



Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

Provisional

9008th

meeting

Tuesday, 29 March 2022, 3 p.m.

New York

President: Mrs. Nusseibeh (United Arab Emirates)

Members:

Albania	Mr. Hoxha
Brazil	Mr. Costa Filho
China	Mr. Dai Bing
France	Mr. De Rivière
Gabon	Mr. Biang
Ghana	Ms. Oppong-Ntiri
India	Mr. Tirumurti
Ireland	Ms. Byrne Nason
Kenya	Mr. Kimani
Mexico	Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez
Norway	Ms. Juul
Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia/Mr. Polyanskiy
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
United States of America	Ms. Sherman

Agenda

Letter dated 28 February 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2014/136)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Letter dated 28 February 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2014/136)

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

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Joyce Msuya, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator; and Mr. David Beasley, Executive Director of the United Nations World Food Programme.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Msuya.

Ms. Msuya: Just over a month ago the war in Ukraine started, and it shows no signs of abating. Children, women and men are being killed, injured, displaced and traumatized. Hospitals, homes and schools are being destroyed. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, as of 27 March, 1,119 people had died, including 99 innocent children. We know that those numbers are conservative and the tolls far greater.

Cities such as Mariupol, Kharkiv, Chernihiv and many others — bustling and full of life just one month ago — are encircled, bombarded, and blockaded. People in those towns lack food, water, medicine, electricity and heating. They are trapped, desperate and afraid.

In some neighbourhoods, it is not even safe to bury the dead. More than 10 million people — including more than half of Ukraine's children — have fled their homes. That includes an estimated 6.5 million people who are internally displaced in the country, according to the International Organization for Migration. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reports that more than 3.9 million refugees have crossed the borders to neighbouring countries in the past month.

Our work is to save lives. The humanitarian system has scaled up to deliver despite the spreading conflict. Since 24 February, humanitarian organizations have reached approximately 890,000 people across Ukraine, mostly in the east, with multisectoral assistance. People have received food, shelter, blankets, medicine, bottled water and hygiene supplies.

We are working around the clock to reach more and more people in need. The United Nations and our humanitarian partners are working impartially and relentlessly to uphold humanitarian principles and negotiate safe passage in and out of encircled areas for one cause alone: to provide life-saving assistance.

Humanitarian logistics and supply chains are scaling up every day. But treacherous security risks and access challenges are hampering our efforts. Many routes are disrupted, and humanitarian convoys and workers are frequently unable to pass due to shelling, fighting and landmines. Humanitarians of all stripes are putting their lives at risk to help those in need.

There are now more than 1,230 United Nations personnel working via humanitarian hubs across the country. And there are more than 100 humanitarian organizations implementing or planning activities in every oblast in Ukraine, in all sectors. The brave work of the Ukrainian Red Cross Society and other civil society organizations who are working shoulder-to-shoulder with volunteers and communities is astounding.

Ukraine is a humanitarian paradox. Side by side with extreme violence we see extreme kindness, profound solidarity and the gentlest of care. I am humbled and inspired by the tireless commitment of those people, and we must continue to support their work. Where security allows, humanitarian convoys are unloading much-needed supplies and delivering equipment to repair damaged infrastructure.

On 18 March, after delays due to ongoing hostilities, the first United Nations-organized convoy reached Sumy, in the north-east. The convoy delivered 130 tons of much-needed medical supplies, water, ready-to-eat meals and canned food for 35,000 people, as well as essential equipment for the repair of water systems that will help improve access to water for some 50,000 people.

Yesterday, again after delays due to ongoing fighting, the second United Nations-organized convoy reached Kharkiv, where supplies of food, other essential

relief items and emergency health kits and medicines were unloaded for distribution by the Ukrainian Red Cross Society.

Countrywide, more than 180 metric tons of medical supplies have been delivered, and more than 470 metric tons are on the way. Where we can, we buy supplies from the local market and work alongside local efforts. But we need to move to scale. More convoys are planned for the days and weeks ahead in order to reach many more people with desperately needed aid.

I am sure Mr. Beasley will tell us more about the World Food Programme, its work over the past month and the expansion of its operations in Ukraine.

Civilians in Ukraine desperately need assistance and protection, but it cannot be provided unless all parties uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law — to ensure safe and unhindered humanitarian access to help civilians in their homes and those on the road in Ukraine and to allow those civilians who want to leave to get out. We need detailed, realistic agreements on humanitarian ceasefires and pauses to allow aid in and people out.

For predators and human traffickers, the war in Ukraine is not a tragedy; it is an opportunity. Humanitarian organizations are worried about the risk of trafficking, as well as sexual violence, exploitation and abuse, in Ukraine and the region. Children fleeing the war in particular are at a heightened risk of human trafficking and exploitation. Predators are luring single parents on the road with promises of transport and accommodations.

We are scaling up our protection services at the borders and within the country in order to make sure that people have information available on safe options and routes, access to helplines and safe shelters. Humanitarian partners are coordinating closely — not only to monitor risks of sexual violence, trafficking and abuse but also to provide swift and specialized services to survivors.

Humanitarian partners agree — our worst-case scenario has been reached and, in some areas, surpassed. That is why, last week, the principals of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee agreed to revise the flash appeal that has rallied nearly \$506 million of the \$1.1 billion needed to support the response. The refugee response plan, coordinated by the Organization's refugee agency — the Office of the United Nations High

Commissioner for Refugees — will also be revised. The generosity and welcome of Ukraine's neighbours remains a bright spot in a darkening landscape.

The global impact of this war is becoming clearer every day, as the conflict continues. It threatens to make things even worse in the world's biggest humanitarian crises such as in Afghanistan, Yemen and the Horn of Africa, which are already grappling with food insecurity and economic fragility. Increases in food, fuel and fertilizer prices will hit hard now and for the coming seasons. We are only now beginning to see the breadth of the impact of this crisis on other regions and countries. We will all be affected.

The Secretary-General has asked Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths to urgently engage with the parties on possible arrangements for a humanitarian ceasefire in Ukraine. Mr. Griffiths has already been in touch with both parties, who have welcomed the initiative, and he will travel to the region within days.

We must find measures — from local pauses to wider ceasefires — in order to save lives and protect the homes, schools and hospitals of civilians from being attacked. Civilians are running out of food, energy and hope. Our aim is simple — to silence the guns and save lives.

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

I now give the floor to Mr. Beasley.

Mr. Beasley: It is good to hear from Ms. Joyce Msuya, and I will try not to repeat much of what she said.

It is simply hard to believe that things could get any worse around the world than they were before the Ukraine crisis. Because of fuel prices, food prices and shipping costs, we were already beginning to cut rations for millions of children and families around the world in countries such as Yemen, where we had just cut 8 million people down to 50 per cent rations and are now looking to go to 0 rations, and others such as the Niger, Mali and Chad — and on and on. Now we are talking about a catastrophe on top of a catastrophe.

Ukraine has gone from the breadbasket of the world to bread lines. We would never have dreamed that anything like this would be possible. This conflict is not just decimating Ukraine and the region, but will have a global impact beyond anything we have seen since the Second World War.

