Shakespeare, Picasso and Goethe. But we also studied masterpieces by people with names like Dostoevsky, Kandinsky, Tchaikovsky, Tolstoy and other great Russian artists from Russia's great culture who influenced and inspired my own education. But today Russia's savagery stands in stark contrast to the heritage of those brilliant artists.

A few months ago, I was in Borodyanka, where atrocities were committed by Russian soldiers. War crimes and crimes against humanity must and will be punished. In order to hold those responsible accountable, we need evidence. That is why we are now helping to collect the evidence of those crimes. Impunity is not an option. And we welcome the International Court of Justice's provisional measures ordering Russia to suspend military operations immediately. We fully support the investigation by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court and the work of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine. The European Union is assisting the Ukrainian Prosecutor-General and civil society in collecting the evidence of war crimes.

The subject of women and peace and security is a critical and timely one. Two years ago, Secretary-

General Guterres called for an end to violence both on the battlefield and in people's homes. As we speak, however, we are hearing reports of Russian forces wielding sexual violence as a weapon of war. Sexual violence is a war crime, a crime against humanity and a tactic of torture, terror and repression — shameful acts in a shameful war. That must be exposed to the light of day and prosecuted without impunity. The war has also caused millions to flee their homes and seek refuge outside Ukraine. They are mostly women and children. I met many of them when I went to Ukraine, Poland and Moldova, and they are particularly vulnerable to human traffickers. We, the European Union (EU), are committed to protecting them and keeping them safe without discrimination. I listened carefully to what some speakers said today. We intend to provide education, health care and access to the labour market. We are also working to eradicate trafficking in order to protect people fleeing the war.

Sadly, sexual and gender-based violence is a global threat, used as a weapon of war and faced by women across the world, including in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, Myanmar, South Sudan, Yemen and other countries. That is why, in just a few days in Brussels, together with UN-Women, the Dr. Denis Mukwege Foundation and Nadia's Initiative, we will be hosting a second conference on women in conflict. I sincerely hope that we can build momentum and step up our collective efforts to seriously address this critical issue.

I want to say to the representative of the Russian Federation that we should be honest. The Kremlin is using food supplies as a stealth missile targeting developing countries. The dramatic consequences of Russia's war are spilling over across the globe, and that is driving up food prices, pushing people into poverty and destabilizing entire regions. Russia alone is responsible for the looming food crisis, despite the Kremlin's campaign of lies and disinformation. I saw it with my own eyes a few weeks ago in Odesa. Millions of tons of grain and wheat were stuck in containers and ships because of Russian warships in the Black Sea and Russia's attacks on transport infrastructure. And it is Russia's tanks, bombs and mines that are preventing Ukraine from planting and harvesting. The Kremlin is also targeting grain storage facilities and stealing grain in Ukraine, while shifting the blame onto others. That is cowardly propaganda, pure and simple.

Let us get to the facts. The EU has imposed no sanctions on Russia's agricultural sector — none. And even our sanctions on the Russian transport sector do not go beyond our EU borders.

The Russian representative may leave the room if he so chooses. It is perhaps easier for him not to listen to the truth.

Our sanctions do not prevent Russian-flagged vessels from carrying grain, food and fertilizers to developing countries. On the contrary, the EU is doing all that it can to help Ukraine's agricultural exports and support Ukraine's agricultural sector for the coming season. Global food security is a top priority for the EU. We will do everything we can to help solve that challenge and assist developing countries. To do that, we need to unlock the Black Sea. We fully support the efforts of Secretary-General Guterres to find solutions to reopen maritime routes for Ukraine's exports. We will actively contribute to the work of the Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance and cooperate with the Group of Seven and the African Union.

The Kremlin may prohibit and prosecute the use of the word "war" but that does not change the heartbreaking reality. Thousands of dead Ukrainian women, children and men, atrocities, rape, countless Ukrainian cities bombed to rubble — that is a war. It is a barbaric war waged by a permanent member of the Security Council.

We say to the Ambassador of Ukraine that we will continue to back Ukraine. We will continue to support his country and his people. We will continue to put pressure on Russia and confront it with the truth. Russia is attacking one country and one people — Ukraine. However, Russia is also attacking the values and principles of the Organization — human dignity, tolerance, multilateral cooperation and international law. Those are our shared values and the bedrock of the Organization.

