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Seventy-ninth year

Provisional

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New York

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Kanu	(Sierra Leone)
<i>Members:</i>	Algeria	Mr. Gaouaoui
	China	Mr. Geng Shuang
	Ecuador	Mr. Montalvo Sosa
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Guyana	Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett
	Japan	Mrs. Shino
	Malta	Ms. Gatt
	Mozambique	Mr. Fernandes
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Hwang
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Slovenia	Mr. Žbogar
	Switzerland	Mrs. Baeriswyl
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Kariuki
	United States of America	Mr. Wood

Agenda

Maintenance of international peace and security

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Maintenance of international peace and security

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

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Miroslav Jenča, Assistant Secretary-General for Europe, Central Asia and the Americas, Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations, to participate in this meeting.

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

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

I give the floor to Mr. Jenča.

Mr. Jenča: On Saturday, 24 August, Ukraine marked its thirty-third Independence Day. The day also marked a sombre milestone of two and a half years of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, launched in blatant violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. On this occasion, we reiterate the full commitment of the United Nations to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine, within its internationally recognized borders.

Over the past 30 months, millions of Ukrainians have witnessed unimaginable death, devastation and destruction. According to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 11,662 civilians have been killed since 24 February 2022 — 639 of them children — and 24,207 civilians have been injured, 1,577 of them children. This July was the deadliest month for civilians in Ukraine in almost two years. At least 219 civilians were killed and 1,018 injured. Tragically, those figures are only growing as missiles, shells and drones continue to hit cities, towns and villages across Ukraine daily. In the past two days, hundreds of missiles and drones reportedly killed at

least 11 people and hit energy and other critical civilian infrastructure across Ukraine. Damage was reported in 15 regions, with at least 11 energy facilities affected. That vast destruction further aggravates the already precarious access to energy and water for millions of people. Just days before, on 24 August, amid escalating fighting in eastern Ukraine, a missile struck a hotel in the town of Kramatorsk, in the Donetsk region of Ukraine. A Reuters staff member was killed and four journalists were injured. Similar attacks on hotels, restaurants, markets and shopping areas in front-line communities have been reported.

We are also concerned about the impact of the spread of fighting on the civilian population on both sides of the Ukraine-Russia border, including in the Sumy and Kharkiv regions of Ukraine, as well as in the Kursk, Belgorod and Bryansk regions of the Russian Federation. Following the start of Ukraine's incursion into the Kursk region on 6 August, local Russian officials reported at least 12 people killed and 121 injured. According to local officials, at least 130,000 people have been evacuated from the region. OHCHR has received no additional reports of civilian casualties or related harm and is not able to confirm those reports, as it has no access to the Russian Federation and the areas impacted by the fighting. As the Secretary-General has repeatedly underlined, attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure are unacceptable, no matter where they occur. Those attacks are prohibited by international humanitarian law. They must end immediately, and we urge all sides to act responsibly and ensure the protection of civilians.

We are alarmed about reported incidents around nuclear facilities in Ukraine and Russia. In August, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) reported a deterioration in the nuclear safety situation at Ukraine's Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant. On 17 August, a drone strike hit the road around the site perimeter. On 11 August, significant fire at one of the cooling towers resulted in considerable damage. The IAEA team has also reported periodic intense military activity near the plant, including sounds of frequent explosions and of repetitive heavy machine-gun and rifle fire and artillery at various distances from the plant.

Concerns are also rising about nuclear safety and security in the Kursk region of the Russian Federation. On 22 August, the Russian Federation informed the International Atomic Energy Agency that remains of a drone had been found within the territory of

the Kursk nuclear power plant. We welcome IAEA Director General Grossi's visit to the Kursk nuclear power plant yesterday and his personal efforts to ensure nuclear safety and security in Russia and Ukraine. We also commend the IAEA's ongoing monitoring of the situation at all of Ukraine's nuclear sites, including Europe's largest plant, in Zaporizhzhya. We continue to call for maximum restraint and vigilance to avoid a nuclear incident, whose consequences could be catastrophic for the region and the world.

After a decade of conflict in eastern Ukraine and the occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol and following two and a half years of full-scale war, the suffering of the people of Ukraine continues unabated. Women in Ukraine are facing particular risks. They make up 56 per cent of the 15 million people in need of humanitarian assistance. We are concerned about the reported 40 per cent increase in cases of gender-based violence. In front-line areas, particularly in eastern and southern Ukraine, entire villages and towns have been partially or completely devastated. According to OHCHR, 546 medical facilities and 1,306 educational facilities have been damaged or destroyed.

As we have said in previous briefings, humanitarian operations in some areas lack access to people in need. We remain deeply concerned about the 1.5 million people whom we are unable to reach in parts of the Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk and Zaporizhzhya regions of Ukraine occupied by the Russian Federation. Like everyone living close to the front line in Ukraine, they require urgent access to health care, medicine, food and clean drinking water. In accordance with international humanitarian law, it is imperative that impartial humanitarian relief be facilitated for all civilians in need.

The hostilities have displaced millions of Ukrainians who continue to need our support. Nearly 3.7 million people have been internally displaced within Ukraine, and more than 6.6 million Ukrainian refugees have been recorded globally. This year, together with our partners, the United Nations aims to reach 8.5 million people with life-saving assistance, including through its winter response plan. So far, donors have provided 41 per cent of the \$3.1 billion required under the humanitarian needs and response plan, and we thank them for their generous contributions. However, the already dire humanitarian situation is expected to worsen, as the hostilities show no signs of abating and winter is approaching.

We welcome the recent exchanges of prisoners of war facilitated by the United Arab Emirates and other actors, and we encourage the sides to step up their efforts to bring all prisoners of war home. However, we are seriously concerned about the treatment of prisoners of war held by the Russian Federation. The United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine has reported that prisoners of war have been subjected to prolonged, routine torture, dire internment conditions and repeated sexual violence. Prisoners of war must be treated in accordance with international humanitarian law.

We cannot allow the horrific devastation of this war to become normalized. It is more critical than ever for us to speak with one voice to ensure the protection of civilians and to step up our urgent efforts towards peace. Next month, world leaders will gather for the Summit of the Future to forge a new international consensus on how we can deliver a better present and safeguard the future. We hope that the Summit will help enhance global collaboration at a time when it is most urgently needed. And we hope that those efforts will also bring us closer to laying the foundations for a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in Ukraine, in line with the Charter, international law and the resolutions of the General Assembly. The United Nations remains ready to support all meaningful efforts to that end.

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

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

Mr. Žbogar (Slovenia): I thank you very much for organizing today's meeting, Mr. President. I would also like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča for his briefing. I believe it is useful for the Council to hear the latest on the most extensive conventional war that the world has seen in decades.

In the past two days we have been reminded of the viciousness of this war as Russia launched one of the largest combined strikes we have seen since it began. Almost 300 drones and missiles hit apartment buildings and energy infrastructure across Ukraine, including reportedly a hydropower plant in the Kyiv region. Those unabated strikes against civilians and civilian infrastructure are blatant violations of international humanitarian law and need to stop immediately. And there are no signs that the intensity of the fighting is decreasing — on the contrary. As Assistant Secretary-General Jenča said, the United Nations recorded more

than 1,200 civilian casualties in July alone, which makes it the deadliest month for civilians in almost two years.

That brings me to my first point. The sheer extent of human life lost to the war instigated by Russia is intolerable and compels us to strive for peace — a just and lasting peace for Ukraine and its people. As we pass the two-and-a-half year mark since the start of the war, it is high time that a peace process began. It is obvious that there cannot be peace without the involvement of all the parties and dialogue between them. In that regard, we hope that the Russian Federation will demonstrate a genuine willingness to end the war and engage in good-faith negotiations, on the basis of international norms and with full respect for the Charter of the United Nations.

Secondly, as the war keeps raging, the stakes are getting higher. That is especially obvious with regard to the safety and security of nuclear power plants in the region. In the span of a single month at the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant, we have seen fire in one of its cooling towers, power outages and a drone strike in the immediate vicinity of the plant. The situation is perilous and will become devastating if the seven indispensable pillars for nuclear safety and security and the five basic principles for the protection of the Zaporizhzhya plant are not respected. That holds true not only for the nuclear power plants on the internationally recognized territory of Ukraine, but also for other such plants and civilian nuclear facilities affected by armed conflict. Slovenia therefore welcomes and fully supports International Atomic Energy Agency Director General Grossi's activities in that regard. We also believe that the Council should address the importance of preventing civilian nuclear facilities from becoming targets or objects of armed conflict. Any attack on a civilian nuclear facility or the prevention of its normal operation could result in an unimaginable, long-term humanitarian and environmental disaster. We are ready to engage in order to prevent that.