I would like to touch upon a couple of issues inside Ukraine. We have now reached about 1 million people. Over the next four weeks, we will reach 2.5 million people and, by the end of May, we will have reached 4 million people. By the end of June, we hope to reach about 6 million people on any given day, week or month, so to speak. The price tag that we are looking at, for food security inside Ukraine alone, is about \$500 million for the first three months. We are short about \$300 million, and we will therefore need to step up our efforts.

One of the things we need to be careful of in the context of our concerns about Ukraine is not to neglect the Sahel, North Africa, the rest of Africa and the Middle East. Otherwise, there will be massive migration coming from all sides of Europe. That is why this is a crisis on top of a crisis.

We all know that the ordinary, loving and welcoming arms of strangers and neighbours in Poland, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia and Moldova has been remarkable. I have been there three times in the past few weeks alone, seeing people's experiences first hand. One can say that the 3.5 to 4 million people who have made it to the outside are the lucky ones, because they are getting food, shelter, help and some degree of hope out of harm's way. However, there are 40 million people inside of Ukraine. We have to do everything we can to stabilize the food supply chain system and reach as many people as we possibly can. As members can imagine, the farmers are fighting on the front lines. For the next four weeks, it will be planting season for maize. Who will tend the crops? It will then be time to harvest, let us say, wheat, in June and July. Farmers are on the front lines, and therefore we start worrying not just about what happens inside Ukraine, but also what will happen outside Ukraine.

Obviously, we are appealing to everyone involved to deconflict and give us the access we need. We can reach most of the places around Ukraine in several different ways right now, but we cannot reach other places, such as Mariupol. We need the access that Ms. Msuya was talking about so that we can reach the people who are in harm's way and do not have access to food.

We will be using cash-based transfers, as well as commodities, in-kind assistance and food itself, depending on the dynamics in each specific area. As members can imagine, Ukraine is not a small country. We are therefore prepositioning and moving food. We

are working with the Government to move it either by train or by truck, whatever it takes. We are also working with the Government to make certain that we have the truck drivers we need to do what is necessary to reach the people in need.

Let me capsulize Ukraine and now turn to outside of Ukraine. As members have heard, Ukraine and Russia produce 30 per cent of the global supply of wheat; 20 per cent of the global supply of maize and between 75 per cent and 80 per cent of sunflower seed oil. Members can begin to see the dynamic consequences. Fifty per cent of the grain that we buy comes from Ukraine. We were feeding 125 million people before the conflict in Ukraine ever happened. Members can therefore assume the devastation that that will have on our operations alone.

We already anticipate a \$71 million increase in monthly expenses because of fuel costs, food costs and shipping costs. That is a total of \$850 million, which means we will be able to reach 4 million fewer people just from expense costs alone. Then consider the devastation in countries such as Yemen and Egypt, which are dependent on Russian and Ukrainian wheat. Egypt is dependent upon Ukraine for 85 per cent of its grain. In 2020, Lebanon was dependent on Ukraine for 81 per cent of its grain. I could keep providing examples around the world.

That is then compounded by the lack of fertilizer-based products that come out of Belarus and Russia. If fertilizer is not put on crops, the yield will be at least 50 per cent diminished. We are therefore looking at what could be a catastrophe on top of a catastrophe on top of a catastrophe in the months ahead. That is why, when I was talking to the Ministers and Secretaries of Agriculture of the Group of Seven, I asked how quickly the world agricultural community could offset the reduction we could expect out of Ukraine and Russia in terms of supply and demand.

At one time, we were primarily concerned about pricing. We see that it is, in fact, a pricing problem and perhaps an availability problem if we cannot offset what we will lose inside of Ukraine and Russia. These are extremely serious issues. As we talk to leaders around the world, we are asking how to respond quickly to do the things necessary to minimize the impact globally, as well as in Ukraine itself.

If we consider the Arab Spring of 2008, 2011 and 2012 and the economic indices and hike in food prices at

that time, we begin to see several similarities — except, quite frankly, it is much worse in some categories today than it was in those years. That is because now there is the war in Ethiopia, the crisis in Afghanistan and a climate crisis that is impacting the Sahel, for example. The months ahead will be extremely difficult.

Many nation States have been stepping up in ways they have not done before. Let me be clear: if we do not step up and respond, we will pay a price that will be 1,000 times more expensive than stepping in and doing what is necessary. For example, in Syria, we can feed a Syrian for \$0.50 per day. If that same Syrian ends up in Berlin or Brussels, the cost is \$70 or more per day.

If we act now to end the conflict and address the needs, we can avoid famine, the destabilization of nations and mass migration. If we do not, the world will pay a mighty price. The last thing we want to do at the World Food Programme is to take food away from hungry children to give to starving children. Please, let us make certain that we can reach them all.

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

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

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

I would especially like to express my gratitude for the substantial mobilization on the part of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the World Food Programme and all other humanitarian agencies. They can count on our support.

The humanitarian situation in Ukraine is deteriorating day by day. All indicators point to red. Last week, the overwhelming majority of the members of the General Assembly demanded the immediate cessation of hostilities perpetrated by Russia against Ukraine and full respect for international humanitarian law. Resolution ES-11/2, proposed by France and Mexico, should make it possible to support the efforts of the Secretary-General and humanitarian actors working on the ground to assist civilians and provide them with vital assistance.

Nonetheless, the Security Council must also continue to fully assume its responsibilities in the light of the humanitarian tragedy unfolding before our eyes. It is imperative that Russia respect the Geneva

Conventions. Civilians, including children, persons with disabilities and medical and humanitarian personnel, as well as civilian infrastructure, must be protected. Full humanitarian access should be guaranteed. Civilians, in Mariupol and all other cities under attack, should be able to leave combat areas safely and freely, should they wish to do so. The siege of Mariupol must be lifted.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine increases the risk of famine around the world. The populations of developing countries are the first to be affected. No doubt, Russia will attempt to make us believe that it is the sanctions adopted against it that are affecting global food security. Let us be very clear: Russia alone is responsible. The unjustified and unjustifiable war that it unleashed on Ukraine is preventing Ukraine from exporting its grain. That, in turn, is disrupting global supply chains, leading to an increase in prices and jeopardizing access to food for the most vulnerable. It is the ongoing fighting that threatens agricultural activity in Ukraine and forthcoming harvests.

The European Union and its partners have adopted sanctions to compel Russia to fall in line with the Charter of the United Nations. Those sanctions do not target Russia's agricultural sector.

In the light of the global food insecurity, the most effective response is the immediate cessation of Russian aggression. It is also important to strengthen international cooperation to that end. France fully supports the initiative launched by the Secretary-General, through the United Nations Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance. France, in its capacity as President of the European Union, has launched an initiative called FARM, or the Food and Agriculture Resilience Mission. The goal of the initiative is to reduce tensions on the global food market and ensure the free movement of food. It should also enable rapid access to agricultural products for those countries where needs are most pressing and ensure rural development and food production in Africa. We call upon the relevant private and public stakeholders to support this initiative, which should also be included in the efforts of the Secretary-General.

Urgent action is needed. France commends the courage demonstrated by the people of Ukraine at the United Nations and in all other forums. We will continue to work with its partners to support Ukraine and the Ukrainian people. We will spare no effort to

ensure that full light is shed on the allegations of crimes which, if found to be so, must not go unpunished.

Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ms. Joyce Msuya, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, and Mr. David Beasley, Executive Director of the World Food Programme, for their briefings. We also welcome the Ambassador of Ukraine to this meeting.

Each week, the humanitarian tragedy in Ukraine increases exponentially, and the figures that have just been shared with us are a reflection of that deterioration. I mention them only because we must not lose sight of the scale of the issue. In five weeks, there are now 3.9 million refugees and 6.5 million internally displaced persons. Of particular concern is the fact that 90 per cent of those refugees are women and children. The risks they run of becoming victims of trafficking, exploitation and sexual and gender-based violence must be clearly underscored here and now.

It is due to the continuing deterioration of the situation on the ground that Mexico and France requested today's briefing. Five weeks after the start of Russia's invasion, the international community's priority is to achieve the cessation of hostilities and protect the civilian population in Ukraine. That was evidenced by the overwhelming majority support for General Assembly resolution ES-11/2 at the emergency special session meeting of the Assembly on 24 March (see A/ES-11/PV.9).

The war has also had major impacts on global food supply and food security, as we have heard. The effects are grave in the immediate, medium and long term. During the negotiations on that resolution, numerous delegations mentioned the issue and highlighted it as a priority. The Secretary-General has also spoken explicitly on the matter.

We acknowledge the World Food Programme's intention to support the basic needs of the nearly 6 million people affected by the conflict. The fact that some 1 million people in Ukraine have already benefited from cash transfers and food distribution should also be recognized. Such relief is certainly very timely, as it is much needed, but it is also only temporary in nature.

We know that there are many logistical difficulties in getting humanitarian assistance to where it is most needed, due to limitations with regard to fuel, transport and drivers — and now the closure of major ports and

insecurity for commercial ships. In some cities, as is the case for Mariupol, the situation has worsened. We therefore reiterate our call to ensure safe and unhindered access for humanitarian personnel.

The conflict has also had a direct negative impact on the global food and energy markets, raising the prices of those products. That price increase is beginning to be felt in domestic markets and will, in several regions, limit people's access to at least certain types of basic foodstuffs.

Consequently, there will also be an increase in the operating costs of the World Food Programme, as we have heard, limiting its capacity to respond to the growing needs and the new situations of food insecurity that will be created in various regions beyond Ukraine. We highlight the work of United Nations humanitarian agencies that have provided support to millions of people, both in Ukraine and in neighbouring countries providing refuge, whose generosity we commend.

General Assembly resolution ES-11/2 is also intended to ensure that conditions exist on the ground to provide humanitarian personnel with safe and unhindered access to carry out their functions.

We have also followed with concern the increase in the flow of weapons into Ukraine. The proliferation of weapons can result in a higher incidence of violence among the civilian population and, if such weapons fall into the wrong hands, lead to other violations of international law and human rights. The extent to which those arms could aggravate the humanitarian situation in the country needs to be assessed. We certainly deplore the use of explosive weapons and cluster munitions in urban areas. The use of such weapons must be stopped.

Finally, Mexico's priorities in the face of the conflict have been, and will continue to be, the protection of civilians, humanitarian aid and respect for international law, including international humanitarian law and refugee law. An immediate cessation of hostilities is urgently needed and, until that is achieved, sustainable humanitarian pauses that guarantee the protection of civilians and access to humanitarian aid are urgently required. We reiterate once again that humanitarian aid cannot be held hostage to political considerations. We therefore call for the full implementation of the resolution adopted a few days ago by the General Assembly.

The President: I now call on the Deputy Secretary of State of the United States of America.

Ms. Sherman (United States of America): I thank you, Madam, for welcoming me as I represent the United States at the Security Council today. I also thank Assistant Secretary-General Msuya and Executive Director Beasley for their briefings today and welcome Deputy Executive Director Abdulla. Of course, I also welcome the Ambassador from Ukraine.

It has been five weeks — although it feels like a lifetime — since Russian President Vladimir Putin launched his premeditated, unprovoked, unjustified and brutal invasion of Ukraine. In just five weeks, nearly a quarter of Ukraine's population has been displaced, including more than half of the nation's children. In just five weeks, nearly 4 million Ukrainians have fled their country as refugees. Now the World Food Programme warns that 45 per cent of the people in Ukraine — nearly half of the people of Ukraine, living in one of the world's greatest breadbaskets — are concerned about having enough to eat.

Russia's ceaseless bombardment of Ukraine's cities and critical infrastructure has created one of the fastest-growing humanitarian crises in recent decades. Russian forces have laid siege to cities such as Mariupol, where citizens have been left without food, water, heat and electricity in the depths of winter. People have resorted to melting snow for drinking water. One mother told reporters that she could feed her three daughters only a spoonful of honey a day as they hid from Russian bombs. Now city officials say people are beginning to die of starvation. Think about that.

Mariupol was at peace five weeks ago. It was, in fact, a bustling port city — a grain exporter that helped feed the world. Today its residents are dying because of President Putin's war of choice. The impacts of Putin's war are being felt far beyond Ukraine's borders as well, with some of the most immediate and dangerous implications for global food security.

As has been said, Ukraine and Russia are both major agricultural producers. Thirty per cent of the world's wheat exports typically come from the Black Sea region, as does 20 per cent of the world's corn and 75 per cent of sunflower oil.

But Russia has bombed at least three civilian ships carrying goods from Black Sea ports to the rest of the world, including one chartered by an agribusiness company. The Russian navy is blocking access to Ukraine ports, essentially cutting off exports of grain. They are reportedly preventing approximately 94 ships

carrying food for the world market from reaching the Mediterranean. It is no wonder that many shippers are now hesitant to send vessels into the Black Sea, even to Russian ports, given the danger posed by Russian forces.

Russian missiles and bombs have damaged and destroyed Ukrainian airports, rail lines, train stations and highways that are critical for getting humanitarian aid to those who need it and for exporting wheat, corn and other commodities. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Kuleba has told his counterparts that Russia is actively targeting grain silos and food-storage facilities. All of those actions by Russia are creating a food crisis in Ukraine and well beyond Ukraine's borders. Already, food prices are skyrocketing in low- and middle-income countries, as Russia chokes off Ukrainian exports. Across the Middle East and Africa, already high prices for staple commodities, including wheat, have risen between 20 and 50 per cent so far this year.

We are particularly concerned about such countries as Lebanon, Pakistan, Libya, Tunisia, Yemen and Morocco, which rely heavily on Ukrainian imports to feed their populations. The world, as we have heard, was already facing a food-security crisis well before Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The coronavirus disease pandemic and the resulting economic crisis pushed millions of families into poverty. Countries around the world are grappling with drought and other disasters made worse by climate change.

As we heard from Executive Director Beasley, the World Food Programme is already feeding 138 million people in more than 80 countries, from Ethiopia to Afghanistan, South Sudan to Yemen, Nigeria to Syria. But now Putin's war is driving up the costs of providing food assistance, and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations estimates that as many as 13 million more people worldwide may be pushed into food insecurity as a result of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Many of us have heard the Russian Government blame United States, allied and partner sanctions for increasing food costs around the world. But the facts — the facts — are clear. Sanctions are not preventing grain from leaving Ukraine's ports. Putin's war is. And Russia's own food and agricultural exports are not under sanction by the United States or by our allies and partners. The responsibility for waging war on Ukraine and for the war's effects on global food security falls solely on President Putin.