This is therefore more than a war against one nation. It is a war against all that we have built over generations since the Second World War. The EU's commitment to the Charter of the United Nations is unwavering. The EU is a reliable, loyal and respectful partner and will continue to cooperate on the global stage to build a safer, freer and more prosperous world.

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

Mr. Massari (Italy): I would like to thank Albania for organizing today's timely meeting, and I thank the briefers for their insightful descriptions of the situation on the ground.

Italy aligns itself with the statement just delivered by the President of the European Council and would like to add some remarks in its national capacity.

During all conflicts, including in this illegal and unjustified war launched by Russia, internally displaced and refugee women and girls are the groups at higher risk of sexual violence. As we heard from Special Representative Patten, in addition to that already alarming situation, Ukrainian women face the risk of trafficking, which is yet another channel for sexual violence and exploitation. Indeed, women continue to represent the vast majority of the victims of trafficking. Those women, who are also often mothers, are attacked as a symbolic representation of their people.

Rape is indeed similar to military aggression on an individual scale. It is also used as a psychological tactic of war to humiliate, dominate, instil fear in, and then forcibly relocate, the children of the victims, steering them into trafficking or forced adoption. In that regard, it is important to strongly reiterate the extent to which minors are also the main victims of this conflict. They experience both its immediate and indirect consequences. They suffer the loss of their parents, country, schools and homes, which is a factor that may result in the loss of a future.

Displaced and refugee children are indeed less safe and more exposed to violence and trafficking. Those considerations prompted Italy to include the issue of the trafficking in persons in conflict among the priorities of its last mandate in the Security Council in 2017. Our efforts resulted in the unanimous adoption by the Council of resolution 2388 (2017), on combating trafficking in persons, which emphasizes the urgency of strengthening protection and assistance for displaced persons who fall prey to trafficking, especially women and children.

Italy also believes that the response to this terrible phenomenon should be based on a common understanding and the widely accepted legal framework. Therefore, we support the universal ratification and full implementation of the Palermo Convention and the related Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, adopted in Italy more than 20 years ago.

The rape of women in armed conflict cannot go unpunished. To avoid the risk of impunity, we must also increase the risk of legal consequences for all those who commit that barbaric war crime. The blatant non-compliance with Security Council resolutions and international humanitarian law and human rights law in this conflict shows us that much remains to be done.

The work of the Security Council, if not hindered by the abuse of the veto power, could benefit from the more systematic involvement of international justice. However, when investigations and prosecutions by national or international courts are impossible or ineffective, the General Assembly should consider creating international fact-finding mechanisms in order to conduct gender-sensitive investigations and ensure the collection and preservation of evidence.

At the same time, it is crucial to assist countries in situations of conflict in strengthening the rule of law and accountability mechanisms. Italy welcomes the framework of cooperation on prevention and accountability for sexual violence in conflict that was recently signed by the Government of Ukraine and Special Representative Pramila Patten.

In addition to accountability, we have only one other way to prevent sexual violence and trafficking in this conflict, namely, through humanitarian assistance to protect women and children from the heinous crimes that are currently being committed in Ukraine. We must use them both.

In conclusion, the true solution to those problems, needless to say, is to stop the war. We reiterate our call on the Russian Federation to stop it.

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

Mr. Pildegovičs (Latvia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Baltic States — Estonia, Lithuania and my own country, Latvia.

Let me start by thanking Albania for organizing today's briefing, and the briefers for their briefings. We particularly welcome the voice of Ukrainian civil society at the Security Council. It is of the utmost importance to keep our focus on Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine.

We are deeply alarmed by the shocking reports on the brutal and systematic sexual violence perpetrated by Russian armed forces in Ukraine and are concerned

about the increasing risk of trafficking of human beings in the region. We recall that, in its resolution 1820 (2008), the Council demanded the immediate and complete cessation by parties to armed conflict of all acts of sexual violence against civilians, with immediate effect. We reiterate that demand on the Russian Federation to immediately stop the sexual violence perpetrated by its armed forces in Ukraine.

To ensure that occurs, clear orders must be issued through the chain of command that prohibit sexual violence, and perpetrators must be brought to justice. Ultimately, Russia must immediately stop its military aggression, enabled by its accomplice Belarus, immediately and unconditionally withdraw all forces from the entire territory of Ukraine and fully respect Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence within its internationally recognized borders, as demanded by General Assembly resolution ES-11/1, adopted on 2 March.