It is devastating to see the war expanding in terms of the territories it engulfs and the destruction it causes. However, that does not absolve the Council of its duty to ensure international peace and security, including in Ukraine. Slovenia will not cease in its endeavours to build trust in order to secure the future of Ukrainians — and Russians, for that matter — with a just and lasting peace.

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

On 24 August 1991, Ukraine declared its independence from the Soviet Union. Two and half years ago, Russia launched an unjustifiable full-scale invasion of Ukraine, and today continues what is a decade-long assault against Ukraine's independence. Ukraine has an inherent right to defend its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity against Russia's aggression. That right is enshrined in Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations.

Ukraine's people are fighting, defying the Kremlin's attempt to redraw Ukraine's borders by force. They are fighting valiantly and heroically, though Russia continues to brutally strike Ukraine's critical infrastructure, as it did over the past weekend, launching its largest aerial attack since the war began, a volley of hundreds of missiles and drones, killing more than a dozen civilians and damaging energy facilities.

In July, Russia hit Ukraine's Okhmatdyt children's hospital. In Putin's war of choice, Russia has forcibly transferred and deported thousands of civilians, including children, and caused 6.4 million refugees to flee the country, and another 3.5 million to be internally displaced. There is no justification for those acts.

Today the Kremlin is endangering the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant. We call on Russia to accede to the demand of 100 of its fellow General Assembly members and return control of the plant to the rightful, competent Ukrainian authorities.

Russia cannot and will not subjugate Ukraine. The United States will continue to uphold the foundational principles of the United Nations Charter and support Ukraine against Russia's aggression, as Ukraine preserves its independence. Ukraine and the United States made concrete progress by signing a historic bilateral security agreement in June. But we are not alone. With the Ukraine Compact, 32 NATO allies and partners pledged to support Ukraine's immediate security needs and maintain Ukraine's long-term defence and deterrence capability.

Ukraine's Independence Day serves as a reminder of what is at stake: the fundamental principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity. Our commitment to those principles, like our commitment to Ukraine, will not waver. The United States will stand by Ukraine as it seeks a just and lasting peace consistent with the United

Nations Charter. And when the world's leaders come to New York next month to reaffirm their commitment to the United Nations Charter, they will also be reaffirming their support for a basic principle: Russia cannot redraw Ukraine's borders by force.

The United States once again calls on Russia to stop its relentless attacks against Ukraine and to immediately withdraw its forces from Ukraine's territory. We hope that next year, Ukrainians will be able to celebrate their independence in peace.

Mrs. Shino (Japan): We would like to thank the United States and Slovenia for requesting this meeting, and Sierra Leone for arranging it. I also thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča for his comprehensive briefing.

First and foremost, we join the global community in congratulating all Ukrainians on the thirty-third anniversary of their independence, on 24 August. Ukraine has been fighting desperately for its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity — principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations that no one can undermine.

We are concerned about the use of a seemingly neutral phrase — the so-called war in Ukraine — to divert attention from the true nature of the situation. Let me make it clear: this unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine has been brought about by Russia. That fact remains unchanged, as clearly recognized by the overwhelming majority of the General Assembly. We express our deep respect for, and strong solidarity with, the Ukrainian people, who have been defending their country for more than two and a half years. Our support has been unwavering from the outset.

In addition to violating the United Nations Charter, Russia continues to disregard the Geneva Conventions. I would like to take a moment to reflect on what Russia's aggression has caused in Ukraine. As we heard from the briefer today, there have been countless civilian casualties. Families have been torn apart by forced deportations of Ukrainians, including children. Countless installations of critical civilian infrastructure, such as power plants and dams, have been destroyed. The continued occupation of Europe's largest nuclear power plant poses a risk of nuclear disaster. The overall damage has been too extensive to enumerate fully. Despite being a permanent member of the Security Council, Russia continues to violate the related Security Council resolutions it has agreed to, including importing missiles from North Korea for use in Ukraine.

The international community must keep united on fundamental principles. We have reaffirmed our commitment to the international order based on the rule of law. We have strengthened our solidarity based on common values, including respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as human rights and dignity. In order to prevent any future attempts to change the status quo by force anywhere in the world, we emphasize once again that Ukraine must prevail and that peace in Ukraine must be based on the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter. We continue to demand Russia's immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal from Ukraine. We reiterate our unshakeable position of adhering to the United Nations Charter and urge Russia to do the same.

Mr. Hwang (Republic of Korea): I extend my gratitude to Assistant Secretary-General Jenča for his briefing. I also welcome the participation of the Permanent Representative of Ukraine in today's meeting.

Ukraine's Independence Day was 24 August. It should have been a day of celebration of national sovereignty and unity, but sadly Ukrainians are still suffering from the ongoing conflict that has already lasted two and half years. Over the past few weeks, we have witnessed a significant escalation along the battlefronts. Ukraine's military operation within Russian territories was followed by Russia's intensified hostilities, which caused a rise in civilian casualties, the mandatory evacuation of affected areas and renewed destruction of critical civilian infrastructure. Russia's attacks, including the vile large-scale attack on Monday, involving hundreds of missile and drone strikes, continue to threaten all Ukrainians and plunge them into darkness, with the approach of the third winter since the war began.

My delegation would like to highlight several points.

First, we are deeply concerned about the ongoing dangerous situation of the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant, following increased military activities in its vicinity. As a country that operates 26 nuclear reactors on its soil and having hosted the second Nuclear Security Summit in 2012, the Republic of Korea joins calls for a halt to any and all escalatory actions that risk a nuclear catastrophe. All parties must faithfully cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in order to prevent such an incident. We appreciate the IAEA's efforts since the war began

to ensure nuclear safety and security in the region. We are also closely monitoring the result of the visit of the Agency's Director General to the Kursk nuclear power plant in Russia.

Secondly, as we commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Geneva Conventions, we deplore that those landmark global commitments for protecting victims of war continue to be blatantly ignored in Ukraine. Indiscriminate attacks against civilians and civilian objects, including energy infrastructure, are in violation of international humanitarian law and must be condemned unequivocally. The mistreatment of prisoners of war and detainees also must stop. And, ultimately, those who committed war crimes and atrocities in Ukraine should be held accountable.

Thirdly, we support the international community's diplomatic efforts to end the war in line with international law and the Charter of the United Nations, affirming Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Even amid the intense fighting on the ground, we cannot lose hope for diplomacy. At the same time, as everybody in the Chamber knows, there is a simple and shorter path, that is, Russia's withdrawal of its troops from Ukraine's territories.

We note with great concern the Ukrainian authorities' announcement that North Korea's ballistic missiles were used again by Russia to strike Ukraine on 31 July and 11 August. Russia cannot cover up its illegal procurement of North Korea's weapons and use of them against Ukraine, which violate multiple Security Council resolutions. We once again strongly urge Russia to fulfil its solemn responsibility as a permanent member of the Security Council by halting its illegal military transactions with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We also condemn the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for being complicit in Russia's illegal invasion, prolonging the war in Ukraine and threatening international peace and security in the wider regions, including Europe and East Asia.

In conclusion, the Republic of Korea will support Ukraine until it achieves just and lasting peace in its territories, based on our bilateral Ukraine peace and solidarity initiative.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): In the middle of August, United Nations accredited reporters began asking us why Western members of the Security Council were in no hurry to convene a meeting on the situation in Ukraine this

month. Could it be, they asked, that the United States and its allies decided to give up on their practice of artificially keeping the Ukrainian issue on the agenda of the Security Council, regardless of the real need for it to be discussed in the Council? Of course, we could not answer for our Western colleagues, although we had some ideas as to why that was the case.

The Kursk adventure, as Ukrainians themselves called the reckless attack of Zelenskyy's regime on the peaceful Russian border region in August, made their Ukrainian underlings look too unfavourable. Our Western colleagues simply could not ignore the ample evidence showing that, in the Kursk region, Ukrainian nationalists were executing civilians trying to flee the area of hostilities, including pregnant women; shelling civilian cars; launching drones at ambulances, journalists and volunteers trying to rescue people from Ukrainian executioners; expertly looting Russian villages and stores and posting it all on the Internet. They also were shelling and destroying civilian objects, including residential buildings, schools and hospitals, abusing peaceful civilians and taking them hostage, all while demonstratively using Nazi paraphernalia and symbols. We already showed some of the video evidence of those crimes during the Arria formula meeting on 13 August. Since then, the number of crimes has only increased, and they are taking place in a territory in which there are no military facilities and which is mostly populated by peaceful women, children and older persons.