The international community must come together to meet this moment to provide food, water, shelter and medicine for the Ukrainian people, to support Ukraine's neighbours who have taken in millions of refugees, and to bolster global food security and protect the world's most vulnerable from hunger — as a result of Putin's war.

The United States is committed to doing our part to ease the human suffering caused by this war in Ukraine — and elsewhere around the world. Last week, President Biden announced that the United States is prepared to provide more than \$1 billion in new humanitarian assistance for the Ukrainian people, those fleeing to neighbouring countries and those around the world feeling the effects of Putin's war, including rising food insecurity. The United States is also committed to providing more than \$11 billion over the next five years to address food-security and nutrition needs around the world, including in countries where food prices are rising as a result of Putin's invasion of Ukraine.

But the fact remains that so long as Putin continues his war, so long as Russian forces continue to bombard Ukrainian cities and block aid convoys, so long as besieged civilians are unable to get to safety, this humanitarian crisis will only get worse — in Ukraine, for the Russian people and around the world.

Russia must abide by its obligations under international humanitarian law on the protection of civilians, including those who are fleeing conflict and those who are providing humanitarian assistance. We hope — we really hope — that President Putin will commit seriously to the peace talks under way. But we are focused on what Russian forces do, not what Russia says or what Putin says. And ultimately, the only way to end this humanitarian catastrophe is through a durable ceasefire and the complete withdrawal of Russian forces from Ukrainian territory and away from Ukraine's borders.

That decision, like the decision to begin this unprovoked, unjustified war in the first place lies with one man, and one man only. Vladimir Putin started this war and created this global food crisis — and he is the one who can stop it.

Mr. Kimani (Kenya): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Joyce Msuya and World Food Programme Executive Director David Beasley for their briefings. I also welcome the participation of the Permanent Representative of Ukraine.

The war in Ukraine is a humanitarian catastrophe. More than 10 million people have fled their homes. Three million have left the country as refugees. The speed with which the situation has deteriorated, the immense damage to civilian infrastructure, the shockingly high number of civilian and military fatalities on both sides — all of this reminds us of the carnage that we have only read about in history books, and therefore we fear that it could get far worse.

We offer our heartfelt condolences to the families who are grieving for their relatives killed in the violence. We also offer our condolences to the Government of Ukraine, which must now try and provide aid to the people even as it resists a breaching of its territorial integrity by the Russian Federation.

We commend Ukraine's neighbours for opening their borders to receive refugees of multiple nationalities. We urge them to ensure that the protections sought are offered with no discrimination on any basis, particularly with regard to race or religion.

It is not only Ukrainians who have fled from the bombings. Thousands of Africans who travelled long distances to seek their education in Ukraine have also had to flee for their lives. These African students in Ukraine, and other parts of the world, travel to study as representatives of their families' hopes for betterment.

Thousands made this hopeful journey to Ukraine. Now they are fleeing before the tanks and bomber planes sent into the country. They have turned from hopeful students into fearful refugees.

Statistics are impersonal — they flatten the human experience — but a humanitarian crisis is human-sized. It is a million individual lives shattered by fear and violence.

Our delegation spoke to Korrine Sky, a Zimbabwean-born student doctor at Dnipro Medical Institute. She had to flee for her safety, joined by close friends to make a dangerous 26-hour road trip to Lviv, in western Ukraine. It took almost four days to make the journey and cross the border to safety.

At the border she suffered the indignity and danger of racism. She encountered that racism as she fled the impersonal brutality of bombs.

She then co-founded the Black Women for Black Lives to support thousands of African students fleeing Ukraine. They have raised funds, gotten the word out

and assisted many who, like them, were fleeing from the conflict. I urge everyone listening to this briefing to visit their website at <https://blackwomenforblacklives.org> for further information about this heroic effort. Today Korrine is calling for the safety of civilians, particularly for the African students trapped in Kherson.

Civilians, including foreign nationals, in Ukraine are not party to the conflict and must not be made a target. In that regard, all actors must prioritize the protection of civilians and objects indispensable to their survival, in accordance with international law and international humanitarian law. Special and urgent attention should be paid to those trapped in besieged cities and villages, such as in Mariupol and Kherson. We call for the urgent activation of safe passages, with no restrictions.

The response to Ukraine's humanitarian crisis has shown how boldly and generously the world can react in solidarity. We commend the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the World Food Programme and the many other organizations and individuals who have come to the aid of the deserving people of Ukraine.

We urge the European Union and its members to offer every form of support they can provide to the African students who have fled Ukraine. It seems imminently doable that those who have been students in Ukrainian institutions can receive offers to further their education in other countries, as well as the mental-health and material support that they need.

We must also not forget our responsibilities in other humanitarian crises. Very frequently, the Security Council is briefed on the shortfalls in financing humanitarian aid in Africa and the Middle East. The situation is currently even worse, given the surge in food and energy prices, owing to the war in Ukraine and its resulting sanctions.

Development is being reversed worldwide as a result of the war. Livelihoods are being destroyed. Farmers in need of affordable fertilizer are struggling to cope. Inflation is surging upwards. The result of the domino-like effects will be stunted health for millions of people and an earlier-than-normal death for many others.

A few weeks ago, we were urging building back better after the coronavirus disease. Now we will need to add the war in Ukraine to that. We urge the

Secretary-General to rally the United Nations, the major economies and international financial institutions to design instruments that can cushion the most vulnerable from the effects of the conflict in Ukraine. In the absence of such action, the solidarity required will eventually suffer from the rising inequalities and economic calamities.

In the final telling, the most humane action that can be undertaken is the cessation of hostilities. We call for a cessation that has clearly defined contact lines and humanitarian corridors. The cessation of hostilities should set the foundations for a lasting peace settlement that respects the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Ukraine. It should also lead to the design of a European security order that offers lasting security, not a generation of new wars in Europe.

Ms. Byrne Nason (Ireland): I would also like to thank Executive Director David Beasley, Mr. Amir Abdulla and Assistant Secretary-General Joyce Msuya for updating the Security Council on the humanitarian catastrophe that is engulfing the people of Ukraine. I also want to welcome our dear colleague from Ukraine among us this afternoon.

The grim realities that have been shared with us over the past few minutes starkly demonstrate the human misery caused by this senseless and unlawful war. And the roll call of devastation caused by Russia's war goes on. Daily, we are witnessing the devastating humanitarian impacts of Russia's use of explosive weapons in populated areas. At least 1,100 civilian deaths have been confirmed by the United Nations, including more than 100 children. We all know at this table that the real number is likely to be far higher. The numbers speak for themselves: more than 3.9 million refugees have fled Russia's invasion; 6.5 million people have been displaced within Ukraine's borders, desperately sheltering from a war with diminishing resources and little to no access to basic needs.