We welcome the recent visit to Ukraine by the Special Representative to the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Pramila Patten, and the framework of cooperation signed with the Government of Ukraine. We look forward to, and encourage support for, its implementation. After her visit, the Special Representative assessed that the sexual violence committed by the Russian armed forces raises all of the red flags.

We call on the relevant United Nations entities to continue to closely monitor the situation in Ukraine and at its borders, including regarding conflict-related sexual violence, through the mechanisms created by the Security Council. The recording and verification of the incidence of violence by the United Nations and other international actors is crucial.

The current situation provides fertile ground for human traffickers. We commend the creation of the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation task force to protect vulnerable Ukrainian refugees from human trafficking networks. We have to carefully approach the situation to avoid instances in which predators can exploit the chaos. In that regard, United Nations entities play a significant role, but so do actors from civil society.

We condemn in the strongest possible terms the unlawful deportation of Ukrainian residents, in particular the forced deportation of unaccompanied children to the Russian Federation by the Russian

authorities and their local collaborators, as well as the illegal adoption of Ukrainian children. Those actions grossly violate international law and the Charter of the United Nations and undermine international security and stability.

We commend Ukrainian women for their bravery and resilience in the light of Russia's aggression and their role in humanitarian, political and military responses. We need decisive and vigorous action to ensure the meaningful participation of women and girls, including from the most vulnerable groups, in all decision-making processes related to the crisis response and peace. Women must not to be seen as victims but as the force of change.

In resolution 2467 (2019), the Council recognized the need for a survivor-centred approach in responding to sexual violence in conflict, including access to medical and psychosocial care. It is of the utmost importance that the survivors of conflict-related sexual violence in Ukraine have the opportunity to report cases as soon as possible and to receive proper assistance, including access to comprehensive services, and in particular sexual and reproductive health services. However, at the moment reporting is possible only after survivors move to a safe area outside the territories occupied by Russian forces or in which active hostilities are taking place.

The Baltic States have welcomed tens of thousands of Ukrainian refugees. We make sure that the human rights of the survivors of sexual violence are at the heart of our response. We follow standards for the safe and effective documentation and recording of survivors' experiences — while respecting their rights with regard to their dignity, privacy and health.

We recall that the Council has clearly reaffirmed its intention to continue to forcefully fight impunity and uphold accountability for sexual violence. The Baltic States have taken several practical steps to call the aggressor to account for the atrocities perpetrated in Ukraine. We have joined the referral to the International Criminal Court of the situation in Ukraine in order to enable the Prosecutor to open investigations into allegations of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide perpetrated in Ukraine. In order to facilitate investigations and prosecutions before the International Criminal Court, the Baltic States have nominated national experts and provided voluntary contributions. Our prosecutors, alongside those of Slovakia, Poland,

Ukraine and the International Criminal Court, have formed the Joint Investigation Team.

In conclusion, we commend the efforts of the United Nations bodies, non-governmental organizations and members of civil society working on the ground in Ukraine to provide services to survivors of sexual violence and trafficking. The security and access of those workers is crucial to alleviating the immeasurable human suffering that Russia's unprovoked war is causing.

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

Ms. Leendertse (Germany): I thank Albania for organizing this important Security Council meeting. I also thank the briefers for their important contributions.

Germany aligns itself with the statement made by the President of the European Council.

We have learned from the history of war and conflicts around the world that conflict-related sexual violence has been used as a tactical or strategic means of weakening, if not destroying, the adversary by targeting the civilian population. A multitude of reports indicates that the ongoing unjustified, unprovoked war of aggression of the Russian Federation against its neighbouring State, Ukraine, is unfortunately no exception.

Germany calls on the Russian Federation to stop this illegal war, withdraw its troops from its sovereign neighbouring State, Ukraine, and also stop the aggression that we are hearing about.

We have heard with shock and horror many accounts about brutal cases of conflict-related sexual violence in the war in Ukraine, predominantly perpetrated against women and girls but also against men and boys. And we know that, amid the chaos of the war unleashed by the Russian Federation, given the limited support on the ground and the almost complete lack of access to services while millions of people are fleeing, as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General reported today, there is a high risk that acts of sexual and gender-based violence are largely unaccounted for.

In that context, I would like to address five points.