Furthermore, irrefutable evidence has emerged that the Kyiv regime was intentionally shelling the Kursk nuclear power plant and was planning to take over the plant during its military operation. That kind of recklessness could trigger a nuclear incident with tragic consequences for the entire continent of Europe and is the best rebuff to those who have tried and are trying to ignore the Kyiv regime's attack on the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant. That is what Western Council members' unprincipled ostrich-like stance leads to. That kind of ostentatious savagery is uncomfortable even for Washington, London and Brussels, which, in 2014, gave the Kyiv Nazis a carte blanche to commit any crime. The Western sponsors of the Kyiv regime are also clearly embarrassed by the fact that, during the attack on the Kursk region, the Kyiv regime did not even bother to hide its true colours which shocked many around the world.

Those are clearly not the best circumstances under which to convene a Security Council meeting. And that is why our Western colleagues waited until the very end of the month and requested the meeting at the last minute, in the hope that the thought process of the leader of the Kyiv regime would become clear by this time and that there would be at least some positive outcomes of his adventurous and reckless decision for Ukraine.

However, the rationale behind the suicidal Kursk adventure of the Ukrainian President, who is past his expiration date, has not become any clearer and the outcomes are even worse. In fact, Ukraine, has suffered enormous losses in military personnel and Western equipment, but for some reason holds a few villages in the Kursk region, and to that end, it is diverting its scarce reserves, including those taken from the east, where Ukraine's front line is now collapsing because of that strategic blunder. The pace of the Russian troops' advances has accelerated significantly, with more and more settlements in Donbas being liberated every day. In recent days alone, we have liberated Tymofiiivka, Novoselivka Persha, Vesele, Lysychne, Ivanivka, Serhiivka, Svyrydonivka, Zhelanne, Mezbove, Zalizne, Komyshivka, Orlivka, Kostiantynivka, Novohrodivka, Kalynove and Memryk. We have recently liberated the village of Novhorodske, which for three years under the Maidan authorities was called New York. Our units have already entered such strategically important points as Selydove and Toretsk, which will soon become Dzerzhinsk, as well as Karlivka, and are approaching the most important transportation and logistics hub in Pokrovsk, which will soon become Krasnoarmeysk again. The average territory liberated per day has more than doubled in August compared with that of July and has amounted to 11.2 square kilometres. And in recent days that figure has risen to almost 30 square kilometres.

At the same time, it is important to understand that, with the Ukrainian armed forces lacking in reserves to be used in the Kursk region, the Russian forces are now liberating the last strongholds that the Ukrainian armed forces had reinforced and held since 2014, and that is only the beginning. Ukraine will have to pay in full for the Kursk adventure. We therefore understand that today's meeting was requested by the Western co-conspirators of Zelenskyy's regime with a heavy heart.

The United States and its satellites must also bear in mind the fact that Ukraine's armed forces are fighting in the Kursk region with Western weapons — they have

no weapons of their own left. They are using and losing German and American tanks and shelling peaceful towns with Western artillery and multiple-launch rocket systems. Furthermore, there are Western mercenaries and consultants fighting and dying in the woods and fields of the Kursk region — without them Ukraine's armed forces can do nothing. This means that the complicity of Western countries in the crimes of the Kyiv regime has become even more obvious to everyone. We are going to discuss that topic in detail on 30 August at the meeting on Western weapons supplies to Ukraine.

Therefore, it would be naive to expect the United States and its NATO allies to make any kind of objective or even humane assessment of what is being done by the Ukrainian murderers, terrorists and looters. In that regard, our Western colleagues have invoked a well-worn mantra of Kyiv's right to self-defence and protection from Russian aggression. We have heard those words today in this Chamber, and they sounded particularly untrue. And I think we will continue to hear them.

The United States representative stated this morning in this Chamber:

"No member of the Council, facing a brutal terrorist organization on its border, would tolerate daily attacks and the displacement of tens of thousands of its own people." (*S/PV.9712, p. 3*)

That position of the United States is reserved exclusively for Israel; when it comes to crimes committed against Russia and Russians, Washington does not pay attention to that.

The reckless Kursk adventure, undertaken by the Ukrainian President, has another consequence. As Council members will recall, in June, the Russian President put forward a peace proposal on Ukraine that reflected the real situation on the front line and took into account the genesis of the Ukrainian crisis. For some time after that, the rhetoric of the Kyiv leaders became more peace-loving, and many of our colleagues from the global South rushed to the conclusion that we were about to begin peace negotiations. Those colleagues who thought that way did not take into account the fact that the Kyiv regime could not enter any kind of agreement. That inability was evident in the case of the Minsk agreements and the draft peace agreement initialled in Istanbul in 2022. This time the Kyiv regime once again deceived everyone who

tried to discuss peace with it and ultimately decided to escalate the situation by attacking the Kursk region, thereby removing any uncertainty about the situation. I hope that no one has any more illusions about that. We have never had any, and therefore we will continue to implement the goals of our special military operation to establish peace in Ukraine, which is something the Zelenskyy regime is not the least bit interested in.

In conclusion, I would like to urge all those Member States that Washington and its allies are now actively trying to lure into their geopolitical games — by bribing elites and turning them against their neighbours and other influential world players — to take a look at the unenviable example of Ukraine, where they will understand what that can lead to. From being one of the wealthiest of the post-Soviet republics, with impressive industrial potential, it has almost overnight become one of the poorest States of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Its economy and industry have been ruined, its land has been sold off to greedy Western corporations and it has become a testing ground for American bio-laboratories and now for testing new Western weapons and using up old ones as well.

Introducing so-called Western-style “democracy” has resulted in a total lack of freedom of speech — and more recently of freedom of religion — as well as thousands of political prisoners and the establishment of a dictatorship under a President who not only failed to fulfil any of his pre-election promises of peace but led his country into a suicidal war with Russia over Western geopolitical interests in which Ukraine plays the role of a private military company. As a consequence, the leader of the Kyiv junta has also flouted his own country’s Constitution and trampled on it by refusing to hold elections, and today he is senselessly throwing hundreds of thousands of his citizens into the meat grinder simply to stay in power.

That is the truly depressing outcome achieved by Ukraine on the thirty-third anniversary of its independence. That is the cost of the mistakes and blunders made by the Ukrainian leadership to please the West. And in apparent recognition of that, on that day this year the Western countries even decided to forgo any actions in support of Ukraine at United Nations Headquarters in New York, unlike in previous years. Instead, the Kyiv regime’s Western sponsors preferred to spend the time comfortably in Geneva, discussing the anniversary of international humanitarian law, which at that very moment was being flagrantly violated by their

Ukrainian underlings in the Kursk region. I would like to believe that the bloody Ukrainian tragedy provoked by the United States and its NATO allies will serve as a lesson to all who might potentially find themselves in a similar situation.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett (Guyana): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča for the update he provided and welcome the participation of the representatives of Ukraine, the European Union, Romania, Denmark, Poland and Latvia in today’s meeting.

While the meeting was convened to discuss the political and security situation in Ukraine, it would be remiss of us not to speak at the outset about the ongoing violations of international law — violations that continue to bring death and destruction to civilians on both sides as the war spreads farther from the front lines with each passing day. Each month we continue to receive alarming reports of civilian casualties, mostly in Ukraine. Since February 2022, more than 34,000 civilians — men, women and children — have borne the brunt of thousands of attacks. As Mr. Jenča reminded us, July was the deadliest month for Ukraine.

We deplore the continued attacks on civilians and civilian objects, despite numerous calls by the Security Council and the General Assembly for full adherence to international humanitarian law, including the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution. We demand an immediate end to all attacks targeting civilians and civilian objects and call on the parties to the conflict to refrain from launching such indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks. We also stress the need for accountability for all such violations. Furthermore, Guyana demands that the conflicting parties take constant care to protect civilians and civilian objects from harm and all necessary measures to minimize the risk of civilian injury and death, as well as damage to civilian property. The status quo cannot be allowed to continue. Every Member State has an obligation to abide by the Charter of the United Nations and the wider body of international law.

With each life lost, each family torn apart and each home bombed, anger and hatred spread and the prospects for peace diminish. Guyana therefore stresses the urgency of resolving the conflict through peaceful means. Prolonging it will only exacerbate the risks and consequences for all concerned and further threaten international peace and security. As I have said previously, innocent lives cannot continue to be

sacrificed on the altar of political brinkmanship. We must choose peace. We therefore reiterate our call to the parties to commit to a serious political and diplomatic process aimed at ending the conflict. We urge them to engage in good faith to bring an end to the suffering of the millions of men, women and children who have already paid too high a price.