We are deeply concerned about the increasing vulnerabilities of internally displaced persons and refugees as the war continues. Reported so-called deportations, or quite frankly abductions, whereby Ukrainian citizens are taken forcibly across the border and into Russia, are simply horrifying. We are also troubled by the activities of human traffickers, to whom the war offers optimal conditions to prey on fleeing women and children.

I will say it once again: we condemn in the strongest terms acts of sexual and gender-based violence against women and violence against children, which have been reported by humanitarian organizations. That is particularly unconscionable and, frankly, ranks among the other horrors being faced by Ukrainian citizens. There can be no impunity for those responsible. We are being warned of an emerging child-protection crisis as the number of unaccompanied and separated children rises. We have a responsibility to heed those warnings.

We once again call on the Russian Federation to uphold its obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law, to allow full, safe and unhindered humanitarian access for humanitarian personnel in order for them to reach those in need. The Russian Federation must also allow all those seeking to leave Ukraine to do so safely to destinations of their own choosing. The truth is that only the Russian Federation can prevent the further deterioration of the humanitarian situation it has caused.

With the world facing a looming hunger crisis, we see now that the consequences of this senseless war are being felt far beyond Ukraine's sovereign borders. This unjustified war is already having a multiplier effect on food and nutrition insecurity, compounding other challenges, droughts, floods and conflict elsewhere that were already increasing prices and squeezing supply chains. The Russian Federation is one of the world's biggest grain producers, and, in waging an unprovoked war against another major producer, is pushing up the price of staples — putting even a loaf of bread out of reach for those living on the edge of survival.

In addition, cruelly, Ukrainian farmers are currently prevented by war from planting, harvesting and exporting grain. Future harvests are therefore already lost, with longer-term consequences for global food security. As we have heard, the war has already greatly impacted the ability of the World Food Programme itself to meet hunger needs, materially and financially, around the world.

We were warned that 2022 was set to be a year of catastrophic hunger. Now this senseless war has all but confirmed that ugly catastrophe. As if we needed reminding, this war brings the connection between conflict and hunger into stark relief. Lives are being lost owing to the food insecurity caused by the war. And even if it ended this afternoon, it will still result in lives lost from hunger into the future.

The war has raged now for five long weeks — five weeks of destruction, bombardment, loss of life and loss of hope. What is not lost is our solidarity with the Ukrainian people. That remains steadfast, and it remains resolute. The international community and the Security Council must not be numbed to the ongoing tragedy in Ukraine. The truth remains, as it has for these past five weeks, that this war can end if the Russian Federation has the will to end it.

People trapped in need of aid in besieged cities can be reached; life-saving aid can be delivered through safe humanitarian access; further flows of desperate and vulnerable refugees can be prevented; and countless lives can be saved — but only if the war ends, hostilities cease, Russia ends its aggression and complies with its obligations under international law and the Russian Federation withdraws all forces unconditionally from the entirety of the sovereign territory of Ukraine.

We again call on the Russian Federation to do the right thing, to end this war, to remember diplomacy, to engage in genuine dialogue in good faith and to restore peace in Ukraine. I continue to believe it is never too late to do the right thing.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank today's briefers. Today we have heard, and will likely hear again, many calls for a humanitarian truce, the provision of humanitarian access, humanitarian pauses and humanitarian corridors. Such initiatives were advanced yesterday by Secretary-General António Guterres.

It is hard not to marvel at my colleagues' inconsistency. Just last Wednesday (see S/PV.9002), less than a week ago, most of them rejected our humanitarian draft resolution S/2022/231, which would have been binding on all parties and which contained a specific list of steps to be taken to unblock the work of humanitarian agencies, primarily in eastern Ukraine. In that context, today's statements, especially those by Western delegations, sound very hypocritical.

And yet our proposals contained in the draft resolution went further than the list presented by our Western colleagues. It also contained a requirement not to place heavy weapons in residential areas and not to use civilians as shields. Their adoption by the Council could have saved innumerable lives, as the main threat to civilians in Ukrainian towns and cities comes from Ukrainian Nazis and radicals, who are using civilians as human shields. The Internet is full of video evidence

of that — from liberated cities or from those who managed to leave through humanitarian corridors, even as they were being shelled by Ukrainian armed forces and nationalists. I hope that Council members have seen those images. And yet today we are being told that we are allegedly bombing vessels with grain, agricultural equipment and grain storage warehouses.

The draft resolution also contained a demand for respectful and humane treatment of prisoners of war, taking into account the videos posted online by Ukrainian Nazis showing extremely cruel treatment of Russian soldiers being held captive. Have Council members seen those images? And this is happening despite the fact that Russia is strictly observing its international obligations, and there is no threat to Ukrainians who lay down their arms. Council members can also find evidence of that in videos on social media.

The Ukrainian Nazis do not shy away from the most sophisticated torture and reprisals. It is enough to mention the shocking discovery of civilians tortured to death in national battalion torture prisons with Nazi swastikas branded on their mutilated bodies. Have Council members seen those images?

In the context of such cruel treatment by Ukrainian radicals and special services of their own citizens, we have serious concerns about the measures being undertaken by Kyiv to physically eliminate leaders publicly espousing undesirable opinions. In our letter of 21 March (S/2022/253), we officially informed the Security Council about the abduction by the Security Service of Ukraine of civilian activist Elena Berezhnaya, who had participated in Council meetings. There is still no information on her fate.

Similar reports have since been received with regard to Vasyl Volha, a Ukrainian opposition politician and leader of the Union of Leftists party, political scientist Dmytro Dzhanhiov, opposition political scientist Yuri Dudkin, journalist and publicist Dmitriy Skvortsov, historian and public figure Alexander Karevin, journalist and television host Yan Taksyur and the editor-in-chief of the Odessa-based publication *Timer*, Yuriy Tkachev. The Security Service of Ukraine even searched the home of another political scientist known to the Security Council, Mykhaylo Pohrebysky. We have no information about what is happening to him today. We are waiting a fair assessment in connection with such a witch hunt from our Western colleagues and relevant human rights bodies of the United Nations

and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

The list of problems created by Kyiv keeps growing. Added danger in the form of drifting Ukrainian mines has now also appeared at sea. Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey have already faced, or will soon face, that dangerous problem. In that context, we would like to stress that there is no threat to the freedom of civilian navigation from the Russian armed forces. In order to allow foreign vessels to leave Ukrainian ports for open sea, we have established a humanitarian corridor — an 80-nautical-mile-long and three nautical-mile-wide traffic lane. The corridor operates every day from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m., Moscow time. That information has been communicated by us to all interested parties.

Although our Western colleagues did not support the humanitarian draft resolution in the Security Council, we are unilaterally implementing all our humanitarian commitments. We are working on the humanitarian corridors, at our own initiative, on a daily basis — 10 routes have again been suggested today, both towards Russia and western Ukraine. We are also organizing the delivery of basic necessities, medicine and food to those in need. We have already delivered more than 6,000 tons of aid to Ukraine, and half a million refugees are currently being hosted in Russia. Communication channels have been established and are successfully functioning among the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Russia and the leadership of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. In direct coordination with the ICRC, we are organizing safe corridors for evacuations and the search and exchange of prisoners of war. On 18 March, with the assistance of the Russian armed Forces, the first United Nations humanitarian convoy travelled from Poltava to Sumy. It delivered and distributed 130 tons of humanitarian assistance.