First, reporting and monitoring are key to holding the perpetrators accountable. We therefore support Special Representative of the Secretary-General Patten's request that the staff of the United Nations

Human Rights Monitoring Mission and the Prosecutor General in Ukraine be reinforced with personnel who specialize in conflict-related sexual violence. With the escalation of Russia's aggression in eastern Ukraine, the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine is already reaching its limits.

Secondly, we also commend the framework of cooperation that Special Representative of the Secretary-General Patten and the Ukrainian Government signed during her recent visit to Ukraine. It is a vital condition for the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and her team of experts to commence their work on site.

We see that as a matter of urgency, since the situation in Ukraine is deteriorating in the course of Russia's ongoing war. The levels of health care, especially of sexual and reproductive health services, mental health services and psychological counselling services, are insufficient considering the scale of the crisis and the huge numbers of internally displaced people. Rapid and effective action is necessary. That is why we will continue our funding for the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in 2022.

Thirdly, a survivor-centred approach is essential for preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence. Three years after the adoption of resolution 2467 (2019), which was proposed by Germany, we are concerned about its slow implementation. The international community must strengthen survivors' rights and improve their access to justice, sexual and reproductive health services and rights, rehabilitation, reparations and reintegration.

Fourthly, women often suffer most from the consequences of war. It is mostly women who are fleeing Ukraine, together with children and elderly persons. They are the ones who are the main targets of conflict-related sexual violence and of trafficking in persons, even as they try to escape the violence.

Germany will continue its engagement to fight trafficking in persons, including by promoting the resolution on that topic in the Human Rights Council. To protect Ukrainian women coming to Germany, we have installed several protection mechanisms, such as websites that provide information in Ukrainian, the provision of active information on the trains that the refugees use and a police presence at train stations.

Fifthly, Germany reiterates its pledge to fight conflict-related sexual violence in all contexts. In the case of Ukraine, that means that, while we continue our efforts to stop this illegal and unjustified war, we will work equally hard to mitigate its immediate effects on the Ukrainian people.

Human security, responding to the humanitarian crisis and addressing the profoundly gender-specific implications of wars and conflicts are not secondary considerations — they are central to our foreign policy decisions. Our feminist foreign policy implies, *inter alia*, taking into account the repercussions of war and conflict on all segments of the population, especially individuals who are particularly vulnerable or marginalized.

Finally, let me stress that our concerns are not limited to the tragic situation in Ukraine. In the global context, Germany will keep efforts related to and support for combating sexual and gender-based violence at the top of its priorities.

In 2021 alone, German humanitarian assistance provided funding in excess of \$80 million for projects with vital components to address sexual and gender-based violence, making Germany the largest donor at the Oslo pledging conference.

Germany also continues to be the largest donor for the special appeal on sexual and gender-based violence of the International Committee of the Red Cross. Earlier this year, German humanitarian assistance launched a new and innovative project with UN-Women to strengthen measures to combat sexual and gender-based violence in humanitarian response plans. We will continue to remain focused on that highly important issue.

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

Mr. Szczerski (Poland): I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for this briefing, which allows us to discuss yet another troubling aspect of the war in Ukraine that needs to be brought to the attention of the international community. I also thank the briefers for their valuable words, but even more for their very valuable deeds on the ground.

Every conflict brings terrible suffering to civilians. The Russian aggression against Ukraine is no exception. Civilians, in particular women and children, have become targets of not only Russian rockets and bombs

but also the cruel, cynical and merciless perpetrators of trafficking in human beings and gender-based violence.

As a neighbouring country and a primary destination for the refugees coming from Ukraine, Poland is especially aware of those harsh realities. Along with humanitarian aid related to hosting on Polish soil the largest number of refugees in history, we are also undertaking considerable efforts to address the effects of conflict-related human trafficking and sexual abuse. All our efforts are conducted according to Polish, European Union and international regulations in a non-discriminatory manner.

The Polish Border Guard and police have implemented numerous measures aimed at preventing and mitigating those effects, including specialized and awareness-raising training for officers, as well as information campaigns for existing and potential victims.