As we just heard from Mr. Jenča, the humanitarian situation in Ukraine is dire, and it will only get worse as the winter season approaches. Guyana urges the international community to pay increased attention to the plight of the 14.6 million people in need of humanitarian assistance in Ukraine, and to scale up support for the humanitarian needs and response plan. We call for continued international support for the victims of the war, including medical, psychological and legal support, with particular attention to children and survivors of sexual violence. We also stress the need for access to be granted to the people in desperate need of humanitarian assistance in the occupied territories and call on the Russian Federation to grant humanitarian access to all populations in need in those territories. Guyana also calls for the Russian Federation to immediately withdraw its military forces from the internationally recognized territory of Ukraine.

In conclusion, Guyana will continue to support all efforts aimed at achieving a peaceful and sustainable end to the war.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča for his briefing.

Two and a half years have passed since the Ukraine crisis fully escalated in February 2022. In that time we have witnessed protracted fighting on the ground, a deteriorating humanitarian crisis and ever-evolving spillover effects. That is tragic and worrisome. The war has taken a new turn since the beginning of this month, with both parties to the conflict thrown into a new round of fierce fighting, leading to severe casualties and damage to infrastructure. Endlessly prolonging the war will bring only more harm, more damage and finally a lose-lose outcome, making an already turbulent world even more unpredictable.

In view of the increasingly severe and complex situation, China has stressed on many occasions that the current priority for all parties should be following the three principles of refraining from expanding the battlefield, escalating the fighting or fuelling the

flames, with a view to achieving de-escalation as soon as possible. We welcomed the new round of prisoner exchanges between Russia and Ukraine under the good offices of the United Arab Emirates. We once again call on both parties to stay calm, exercise restraint, abide by international humanitarian law in earnest and refrain from attacking civilians, civilian infrastructure, nuclear power plants or other nuclear facilities being used for peaceful purposes. We call on all the parties to the conflict to demonstrate political will, seek a rapprochement, stop fighting and launch peace talks as soon as possible. We call on the international community to maintain an objective and impartial position and to create favourable conditions and provide concrete support to that end.

Despite the twists and turns on the path towards peace, China has been committed to working for peace and promoting talks. As long as it can be conducive to alleviating the situation and facilitating negotiations, China has been contributing. The Special Representative of the Chinese Government on Eurasian Affairs recently visited Brazil, South Africa and Indonesia for a fourth round of shuttle diplomacy on the political settlement of the Ukraine crisis. During the exchanges, all parties highly commended the six-point consensus proposed by China and Brazil on the question of Ukraine. They all expressed worries about the escalation of the conflict and unanimously called for the early launch of peace talks. China is ready to continue its close communication with the global South and other concerned countries and make unremitting efforts towards a political settlement.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate that on the question of Ukraine, China has always maintained that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries should be respected, the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations should be observed, the legitimate security concerns of all countries should be taken seriously and all efforts conducive to the peaceful settlement of the crisis should be supported. Based on those four “shoulds”, China will continue to work for a political settlement.

Mr. Montalvo Sosa (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča for his detailed briefing.

We are at a critical juncture, with recent developments that have further worsened tensions and insecurity in the region. The escalation of hostilities is

not only continuing to claim innocent lives, but it is also exacerbating the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, where more than 14 million people, including 3.2 million children, are in urgent need of assistance.

Ecuador rejects any action that could exacerbate the violence and cause the civilian population greater suffering. Deliberate attacks on civilians and civilian objects, such as hospitals, schools and humanitarian facilities, are flagrant violations of international law and must cease immediately. The protection of civilians — in its broad sense — must guide any response in the context of this conflict, so that the sanctity of international humanitarian law is preserved. Even in times of war there are mandatory norms.

Similarly, nuclear safety is an issue that warrants our utmost attention. Any activity that puts the integrity of nuclear facilities in Russia or Ukraine at risk is unacceptable. I echo the call by the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency for compliance with the seven indispensable pillars of nuclear safety and security during armed conflict and the five concrete principles, which were established to protect the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant but are applicable to any nuclear power plant. It is imperative that those principles be respected in order to prevent a humanitarian and environmental disaster of incalculable proportions.

The intensifying violence and the growing risk of escalation, which threaten to destabilize not only regional but global security, are worrisome. My country reiterates, as it has consistently done, that as Members of this Organization, we are obliged to abide by universally accepted principles and international law. To do otherwise would be tantamount to endorsing the Latin maxim *inter arma silent leges*, that is to say, the law is silenced during war. It is therefore important to recall unequivocally Article 2, paragraph 4, of the Charter of the United Nations, which prohibits Members of the Organization from resorting to the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State. That principle is one of the pillars of the international order that we have all agreed to protect and promote.

It is imperative to work for de-escalation, containment and the cessation of hostilities. We must not allow war to become normalized. It is crucial to revitalize channels of communication and explore negotiation options that are based on dialogue

and diplomacy, always with strict respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

In conclusion, it is the Council's primary responsibility to maintain international peace and security. We therefore urge its members to act with determination, in full adherence to the principles of the Charter, to put an end to this devastating conflict. They can count on Ecuador's support in working towards that goal.

Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to join my colleagues in thanking Assistant Secretary-General Jenča for his briefing.

Earlier this week, Ukrainians in various parts of the country once again woke up to the sound of warning sirens and explosions. Russia's massive attacks on cities and power grids in recent days have once again claimed victims and caused extensive damage. Switzerland condemns the continuing strikes on Ukraine's civilian and energy infrastructure. Those developments remind us that two and a half years after the military aggression began, human losses, the destruction of homes and the collapse of all certainties continue unabated.

From the outset, Switzerland has unequivocally condemned Russia's military aggression against Ukraine. That aggression is a violation of the fundamental rules and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Just a few days after the anniversary of Ukraine's independence, I reaffirm Switzerland's firm support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. After 30 long months, and as we watch with concern the particularly intense hostilities and tensions in eastern Ukraine and the border areas, three actions require immediate attention.

First, compliance with international humanitarian law must be an absolute and non-negotiable imperative. We have just commemorated the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Geneva Conventions. Together, we reminded one another of the universally adopted obligations, in particular that of guaranteeing the protection of the civilian population and civilian property. According to figures from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights — and as Assistant Secretary-General Jenča just pointed out — last month was the deadliest for civilians in Ukraine since October 2022. On average, a school, hospital or medical clinic is damaged or destroyed in Ukraine every day. Switzerland urges all parties to the conflict to comply

strictly with their obligations, including those arising from the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution in the conduct of hostilities. Any violation of international humanitarian law is unacceptable.

Secondly, accountability efforts must continue. Investigations of violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law and the prosecution of international crimes are essential to restoring justice. Switzerland supports accountability efforts at both the national and international levels, in particular, the work of the International Criminal Court (ICC). In that respect, we welcome Ukraine's decision to ratify the Rome Statute. Its full accession is crucial to enabling the ICC to deliver justice to victims and deter future atrocities. We also stress the need for holistic support for victims and their families. Such initiatives as the Register of Damage Caused by the Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine and special attention to psychological needs are crucial.

Thirdly, it is essential to advance peace in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. We urge all stakeholders to work concretely and constructively towards a peace process aimed at a just and lasting peace, based on the fundamental principles of international law. Switzerland remains committed to supporting those efforts and underlines its conviction that peace is achieved through dialogue. We reiterate the call made to the parties concerned at the summit on peace in Ukraine to guarantee nuclear safety and security, among other things. It is crucial to launch an exchange of views that will lead to concrete measures on that matter. International humanitarian law and the five principles established by the International Atomic Energy Agency in the Council must be respected.

Let me conclude with the words of a Ukrainian couple: "We had everything we needed, but now we are just happy to be alive". I express Switzerland's solidarity with the Ukrainian people, who have suffered the ravages of this war for too long. For the sake of international peace and security, the war must end. We therefore reiterate our urgent appeal to Russia to cease all hostilities and withdraw its troops from Ukrainian territory.

Mr. Gaouaoui (Algeria): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Miroslav Jenča for his briefing.

At the outset, I would like to express Algeria's deep concern about the continuing deterioration of the humanitarian situation caused by the military

operations in both Ukraine and Russia. It continues to be driven by a mindset focused on escalation and aimed at strengthening military positions on the ground. In the meantime, civilians continue to be affected by the conflict, with increasing suffering and loss of civilian lives, as well as by the worsening humanitarian situation. The absence of any eventual peaceful political solution or prospect of de-escalation is even more concerning. Unfortunately, confrontation and polarization remain the main drivers of the conflict. Against that backdrop, Algeria would like to make three critical points.

First, it is urgent to reverse the trends and to de-escalate tensions by ceasing the hostilities and abiding by international law and international humanitarian law. Attacks on civilians and the destruction of civilian infrastructure are unequivocally prohibited by international law.

Secondly, the continued polarization of the crisis remains a source of concern for Algeria. It contributes to prolonging the crisis by nurturing escalation between the parties, with adverse repercussions for international peace and security.