While convoys with tons of food and essential goods are travelling to Ukraine, what is travelling from the West to Ukraine, as we all know, are weapons and missiles.

Today we heard, and will again hear, a claim about the allegedly imminent global food crisis. According to Western delegations, it is caused exclusively by Russia's actions in Ukraine. By framing the question in that way, our Western colleagues are deceiving themselves. After all, the real reasons the global food

market is experiencing serious turbulence are by no means because of Russia's actions, rather because of the unbridled sanctions hysteria unleashed by the West against Russia, without consideration for the people of the so-called "global South" or its own citizens.

Attempts to isolate Russia economically, financially and logistically from long-established channels of cooperation are already turning into an economic crisis of historic proportions. Even to the average observer, it is clear that the lifting of tensions in logistics and financial relations, ensuring the continuity of supply chains and stabilizing international agricultural and food markets can be achieved only by rejecting unlawful unilateral restrictions. After all, the stocks of food produced in Russia have not decreased. It is precisely the Western States themselves that are capable of preventing hunger and food shortages, regardless of how much they might argue the opposite today and try to shift the blame onto Russia.

We also cannot fail to express our concern about the ongoing cases of vehicles with United Nations insignia being confiscated by the Ukrainian armed forces. It is good that the Secretariat has finally acknowledged such offences taking place in Kharkiv and Mariupol. We are awaiting a response to our most recent enquiry regarding a United Nations vehicle with diplomatic plates DP210015, also in Kharkiv, which, according to witness testimonies, took part in Ukrainian nationalist combat operations.

We are also aware of cases of radicals using vehicles of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Our colleagues in Vienna are fully aware of that information. It is important that both international organizations provide fair assessments of such incidents. Incidentally, online publications clearly show that DHL delivery vehicles have also fallen into the hands of the Ukrainian armed forces and are being used to transport weapons. We cannot rule out the possibility that the vehicles of those organizations or vehicles with medical markings are being used to transport into Ukraine the very weapons that the West so generously promised to Kyiv from neighbouring States, and I hope that it is clear what reputational damage such a scenario could do to all international entities that are concealing the fact of vehicles with their insignia being used for such purposes.

In conclusion, I would like to respond to a talking point that has already become common in the

vocabulary of our Western colleagues, namely, that Russia's military operation is allegedly an unprovoked war of choice. That is also a formula that we heard again today. We have repeatedly explained what has led to the current crisis, and those who accuse us of this are doing so, *inter alia*, because they seek to gloss over their role in provoking the crisis and are pretending that despite their policies of creating an anti-Russian State for geopolitical purposes, which is what Ukraine has turned into, this has nothing to do with them.

If we are going to talk about wars of choice, then let us recall the United States aggression against Yugoslavia, Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan, Syria and the Viet Nam War. All those States are thousands of kilometres away from Washington, and military warfare there led to nothing except hundreds of thousands of ruined and broken lives, leaving behind completely devastated countries and condemning millions of people to destitution and a miserable existence. Those were wars of choice, because the United States had a choice not to start those wars, just as today Washington and its allies have a choice to stop adding fuel to the fire of the Ukrainian crisis by supplying the Kyiv regime with weapons and provoking an international food crisis and hunger in States around the world.

Ms. Juul (Norway): We thank the briefers for their sobering accounts of the situation on the ground.

Russia's war against Ukraine represents a blatant violation of international law and the very principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Russia's war is causing the largest humanitarian crisis in Europe since the Second World War. The damage and destruction to civilian infrastructure, including food systems, is devastating, as we heard so clearly from the briefers today.

The attacks on civilians are simply unacceptable. A quarter of the Ukrainian population has now been displaced. Once again, we reiterate that international humanitarian law must be respected and the civilian population in Ukraine must be protected. A humanitarian ceasefire in Ukraine is urgently needed, and we welcome the Secretary-General's initiative to request Under-Secretary-General Griffiths to work directly with the parties on a possible agreement. We also welcome the renewed dialogue today between the parties and hope that this will establish the trust needed for an early agreement on the cessation of hostilities.

Let me highlight just three areas of concern.

First, the war is increasing the risk of sexual and gender-based violence, including sexual violence being used as a tactic of warfare. That is of great concern. Prevention, protection and response must be scaled up.

Secondly, immediate action must be taken to shield children in Ukraine from the harms of conflict, including suffering from a lack of both urgent and ongoing medical care. Many children have fled and are unaccompanied. They are extremely vulnerable and must be protected.

Thirdly, the massive displacement and refugee flows have led to reports of a significant increase in human trafficking. That needs to be urgently addressed by all, including the United Nations and receiving States.

The Ukrainians are responding with great courage and commitment, and we recognize the leading role that women are playing in the response. The work undertaken by international humanitarian organizations and their local partners and responders is crucial. The systematic engagement between them — together with the people affected — needs to be strengthened. As the needs grow, their efforts and ability to stay and deliver must be accelerated.

Humanitarian organizations must be allowed safe, rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access to people in need. We also commend the hospitality and solidarity extended by Ukraine's neighbours, and we encourage countries to keep their borders open to all those seeking protection, without discrimination.

The Secretary-General, the United Nations Development Programme and other development organizations are sounding the alarm about regional — and even global — consequences of the war. That is both a humanitarian and a development crisis. It is both a Ukrainian and a global crisis.

Ukraine itself has been set back decades in its economic development. More than 60 per cent of its citizens could fall below the poverty line within the next 12 months.

The conflict will have serious negative effects on the agricultural sector, likely leading to a global rise in food insecurity and increased fuel and fertilizer prices, all contributing to social unrest and instability across the world.

The ripple effects of the Russian aggression will be particularly felt by those living in conflict- and crisis-

affected countries, such as Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan, Ethiopia and South Sudan.

We therefore welcome the Secretary-General's initiative to establish a Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance.

Russia's aggression has long-term consequences for Ukraine. It exacerbates other humanitarian crises and undermines global economic development, peace and security. Russia must stop that unjust war. That is the only way to end the humanitarian catastrophe in Ukraine and beyond.

Mr. Tirumurti (India): Let me begin by thanking Assistant Secretary-General Joyce Msuya and World Food Programme Executive Director David Beasley for their briefings on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine.

India remains deeply concerned at the ongoing situation, which has continued to deteriorate since the beginning of the hostilities. We reiterate our call for unimpeded humanitarian access to areas of armed conflict in Ukraine. There is an urgent need to address the humanitarian needs of the affected population. In that regard, the initiatives of the United Nations and its agencies, such as the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the World Food Programme, have reinforced ongoing efforts. We also note the decision by the European Union countries that have agreed to a permit-free transit of humanitarian carriers to Ukraine.

We hope that the international community will continue to respond positively to the humanitarian needs of the people of Ukraine, including through extending generous support to the Secretary-General's flash appeal and the regional refugee response plan on Ukraine.

Keeping in view the dire humanitarian situation unfolding in Ukraine, India has already sent more than 90 tonnes of humanitarian supplies to Ukraine and its neighbours. Those supplies have included medicines and other essential relief material for refugees. We are providing more humanitarian assistance in the coming days, especially through the supply of essential medicines.