Any incident of possible human trafficking and sexual crimes can be reported 24/7 to police officers who speak Ukrainian and Russian. All reported incidents are subject to prompt verification. Relevant information leaflets in Polish, English and Ukrainian are widely distributed among the refugees, local governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the media and through the Internet. In addition, to prevent human trafficking, the police are deploying officers from anti-crime sections to the border regions, border crossings and train and bus stations, as well as reception centres, in order to help potential victims and identify individuals or groups trying to exploit them. In the case that an alleged crime is reported, the police assist a potential victim who does not speak Polish with an interpreter and other specialized assistance that may be needed. State structures are joined in those efforts by numerous NGOs active on the ground from day one.

Moreover, the Polish Government urgently implemented new immigration measures for Ukrainians fleeing the war by adopting a special law in March, effective from 24 February. It stipulates that Ukrainian refugees can obtain a Polish identification number, which entitles them to work legally in Poland and have free access to the public health-care system, schooling and social benefits and support. Ukrainian citizens have access to the Polish health-care system on the same footing, and are subject to the same entitlements as insured Polish citizens, including when it comes to psychological and sexual health care. What is more, all

reception centres in the regions neighbouring Ukraine have first-aid medical points and are assigned to specific hospitals and emergency services in the region.

We commend the work of the United Nations system in preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence and on its support to Member States aimed at strengthening national responsibilities in that respect. In that context, I would like to mention the important actions by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and UNICEF, which provide valuable expertise and support in emergency situations.

Aside from immediate action, we must ensure accountability for such crimes at both the national and the international levels. It constitutes a key element of prevention and justice for victims, on which we must deliver. It is a matter of urgency not only for the victims, but also for the credibility of the whole international system established by us, the United Nations.

Let me conclude by referring to the ranking of States helping Ukraine the most in terms of political, military, financial and other support, just published by *Forbes Ukraine*, where Poland has ranked first, with the United States and Estonia following. We are thankful for that kind appreciation, but we would prefer to trade it for the end of this war of aggression waged by Russia and, instead, enter the ranking of States helping Ukraine to rebuild stronger and even more resilient.

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

Mr. Chatrnúch (Slovakia): At the outset, let me thank the Special Representative, Ms. Pramila Patten, and the representatives of civil society for their comprehensive, insightful briefings.

For more than 100 days, we have been witnessing the unjustified and unprovoked Russian aggression against Ukraine, in blatant violation of international law. For more than 100 days, Ukrainian citizens have been bravely defending their own motherland, their lives and their basic right to decide freely about their future. Over more than 100 days, they have been defending rules that have guaranteed stability and peace for the European continent — the very rules that the Russian Federation decided to flagrantly breach.

The international community already made a commitment to helping Ukraine in its reconstruction and recovery as soon as this nightmare is over. Ukraine

will undoubtedly flourish once again, but the blood of the victims of this senseless war will be forever dried on the palms of the hands of the Russian Federation. As of 3 June, more than 9,000 civilian casualties had been recorded by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Needless to say, that number is much higher in reality.

The situation of vulnerable groups, including women, is particularly disturbing. While fully recognizing the impact that this shameless war has on them, we must unfortunately expect worse until President Putin decides to stop this heinous war.

Since 24 February, women specifically have been disproportionately affected by the war. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, other agencies and world media have recorded the rise in conflict-related sexual violence, including rape, sexual abuse and human trafficking. We take this opportunity to once again condemn acts of sexual violence perpetrated by Russian forces, which are part of the most hideous violations of the laws of armed conflict. Slovakia will continue to work with its partners to ensure that those perpetrators are held accountable for the crimes committed in Ukraine.

Another deplorable issue is the detrimental effect that rape, human trafficking and other forms

of sexual abuse and exploitation have on the physical and mental health of victims. For traffickers, the crisis is not a tragedy but an opportunity to exploit people in need. In that regard, women and other vulnerable groups who experienced trauma and sexual violence must have access to adequate medical care, including access to psychological support and basic sexual and reproductive health services and rights.

So far since the beginning of the aggression by the Russian Federation, about 490,000 refugees, mostly women and children, have entered Slovakia. My country has adopted numerous legislative and administrative measures to help women in need, and we will continue to do so. In that vein, I would also like to praise civil society and the people of Slovakia, who have expressed great solidarity and provided those fleeing Ukraine with the necessary assistance.

Last but not least, allow me to reiterate that the aggressor accountable for this situation is evident. Slovakia calls for an immediate cessation of Russian military activities in Ukraine and the unconditional withdrawal of all Russian troops from the whole territory of Ukraine.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.