Thirdly, de-escalation should go hand in hand with intensifying diplomatic efforts to get the parties around the table for an inclusive and constructive dialogue and negotiations. That is the only way to guarantee a peaceful settlement of the conflict in which the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations are upheld and the legitimate security concerns of both parties met. We believe that whatever the reasons and motivations leading to a conflict may be, the parties and the international community should never consider it to be irreversible. As soon as dialogue is genuinely engaged, peace may emerge from the darkness of the most complex confrontations.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): I too thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča for his briefing.

As we discuss the situation in Ukraine today, we are once again compelled to highlight the continued barbarity of President Putin's tactics against the Ukrainian people. Last weekend, Ukraine marked its third Independence Day since Russia's illegal invasion. Instead of celebrating, Ukrainians were fighting for their country, their land and their families. They are also fighting on behalf of all our countries, in defence of the principles on which this institution, the United Nations, was founded — that every Member State has a right to sovereignty and territorial integrity and that

borders cannot be redrawn by force. Let us be clear. Under Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, Ukraine has a right to self-defence. The United Kingdom and other allies fully support Ukraine in exercising that right.

President Putin thought Kyiv would fall within days. He was wrong, and Ukrainian courage continues to prove him wrong every day. Russia is getting increasingly desperate, as we heard again today. And as it does, the attacks become more cowardly. On Monday, Russia launched a wave of missile and drone attacks across Ukraine, striking numerous civilian areas. There were further attacks on Monday night and Tuesday morning. At least seven people were killed and many more injured, and we were deeply saddened to learn that a British national, Ryan Evans, was also killed in the recent attacks. More than 35,000 civilians in Ukraine have been confirmed killed or injured since Russia's invasion began. Those most recent attacks represent continued evidence that Russia is intentionally targeting civilian energy infrastructure, risking a further humanitarian crisis this coming winter. Let us be clear that intentionally directing attacks against civilians and civilian objects constitutes a war crime.

At the same time, the consequences of Putin's miscalculation for the Russian people are increasingly evident. This week's attack alone cost Russia almost \$1.3 billion, and it is estimated that more than 1,000 Russian troops were either killed or wounded on Monday alone. We once again call on Russia to end its illegal invasion and immediately withdraw its forces. The United Kingdom, along with its international partners, will not falter in its support for Ukraine. We will stand with the Ukrainian people for as long as it takes to secure a just and sustainable peace based on the principles of the Charter and international law.

Mr. De Rivi re (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Mr. Jen a for his briefing.

On 24 August, the Ukrainian people, and with them the international community, celebrated the thirty-third anniversary of their independence, an independence that Ukraine has been courageously defending for more than 900 days. On 24 February 2022, Russia began its aggression against a sovereign country that posed no threat to it whatsoever. Since then, Ukrainians have been bravely exercising their legitimate right to defend their sovereignty and territorial integrity. Through that struggle, they are fighting to defend the purposes and

principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Two days after that celebration, Russia launched the most massive drone and missile attack on Ukrainian energy infrastructure since the conflict began, carrying out a new attack on the night of 26 and 27 August. After 30 months of war, Russia continues to target civilians and civilian infrastructure. That must stop. Russia must respect international humanitarian law and put an end to its aggression.

The United Nations has proved that the Russian army has committed terrible acts. The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine has documented the widespread and systematic use of torture and sexual violence. France reiterates its condemnation of the illegal deportation of Ukrainian children. This year the Secretary-General once again included Russia on the list of shame in his annual report on children in armed conflict (S/2024/384). Russia continues to be guilty of the killing, maiming and illegal transfer of children.

From the very first days of the Russian aggression, France has been working to ensure that the perpetrators of crimes committed in Ukraine are identified and prosecuted and their crimes documented. We will continue to support the work of the International Criminal Court and the Ukrainian courts, and we welcome the authorization given by the Ukrainian Parliament to ratify the Rome Statute, which will facilitate investigations. With the Summit of the Future just weeks away, as world leaders prepare to come together with the Secretary-General to discuss our common future, Russia must stop destabilizing a world already under serious threat even further. The path to peace in Ukraine is simple. Russia must immediately withdraw its troops from Ukrainian territory within its internationally recognized borders and end its aggression.

Ms. Gatt (Malta): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Jen a for his briefing.

More than two years in, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine continues to demonstrate its disregard for global peace and security, international law and multilateralism. As we speak, the hostilities in north-eastern Ukraine continue unabated. Recent attacks in the Donetsk, Kharkiv, Kherson and Sumy regions are impacting civilians, causing damage, suffering and destruction to Ukraine and her people, who continue to bear the brunt of the war on a daily basis. Specifically,

the security situation in the Donetsk and Sumy regions has significantly worsened in recent weeks, with intense shelling by Russian forces against various cities. That escalation has led to the loss of 16 civilian lives and 22 others injured. Furthermore, local authorities have issued a mandatory evacuation order for families with children in Pokrovsk as Russian troops approach, underscoring the severity of the threats faced by those living in the front-line communities.

No place in Ukraine is safe. On 20 August, an attack targeting a children's café in the Zaporizhzhya region resulted in the death of a 14-year-old boy and severe injuries to six other children. It further increased the mounting civilian casualties, including children, due to Russia's use of banned weapons, such as cluster munitions and explosive weapons, in populated areas. As we heard today from our briefer, July was the deadliest month since Russia's war of aggression began. Malta calls on all parties to respect international humanitarian law and ensure the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure. We stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine and the humanitarian workers risking their lives to provide critical assistance in these challenging circumstances.

Malta is deeply concerned about Russian forces' increasing attacks on Ukrainian civilian infrastructure, including the strike on 22 August on a transit centre for recently displaced people in Pokrovsk. It resulted in serious damage and the eventual deactivation of the site due to security concerns. We stress once again that civilians are not targets. Children are not targets. Civilian infrastructure is not a target. Humanitarian facilities are not targets. They are all protected under international humanitarian law.

We welcome the recent exchanges of prisoners of war facilitated by the United Arab Emirates and other actors and encourage the sides to step up their efforts to bring all prisoners of war home.

We remain firm in our belief that those responsible for perpetrating serious crimes under international law must be held accountable. Such perpetrators cannot and must not go unpunished. To that end, we reiterate our full support for the mandate of the International Criminal Court, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine and the Register of Damage Caused by the Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine.

In conclusion, Malta will continue to call for full respect for the Charter of the United Nations in response to Russia's war of aggression. We also reaffirm our unwavering support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

Mr. Fernandes (Mozambique): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Miroslav Jenča for his insights. I also welcome the participation of the Permanent Representative of Ukraine in this meeting.

Our repeated calls for an immediate cessation of hostilities and a de-escalation have been disregarded for more than two years. That total disregard for peace is deeply troubling. Civilians have continued to bear the brunt of the war as the fundamental principles of international humanitarian law and the rules of war, including the tenets of the Charter of the United Nations, have been consistently and flagrantly violated on a daily basis. That is unconscionable. Given the gravity of the situation, we would like to emphasize the following critical points.

First, the military approach has proved unrealistic and untenable as a means of resolving the conflict. Its escalatory nature now threatens the wider region, potentially leading to devastating consequences for Europe and the world at large.

Secondly, we strongly urge the warring parties to recommit to confidence-building measures without delay. It is imperative that the underlying grievances that have led to this calamitous state of affairs be addressed decisively through dialogue and honest negotiations.

Thirdly, we urge the warring parties to cease hostilities without delay and resume direct negotiations without preconditions. We insist that there is simply no way left other than engaging in meaningful and constructive dialogue in good faith.

Lastly, we call for scrupulous respect for humanitarian safeguards and for the parties to ensure the safe movement of civilians and the unhindered delivery of essential supplies to all the areas affected.

To conclude, Mozambique reiterates its firm conviction that a political and negotiated solution is the only viable way to end the conflict and lay a foundation for lasting and sustainable peace between the two neighbouring countries. Where there is a will, there is a way.

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

I thank Slovenia and the United States for requesting this meeting, and I thank Assistant Secretary-General Miroslav Jenča for his helpful briefing. I also welcome the participation of the representative of Ukraine in this meeting.

Sierra Leone is deeply concerned about the security and humanitarian situation in Ukraine, which continues to deteriorate and escalate. The conflict has been ongoing for two and a half years, with no apparent end in sight and with increasingly high numbers of casualties and destruction of civilian infrastructure. In recent months, the conflict has escalated drastically and the battlefield has expanded, as Russia has reportedly intensified its offensive further to the north-east and Ukraine has reportedly continued to expand the battlefield in the Kursk region of the Russian Federation. That escalation and the purported gains on both sides reaffirm the fact that a military solution to the conflict in Ukraine is clearly not feasible and underscore that dialogue and negotiations represent the only viable means of resolving the conflict.