Allow me to underscore that it is important that humanitarian action always be guided by the principles of humanitarian assistance, that is, humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, embedded as they are at the heart of the United Nations guiding principles of

humanitarian emergency assistance. Those measures should not be politicized.

The conflict is already having an impact on the global economy, especially on many developing countries, including through the disruption of supply chains. Its adverse impact on energy and commodity prices is evident.

We reiterate our call for an immediate cessation of hostilities across Ukraine. Our Prime Minister, on several occasions, has reiterated this and emphasized that there is no other option but the path of dialogue and diplomacy.

We continue to emphasize that the global order is anchored in international law, the Charter of the United Nations and respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of States.

We call for purposeful engagement in the ongoing talks by both sides. We hope that an understanding can soon be reached. It is clearly in our collective interests to find a solution that can provide for an immediate de-escalation of tensions, aimed at securing long-term peace and stability in the region and beyond.

Ms. Oppong-Ntiri (Ghana): I would like to begin by thanking Ms. Joyce Msuya, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, and Mr. Beasley, Executive Director of the World Food Programme, for their briefings. I also welcome the participation in this meeting of the representative of Ukraine.

Almost a week after the General Assembly voted to adopt landmark resolution ES-11/2, with an unequivocal call for an immediate cessation of hostilities and a return to the path of dialogue and diplomacy (see A/ES-11/PV.9), the signs on the ground have yet to reflect the sentiments of the international community for an early improvement in the humanitarian situation in Ukraine.

An unconditional and immediate ceasefire and the withdrawal of all invading troops from the internationally recognized borders of Ukraine are critical to save lives and prevent further devastation to the Ukrainian people and remain fundamental to addressing the worsening humanitarian conditions.

Ghana remains deeply concerned about the continuing military bombardment of cities and civilian populated areas of Ukraine and is disheartened by the resulting trauma, especially to the elderly, women

and children. We note with regret the loss of lives, the displacement of people and the overall suffering of the Ukrainian people from this needless war.

It is more important than ever for the parties to the conflict to urgently commit to a humanitarian pause in order to enable the evacuation and safe passage of civilians and facilitate the delivery of food, medicine and other essential services to those in critical need who have been caught up in cities under siege. We also deplore the attacks on medical facilities and call for the protection of humanitarian workers and medical personnel.

We urge the parties to comply with their commitments under international law and international humanitarian law, in particular the provisions of the 1949 Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in the Time of War, also known as the Fourth Geneva Convention. Ghana also encourages the countries neighbouring Ukraine to facilitate the free passage of persons fleeing the war, without discrimination, and to provide them with humanitarian assistance, including medical care — in line with the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality.

We remain concerned about the impact of the war in Ukraine on the global economy, in general, and its disproportionate impact on developing countries and small economies, many of which are already caught up in the throes of the coronavirus disease pandemic. We reiterate our urgent call for international solidarity on the issues of sovereign release of excess food stocks, calibrated intervention in the oil market and new debt initiatives and financial access mechanisms to help maintain global cohesion and stability at this precarious time.

We note the reported intention of the Russian Federation to redeploy its forces from certain parts of Ukraine and urge it to follow through in the ongoing dialogue in Turkey aimed at a pathway to resolving the crisis.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): I join other in thanking Assistant Secretary-General Msuya and Executive Director David Beasley for their briefings.

Today we once again heard the appalling impact on the Ukrainian people of President Putin's senseless war of choice — 10.3 million have been displaced, with 73

confirmed attacks on hospitals and medical centres and 659 schools and kindergartens damaged.

The devastation in Mariupol is almost beyond description. Civilians remain without food, water or electricity. People are reportedly resorting to drinking not just snow, but sewage water to survive. There are credible reports of mass graves and forced deportations of residents to the Russian Federation, as well as incidents of sexual violence and use of landmines. There will be accountability for those crimes.

There is an urgent need to alleviate humanitarian suffering in Ukraine. We note the Secretary-General's announcement yesterday regarding the role of Martin Griffiths in pursuing a humanitarian ceasefire, and we are grateful for the latest data from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the World Food Programme and the Secretary-General's remarks yesterday regarding those they have been able to reach.

We encourage all efforts to help the people of Ukraine, in agreement with the Ukrainian Government. The United Kingdom will continue to play its part. We have provided £400 million to support Ukraine, including £220 million in humanitarian aid. We call for close cooperation between United Nations agencies and other donors in order to ensure that this assistance reaches and protects the most vulnerable.

But let us be without a shred of doubt. As the Secretary-General set out yesterday, the only way to end the suffering is for Russia to end the war. Global commodity prices were already on the rise before the invasion as economies recovered from the coronavirus disease pandemic. We now see spiralling energy prices and global food insecurity hitting the most vulnerable the hardest. Almost every Member State is now suffering because of Russia's war. As David Beasley said, we now risk famine destabilization, and we risk having to take food from hungry children for starving children. Russia's appetite for war is taking food off the world's table.

The United Kingdom welcomes General Assembly resolution ES-11/2, adopted last week. United Nations States Members sent an overwhelming message that Russia alone is to blame for the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine and for the shocks being felt globally. For the suffering to end, Russian bullets and bombs must stop, and Russian tanks and troops must go home.

Mr. Hoxha (Albania): Whoever seeks the truth about Ukraine today comes to the same conclusion — Russian aggression has caused a catastrophic humanitarian situation in Ukraine. It must end and give way to not only a chance for negotiations, but actual negotiations, with an immediate nationwide ceasefire, as 140 Member States called for just last week (see A/ES-11/PV.9). Unfortunately, as we speak, people are still being killed.

At the end of the Second World War, some 40 million people had been displaced from their homes. In Ukraine, after only five weeks, a quarter of the country's population of 44 million has been displaced by the Russian aggression. We have been told, repeatedly, that this war does not concern civilians, but in truth, it has become mainly a war between the Russian army and Ukrainian civilians, including women and children.

Mariupol, savagely battered into rubble and reduced to ashes, symbolizes the extreme brutality of the Russian invasion. In the words of the city's mayor, Russia's aim is to wipe the city off the face of the Earth, along with its inhabitants. There is a legal definition for that despicable practice.

We know it through historical records: cruelty inflicts untold damage and pain, but it never prevails. It did not do so during the Second World War; it did not during the three long years of siege of Sarajevo or the genocide in Srebrenica; it did not during the horrible massacres and massive ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. We know where all those who tried to do so — who suffered from the strongman syndrome — ended up: behind bars, at best.

Bombing schools, hospitals, commercial centres, theatres and cinemas with modern weapons has killed many and terrified many more, but it has not demoralized or broken Ukrainians. Instead, it has marked Russia's failure and sealed its humiliation. Ukrainian men and women are not fighting to survive but to win — and win they will.