Sierra Leone is deeply concerned about the apparent strategic approach to annexing territories, and we therefore reiterate the Secretary-General's previous statement that

“[a]ny annexation of a State's territory by another State resulting from the threat or use of force is a violation of the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law.”

In that regard, we also want to recall resolution 2202 (2015), reaffirming the full respect of the Security Council for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine. Similarly, we affirm full respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Russian Federation. In view of that, we urge all the parties to create conditions conducive to holding direct talks at the earliest possible opportunity and to work actively for de-escalation until a ceasefire can be achieved.

As we navigate the various complexities of the conflict, including the political context, it is important that we also continue to highlight the security situation, which continues to deteriorate, with a devastating impact on the civilian population. In the past week, civilian casualties and injuries have reportedly risen both in Ukraine and in Russian-controlled areas. In

addition to the figures for July, the deadliest month since the start of the conflict, the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine verified that six civilians had been killed and 32 injured in Donetsk oblast between 22 and 25 August, along with 14 civilian casualties in Sumy oblast.

As we reported, the continuing attacks have also damaged numerous civilian facilities across Ukraine and Russia. Attacks have reportedly continued to target Ukrainian electricity and gas facilities and sites where Ukraine claims to be storing Western weapons. For instance, the recently reported attacks across 15 regions in Ukraine caused serious damage to infrastructure, leaving 250,000 families and business entities in Sumy oblast without electricity and with disrupted water supplies and damaged railway infrastructure. One of the country's last remaining power stations, a hydroelectric plant north of Kyiv, was one of the most recent targets, and the damage to it is reportedly still being assessed.

As Ukraine approaches its third winter since the start of the conflict in February 2022, these attacks on energy infrastructure continue to inflict severe suffering on millions of people. Sierra Leone reiterates that attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure are prohibited under international law. We call on all sides to ensure compliance with applicable international law, including international humanitarian law.

We note that to address the winter-specific needs, the humanitarian community launched the 2024–2025 winter response plan, calling for \$492.1 million to support 1.8 million people with critical winter-related humanitarian assistance, as outlined in the 2024 humanitarian needs and response plan. The plan intends to support timely preparedness and response. Sierra Leone calls upon the international community to support the plan financially in order to address the pressing needs of the people, enhance living conditions and ensure access to essential services.

Let me conclude by reiterating that based on the sacrosanct nature of the United Nations Charter and its principles, including respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Member States, we call for full respect for the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine and the Russian Federation within their internationally recognized borders.

Sierra Leone once more calls for good faith diplomatic efforts in pursuit of a peaceful resolution involving the parties to the conflict. We therefore welcome the exchange of prisoners of war facilitated by

the United Arab Emirates. Meaningful steps must be taken towards an immediate cessation of hostilities. We urge the parties to the conflict to engage constructively, including on their legitimate concerns, in order to find a political and diplomatic solution, as envisaged in Article 33 of the United Nations Charter.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The representative of the United States has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I will be brief. The representative of the Russian Federation, who once again left the Chamber immediately after delivering a package of misinformation, disinformation, lies and propaganda, bragged about liberating parts of Ukraine and, in essence, taking possession of those parts. Ukraine is not Russian territory to liberate and take possession of. Ukraine is a sovereign, independent State and will remain so. The United States and its allies will continue to help Ukraine in its self-defence efforts. Russia's efforts to redraw Ukraine's borders, as many Member States have said, are a clear-cut violation of the Charter of the United Nations. While Russia, which is — let us not forget — a permanent member of the Security Council, continues to drive a stake through the heart of said Charter, the United States and other like-minded Member States will continue to uphold the Charter and oppose Moscow's brutal war of aggression.

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

Mr. Kyslytsya (Ukraine): I also recognize the continued occupation of the seat of the Soviet Union by a lonely, sad, junior staff member of the Russian Permanent Mission to the United Nations.

The beginning of the week was again marked by Russia's intense and massive missile and drone strikes against Ukraine, primarily against our critical energy infrastructure, industrial facilities and residential buildings. On Monday, 26 August, Russia launched at least 109 drones and 127 missiles of various types — cruise, ballistic and air-launched ballistic — on 15 Ukrainian regions and on the capital city, Kyiv. The defence forces of Ukraine were able to intercept 102 missiles and 99 drones. Yesterday, on 27 August, Russia launched 81 drones and 10 missiles on 16 regions of Ukraine, of which 60 drones and five missiles were shot down. We reiterate our gratitude to

all allies that are contributing to enhancing Ukraine's air defences and, thus, saving the lives of people.

Nevertheless, the missiles and drones that were not intercepted caused severe damage and increased the number of casualties. One of the victims was killed in an apartment in the city of Luts'k, following a drone attack. Footage clearly shows that before the strike, the drone sustained no external interference. It was not jammed or intercepted. It first reached an altitude of 100 to 150 metres, locked onto the target and began its precise trajectory towards it. Among the Russian targets hit on Monday was the Kyiv hydroelectric power plant and its dam. By attacking that facility, Russians continue to dream of repeating what they managed to do in Kakhovka in June 2023, that is, to destroy the dam and to flood the territories downstream along the Dnipro River — in this case, the capital of Ukraine and its outskirts, the most densely populated areas of Ukraine.

For over 2 years, Ukraine has been withstanding the largest aerial terror in human history. Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, Russia has launched over 9,600 missiles, nearly 14,000 attack drones and more than 33,000 guided aerial bombs. Just imagine this number of deadly weapons dropped on our homes, schools, hospitals and power stations. The cost of those attacks is difficult to calculate. On 26 August alone, Russia spent about \$1.3 billion shelling Ukraine. That money could have been spent on improving the life of ordinary Russians, a quarter of whom — according to the United Nations — have never had access to centralized sewage systems. However, we are speaking about Russia and its criminal regime, a regime that has plunged its country into a profound crisis. The elements of the Russian crisis include a complete disregard for human life, both of its own citizens and those of other nationalities; a lack of humanity and morality and growing inadequacy, both internally and on the international stage. That is why Russia hopes to spend its revenue on killing Ukrainians.

Among the most recent appalling attacks was a strike on a supermarket in the centre of Kostiantynivka, Donetsk region on 9 August. The Russian missile killed at least 14 civilians, including three children, and injured 44 others. On 20 August, a Russian artillery shell struck a children's playground in the village of Mala Katerinivka, Zaporizhzhya region, killing one child and injuring three other children. On 25 August, Russia deliberately targeted a hotel in the city of Kramatorsk, Donetsk region, with an Iskander

missile. A Reuters team, along with local residents and workers were among those who suffered from the strike. Unfortunately, a safety adviser from the United Kingdom was killed and two journalists were injured, one of them, seriously so. Those are just a few of Russia's barbaric war crimes, all of which must be condemned and punished.

There is a clear distinction between the parties in this war. Russia is attempting to annihilate Ukraine, which is why it is targeting residential buildings, stores and critical infrastructure. Ukraine wants to stop the violence and to diminish Russia's capacity to attack. We therefore aim at legitimate military targets, including places with a concentration of Russian troops and equipment, as well as arms and fuel depots and logistics centres.

Recently, Ukrainian forces attacked military airbases Savasleyka in the Novgorod region and Marinovka in the Volgograd region. Those attacks damaged or destroyed combat aircraft and weapons, including guided aerial missiles. We will continue to eliminate Russia's combat potential, regardless of the threats Putin's representative makes here and the fakes he spreads. Responding to him is a waste of our time and United Nations resources. He does not influence the decision-making process in his country. His capital does not take into account his reports, and it would not do so even if he ever reported the truth.

Therefore, I would rather address members of the Security Council who, despite tolerating the toxic presence of Putin's envoy in the Chamber, realize the scope of the threats to both international security and the credibility of the Council. We urge them, and all partners, to consider two specific decisions to help us put an end to Russian terror sooner. First, we urge them to acknowledge Ukraine's right to long-range strikes on all legitimate military targets throughout the Russian territory. Secondly, we urge them to engage partners' air defence capabilities to shoot down missiles and drones close to their airspace. Neither of those steps are escalatory. On the contrary, they will deter Russia and reduce terror and the number of casualties.

At this moment, Russia has put everything on the line to advance in Donbas. All traditional methods are being used by Russian military commanders, including continuous meat-grinder assaults and the complete destruction of settlements, leaving only a moon-like surface. Currently, Russia is razing to the ground the

city of Pokrovsk, in the Donetsk region, and seeks to advance on the ruins— with no residents and no intact buildings. That is what Russia calls the liberation of Donbas. Dozens of Donbas cities and villages have been completely destroyed and depopulated during that liberation.

Ukraine will continue fighting against that current-day barbarism everywhere, including in the territory of Russia. That is why Ukraine could not stand idly by observing Russia's military build-up in the Kursk region and its preparations for attacks on Ukraine's Sumy region, similar to the Russian offensive on Kharkiv from the Belgorod region this May. Responding to that danger, Ukraine launched a defensive operation in designated areas of the Kursk region. Owing to those preventive actions, the immediate danger of occupation of Sumy has decreased. The dictator's confusion has been evidenced by the fact that he could not find the strength or courage to appear before the public for several days.

Recently, an unpleasant truth was revealed about the poorly equipped and inexperienced conscripts abandoned by their commanders and readily surrendered and about the mass looting of the properties of local residents and businesses by Russian soldiers. In the past, Russians, infected with propaganda, dismissed similar videos of Russian looters filmed in Ukraine as fake. Now they are shocked by video footage from the Kursk region, where Russian soldiers were again stealing — this time from their own fellow citizens.

While carrying out the operation in the Kursk region, the Ukrainian army strictly adheres to international humanitarian law. We also have no political plans regarding those areas that contradict the Charter of the United Nations. I would like to underline that the goal of the operation is strictly defensive. At the same time, Ukraine establishes military administrations to ensure order and normal life for the local population. Ample video footage, as well as reports by the international media, provide proof of the humane treatment by Ukrainian servicemen of the local civilian population, as well as of Russian prisoners of war (POWs). The latter are safe in Ukrainian captivity, and Ukraine is ready to ensure their swift exchange for Ukrainian POWs. Sunday's exchange proves our resoluteness to bring all our soldiers and illegally detained civilians out of Russian captivity as soon as possible.

Unlike the humane treatment of Russian POWs by Ukraine, our servicemen captured by Russia face cruelty and torture. Unfortunately, more crimes against Ukrainian prisoners of war have been recorded recently. For instance, the Prosecutor General's Office of Ukraine is investigating footage, which appeared on 17 August, that shows soldiers of Russia's 155th Naval Infantry Brigade with what appears to be a severed head of a Ukrainian serviceman on a spike in the background.

We are extremely concerned about the fate of Ukrainian servicemen in Russian prisons as they remain subject to ill-treatment and torture, leading to death. In July, Ukrainian POW Oleksandr Ishchenko, former soldier of the twelfth Special Forces Azov Brigade of the National Guard of Ukraine, was killed in a Rostov detention facility in Russia. According to a forensic report, prepared in Ukraine, his death was caused by blunt force trauma to his chest, multiple rib fractures and shock.

Torture in captivity, including with fatal outcomes, is a deliberate and sanctioned practice by the Russian side. As recently stated by Danielle Bell, the Head of the United Nations human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine, in an interview with a Dutch television anchor, "torture is regular and widespread, affecting over 95 per cent of prisoners". At the same time, she emphasized that the treatment of Russian POWs in Ukraine is entirely different, and international access to them is ensured. We remain convinced that the Security Council should address the appalling situation with the ill-treatment and torture of Ukrainian POWs by Russia. We also reiterate the inadmissibility of Russia's excluding Azov servicemen from prisoner exchanges, and we demand that shameful practice be stopped.

Ukraine remains committed to the peace process, aimed at ceasing violence, hostilities and violations of international law. The comprehensive, just and lasting peace should and will be based on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. That is the core of the Ukrainian peace formula, the implementation of which is well under way.

The expanded meeting of the working group on energy security took place on 22 August to discuss the contribution to the peace framework to be presented at the second peace summit. That conference on energy security has opened a series of events aimed at implementing the agreements reached at the inaugural peace summit in Switzerland. We encourage all

peace-loving States to engage in the process moving forward and contribute to the restoration of international law and the multilateral security architecture.

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

Mr. Lambrinidis: I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries North Macedonia, Montenegro, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Andorra, Monaco and San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča for his briefing. Coming after a new series of massive Russian attacks, it once again reminded us, as if reminding were necessary, of the dramatic consequences of Russia's illegal, unprovoked and unjustified aggression against Ukraine and its people.

Last Saturday, exactly two and a half years since Russia's full-scale invasion, millions of Ukrainians celebrated their independence day — a hard-fought independence, one that Russia has been trying its utmost to undo by sheer force for two and a half years; one that Ukraine, for its part, has been forced to exercise its inherent right to self-defence to protect and restore its territorial integrity and to protect its existence as an independent, sovereign country and Member of the United Nations. Under international law, Ukraine has the right to take actions to protect itself from Russian attacks. Under international law, Russia must fully abide by the order of the International Court of Justice of March 2022 and immediately and unconditionally withdraw all of its troops from the internationally recognized territory of Ukraine.

While Ukrainians courageously defend their country, Russia further intensifies its attacks on civilian infrastructure, including Ukraine's energy sector. And not only does it not withdraw its troops, but it is intensifying its illegal attacks. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, July was the deadliest month for civilians in almost two years, with at least 219 killed and over 1,000 injured, including 60 children. We repeat our call on Russia to immediately and unconditionally halt its systematic air strikes against Ukraine's civilians and civilian and critical infrastructure, which violate international humanitarian law. On Monday, in one of its largest air strikes since the beginning of its aggression, Russia hit the Kyiv Hydroelectric Power

Plant. The United Nations has repeatedly documented Russia's targeting of energy infrastructure as well as its use of so-called double-tap strikes, where it uses high-precision weapons to strike the same location twice within a short interval, causing additional casualties among civilians and first responders.

Russia shows similar disregard for the welfare of civilians in the areas it temporarily occupies, by unlawfully impeding the delivery of humanitarian relief. The United Nations has frequently highlighted the challenge of reaching civilians in areas currently under temporary Russian occupation. That means that an estimated 1.5 million people are being cut off from humanitarian aid. In accordance with international humanitarian law, Russia must facilitate the full, safe, rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief for all civilians in need. We furthermore remain deeply concerned about the fate of all Ukrainian children unlawfully deported and transferred to Russia and Belarus.

Russia and its leadership must be held fully accountable for waging a war of aggression and for other most serious crimes under international law, as well as for the massive damage caused by its war. Ensuring accountability for violations of international law is necessary to deliver justice for ongoing atrocities and can deter future ones. A lack of accountability, on the other hand, only emboldens the aggressor and its accomplices.

I reiterate the EU's support for a comprehensive, just, and lasting peace in Ukraine, based on the Charter of the United Nations. To that end, Russia, the aggressor, must end its war of aggression and withdraw all its troops from the entire territory of Ukraine. Other countries must refrain from any actions that may amount to complicity. The EU welcomes the outcome of the summit on peace in Ukraine in June. We ask all countries to continue supporting a comprehensive, just and lasting peace, based on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

Allow me to conclude by reaffirming once again the EU's unwavering support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders — every country's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and certainly Ukraine's. We will continue to support Ukraine and defend the United Nations Charter in response to Russia's illegal aggression and will do so for as long as it takes.

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

Mr. Feruță (Romania): I thank you, Sir, for the opportunity to participate in today's meeting. I also want to thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča for his briefing.

This week, members of the Council just returned from a visit to Geneva to mark 75 years since the adoption of the Geneva Conventions. Today those commitments, undertaken by the international community in the aftermath of the Second World War, continue to be seriously undermined. We fail to put a stop to the suffering of civilians who are innocent victims of a war of aggression. We reiterate the need for United Nations humanitarian personnel to be granted access to distribute life-saving aid for the benefit of Ukrainian civilians. Their protection from indiscriminate attacks is a must.

For more than two and a half years, Ukraine has been making use of a legal provision in the Charter of the United Nations, namely, its inherent right to self-defence. Peace needs to be built on the Charter and the basic principles of international law. Romania supports the peace initiative of President Zelenskyy as the only way to a just and lasting peace. We hope for that promise of peace to deliver results before the end of this year. Failure in that endeavour will result in another difficult winter for Ukrainian civilians. Disruptions in heating might trigger another wave of internally displaced persons or refugees in wintertime.

We remain very concerned about the continuation of attacks by the Russian Federation against civilians and critical civilian infrastructure of Ukraine, endangering the population of Ukraine and neighboring States alike. I would also like to address the issue of nuclear safety. General Assembly resolution 78/316, entitled "Safety and security of nuclear facilities of Ukraine, including the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant", adopted last month, called for the immediate cessation of attacks by the Russian Federation against critical energy infrastructure of Ukraine, which increase the risk of a nuclear accident or incident at all of Ukraine's nuclear facilities. We reiterate that imperative and our support for the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency in ensuring nuclear safety and security in Ukraine. Another message that my delegation would like to register is the following: there is no space for irresponsible actions towards or at nuclear facilities.

Peace in Ukraine cannot be realized without accountability. Both the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court made pronouncements in line with their mandates, and they must be fully respected and implemented. We continue to strongly support their judicial activity and call for respect of their independence.

Lastly, as our leaders prepare to come to the United Nations next month for the Summit of the Future, we need to recommit not only in words and spirit and not as a slogan, but through meaningful action, to the lofty objectives and principles of the United Nations Charter. This aggression continues to be as unjustified today as it was 30 months ago, and that will not change with the passing of time. Principles are non-negotiable. The only variables are our actions and our behaviour. And there is a strong need to reverse the current trend and restore full respect for the United Nations Charter.

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

Ms. Landi (Denmark): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the five Nordic countries, namely, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and my own country, Denmark.

We thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča for his briefing.

On 24 August, we marked the thirty-third anniversary of Ukraine's independence, a day dedicated to celebrating Ukraine's unique history, culture and identity, but also the right to freely choose its own future and aspirations. The Nordic countries remain unwavering in our support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. Just 48 hours after the Ukrainian Independence Day, Russia launched a major missile attack on the regions of Kyiv, Odessa, Vinnytsia, Zaporizhzhya, Kremenchuk, Dnipro, Khmelnytskyi, Kropyvnytskyi, Kryvyi Rih, Lviv, Rivne and Ivano-Frankivsk, targeting innocent civilians and critical infrastructure. That once again shows Russia's blatant disregard for international law. We strongly condemn such heinous attacks. Those massive air strikes are among the worst since the onset of Russia's illegal, unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression.

Russia's goal remains to subjugate Ukraine. In the areas it has temporarily occupied, Russia has brought death, terror and destruction. No one wants peace more than Ukraine, whose people continue to suffer the consequences of Russia's aggression. But it cannot

be peace at any cost. At the peace summit in June in Switzerland, more than 100 countries and international organizations from across the globe came together to reaffirm their support for a peaceful resolution based on international law, including the Charter of the United Nations. The summit reconfirmed widespread international support for the peace process and conveyed strong political will to solve concrete challenges on food and nuclear security, persons deprived of their liberty and deported persons. The summit's joint communiqué echoes a common message conveyed in the countless statements made in the Council and the seven resolutions adopted by the General Assembly: we all have a shared responsibility to work towards promoting a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine based on the United Nations Charter and in line with Ukraine's peace formula.

Last month, the General Assembly adopted the resolution entitled "Safety and security of nuclear facilities of Ukraine, including the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant" (resolution 78/316). The Nordic countries welcome the continued engagement by the United Nations community in working towards peace in Ukraine, as demonstrated by the adoption of a resolution on that important matter. Despite that, Russia's systematic and detrimental attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure continue unabated. Russia has again chosen to weaponize supplies of energy and critical energy deliveries. The Nordic countries are firmly engaged in point 3 of Ukraine's peace formula, on energy security, and we are committed to support Ukraine in the rebuilding of its energy infrastructure. We reiterate that attacks targeting civilians and civilian objects are strictly prohibited under international humanitarian law and must stop immediately. With 14.6 million people already in need of humanitarian assistance in Ukraine, we are confronted with a harsh reality: unless Russia immediately halts its attacks and the energy infrastructure is rebuilt quickly, there will be grave consequences for the civilian population during the fast-approaching winter.

In conclusion, the Nordics once again reaffirm our unwavering support for the founding principles of the United Nations, including the inviolability of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all States. We call on Russia to cease all hostilities and withdraw troops from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. We will stand by Ukraine for as long as it takes.

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

Mr. Szczerski (Poland): Allow me to start by congratulating Ukraine on the occasion of its Independence Day, which was celebrated just a few days ago. To quote the President of the Republic of Poland, Andrzej Duda, who visited Kyiv on that very day:

“We are here today to show that neighbours stand with Ukraine, that Ukraine is not alone and that we are not afraid”.

The war waged by Russia should remind us all that independence, which many of our societies take for granted, in fact is not given for free and sometimes must be defended at a very high cost.

It is regrettable that, despite a significant number of Council meetings during the past two and a half years, there is no breakthrough in the discussion due to Russia's continued illegal and barbaric war against Ukraine. The harsh reality is that Moscow is not planning to stop it any time soon. The recent massive attacks from the air, involving hundreds of missiles and drones, which struck various locations throughout Ukraine, give a clear picture of the aggressor's intentions.

In that context, let me inform members of the repeated violations of Polish airspace — and thus of NATO airspace — by Russian air assaults, which Poland strongly condemns. Recently, we have seen a significant intensification of such actions. They destabilize the European security environment and pose a threat to infrastructure, the civilian population and air traffic. We urge Russia to stop its attacks against critical infrastructure and appeal to all States to redouble efforts to ensure Ukraine's energy security, including nuclear energy infrastructure. That could include, for example, providing air defence around critical infrastructure, spare parts and power generators, as well as increasing energy exports.

Poland once again condemns in the strongest possible terms the continued, heinous attacks against Ukraine. Moscow shows total disregard for humanitarian law, which results in thousands of civilian casualties and injuries.

On a general note, Russia's aggression against Ukraine stands in stark contrast with our efforts to build a stable and peaceful world based on respect for universal principles and international law, with the Charter of the United Nations at its core. It is crucial

that the international community have no doubts: Moscow aims at replacing that noble concept with an alternative where sheer military power is the basic principle in relations between States. Such an approach to international relations is not — and should never be — accepted. We also want to highlight broader implications of Moscow's actions contributing to economic instability and threatening security, not only of Europe but also of other regions of the world.

Ukraine has every right to defend itself and protect its citizens and sovereignty, while taking all necessary measures in compliance with international law. It is our common duty to support the victim of the aggression in defending its basic rights stemming from the United Nations Charter. Given the current circumstances, any temptation to turn to the policy of appeasement should be decisively rejected. Freezing the conflict will not bring about lasting peace in Ukraine, as Russia will use the pause to regroup for another attack. Illegal actions, which are being continued, must be condemned, not rewarded. There is only one way to end this conflict: Russia must withdraw its forces from Ukraine and stop the aggression.

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

Mr. Ilgis (Latvia): I have the honour to address the Council on behalf of three Baltic States, namely, Estonia, Lithuania and my own country, Latvia. We align ourselves with the statement of the European Union.

We thank Assistant Secretary-General Miroslav Jenča for the briefing.

Yet again, Russia has attacked Ukrainian cities and people. On Monday, 26 August, Russia launched 127 missiles and 109 Shahed combat drones. The attacks that took place right after Ukraine's Independence Day this past weekend kept most of the country under strain for eight hours. This is assessed to be the largest Russian air attack since the beginning of the full-scale invasion in 2022, targeting the Ukrainian capital city of Kyiv and the cities of Lviv, Odessa, Kharkiv, Zaporizhzhya and others. Again and again, Russia has deliberately targeted civilian and critical infrastructure — residential buildings, hospitals, gas facilities and electric power plants, including an unsuccessful attempt to destroy the dam of the Kyiv Hydroelectric Power Plant. That energy infrastructure is crucial for supplying basic services to people in their homes, schools and hospitals.

On 14 August, two humanitarian workers died in a Kherson hospital after being injured by Russian shelling. Last week, Russian forces attacked a hotel in a city of Kramatorsk, killing a Reuters staff member and injuring four other international journalists, including a Latvian journalist. Those are blatant violations of the international law, including the United Nations Charter.

The Baltic states strongly condemn Russia's criminal actions amid Russia's full-scale illegal and unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine. We call upon the aggressor to immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraw all of its troops and military equipment from the territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. We also call on Belarus, Iran and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to stop their assistance to Russia to conduct its cruel war against Ukraine. Belarussian armed forces have concentrated a significant amount of military assets along the border with Ukraine, which is an unwarranted escalation. The Baltic States join Ukraine's call to withdraw Belarusian forces from Ukraine's State border. We remain ready to further limit Russia's ability to wage war and urge all countries not to provide any material or other support for Russia's war of aggression.

Russia and its leaders must be held accountable for the crime of aggression through an international tribunal that enjoys broad support and legitimacy. We fully support and urge the international community to implement the binding order of the International Court of Justice to halt the military offensive by Russia against Ukraine and the International Criminal Court arrest warrants issued for Russia's top political and military leadership.

The Baltic States support Ukraine's peace initiative and encourage other Members of the United Nations to join it. We welcome the outcome of the peace summit held in Switzerland in June and encourage all countries to continue supporting peace based on the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law.

In conclusion, let me reiterate that the Baltic States strongly support Ukraine's exercise of its inherent right to self-defence and reaffirm our full solidarity with Ukraine in restoring its territorial integrity and sovereignty within its internationally recognized borders.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.