No propaganda can erase facts: half the children of an entire country of 44 million have been displaced; while nearly 4,500 residential buildings, more than 90 factories and enterprises, more than 650 educational establishments and 74 health-care institutions have been damaged or destroyed in Ukraine. In Kharkiv alone, more than 1,000 houses have been destroyed by Russia. That extensive damage is not only a consequence — it

is in fact the real aim of the aggressor. Unable to occupy the country, it is simply destroying it.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has major implications for food security across the world, as United Nations reports confirm. It is inflicting severe difficulties on developing countries. That comes as 2022 is expected to become a year of catastrophic hunger, more than 44 million people in 38 countries are on the verge of famine and overall global needs for humanitarian assistance are higher than ever. People in conflict areas used to fear dying of war; now they fear dying of hunger as well. That is another consequence of Russia's war.

Troubling facts confirm that Russia has replaced the right to information with the freedom of disinformation. *Novaya Gazeta*, one of the largest independent investigative newspapers in Russia, led by Nobel Prize winner Dmitry Muratov, announced that it was forced to halt publication after being issued a warning from the Government. They were told they could not tell the truth and that they could not speak of war.

How many times have we heard, in the most ridiculous posture, that Ukrainians are inflicting it all on themselves? That is what Russians are being told relentlessly now, in an almost closed-circuit information system. How masochistic would such Ukrainians be? The simple fact is that they have been attacked in their home and are fighting to defend it. A total information blackout will keep Russians in darkness, buried in a parallel reality that is distorted by propaganda, until mothers start looking for their missing boys.

The United Nations human rights team in Ukraine has received information about mass graves in the besieged city of Mariupol. Other horrors will soon be unearthed. Everything must be done to ensure accountability for every war crime committed in Ukraine. The recently established Group of Friends on Accountability following the Aggression in Ukraine will support all efforts to gather evidence and document the atrocities of the war.

Let me end with a reality check. Now we know that Russia wanted all of Ukraine, and it has learned the hard way that it cannot — and will not — get it. Now it wants to divide it and grab a part. That must not be tolerated. It must be condemned, and Russia must be held accountable.

Mr. Biang (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Msuya and Executive Director Beasley for their respective briefings.

The war in Ukraine is now entering its second month. Hostilities continue on the ground, as does the flow of civilians, including African residents and students, who are attempting to flee the combat zones. We are carefully following the evolution of the situation on the ground and are alarmed by the attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure, as well as the attacks that directly impact the provision of vital public services.

The latest data provided by the International Committee of the Red Cross indicates that some 18 million people are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance in Ukraine, of whom only 900,000 have been rescued and received by the United Nations and its specialized agencies. The deteriorating living conditions, which go hand in hand with increasing health-care needs, including for psychosocial care and support, no doubt complicate matters when it comes to the modality and nature of the distribution of aid. Such aid is required urgently by thousands of people, whether they decide to remain in their country or flee the combat zones in order to seek refuge. We know that the majority of those fleeing are women and children.

We are concerned by persistent reports that there is a risk of disease resulting from difficulties in accessing drinking water and sanitation infrastructure and related hygiene problems. Data from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations is also a source of concern, as it predicts food shortages in the next three months, with 40 per cent of monitored zones impacted, in particular due to unpredictable harvests. The risk of food insecurity has global repercussions, especially in the light of diminishing cereal stockpiles. We fear the worst in those regions of the world that are already fragile, such as the Sahel.

Beyond our solidarity with the Ukrainian people, which we wish to reaffirm, as well as with all people placed in distressing circumstances due to the war; beyond the momentum of international solidarity, which has not wavered since 24 February and has translated into greater mobilization to provide humanitarian assistance to Ukraine; and beyond our words of condemnation that we have spoken before the world, it is urgent that we respond to the needs of the Ukrainian

people and all those suffering alongside them in this crisis with actions that truly reflect what is at stake.

My country is of the view that the humanitarian situation in Ukraine must be addressed in isolation, without any politicization of the issue whatsoever. Politicizing the situation in Ukraine will only distance the Security Council from its objective of ensuring respect for the relevant international conventions and creating conditions that are conducive to the protection of civilians in war zones while providing safe, secure and unimpeded access to humanitarian workers and humanitarian corridors. That is the purpose of international humanitarian law, and that is how we currently address the other issues on the Council's agenda.

I wish to reiterate my country's appreciation for Ukraine's neighbours, which continue to mobilize to host refugees during this emergency. We encourage them to accord the same welcome to all those in distress, regardless of their origin or race, including African residents and students. We ask that their dignity be respected and call for the equitable treatment of all persons in distress.

We once again call on the warring parties to respect the provisions of international humanitarian law, in particular the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the Protocols Additional thereto, and to guarantee respect for, and the protection of, all medical and humanitarian personnel. We call on the parties to commit to opening secure humanitarian corridors and urge an immediate cessation of hostilities.

The conflict should not end because, as the French writer Pierre Corneille put it, there are no fighters left. It should end because we have mobilized to reach an agreement in line with the humanitarian, political and security interests of the protagonists. My country is paying close attention to the negotiations currently being held between the parties, in particular in Istanbul. We hope that those negotiations will lead in the short term to a ceasefire in order to create a climate of confidence to bring about the necessary calm in which diplomacy may prevail. We call on the warring parties and all stakeholders to resolutely engage in constructive dialogue to find a way out of the crisis.

Mr. Costa Filho (Brazil): Let me start by thanking the briefers — Assistant Secretary-General Msuya and Executive Director Beasley — for their presentations and, above all, for the tireless efforts of both the Office

for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the World Food Programme (WFP) in helping to alleviate the humanitarian situation in Ukraine. Let me also welcome the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to this meeting.

As we enter into another week of hostilities, we continue to witness the intense human suffering it is causing. The briefings today highlight yet another grave dimension of the war — one that affects all countries, particularly developing States: food insecurity. Brazil is concerned with the worsening of the global food crisis. The ongoing conflict is already causing a decline in food supplies and a surge in food prices. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, around 50 countries depend on imports of wheat from Russia and Ukraine, not counting other food products and services.

OCHA's Global Humanitarian Overview 2022 has already alerted that food insecurity is at unprecedented levels. I would like to recall one sentence from the Overview:

“Without sustained and immediate action, 2022 could be catastrophic.”

The most worrisome part of this assessment is that it came before the conflict in Ukraine erupted. Now the prospects are even worse. While the humanitarian needs are greater, the resources are still scarce, which is only aggravated by rising food prices. It is deeply worrisome to note that the WFP has already had to reduce assistance for refugees and other vulnerable populations across East Africa and the Middle East.

Adding to the direct consequences of the conflict in Ukraine, the indiscriminate imposition of broad economic sanctions may further affect food insecurity. Unilateral sanctions are not only illegal under international law, but, as currently applied, they jeopardize access to products that are essential to the survival of a large portion of the world's population. In the end, sanctions tend to be heavily detrimental to developing countries, while some developed countries can protect their interests and guarantee the well-being of their own populations through sustained funds during the coming years.

The General Assembly recently adopted a resolution about the humanitarian situation in Ukraine (resolution ES-11/2), with the support of Brazil. In our explanation of vote, we highlighted that the General Assembly could

not become a bystander to the shocking images from the conflict and the desperation of civilians trapped in the battlefield (see A/ES-11/PV.9).

Neither can the Security Council. As the main United Nations organ with the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, the Security Council has the mandate and the responsibility to address the situation in an effective manner. We should strive to create the conditions for increased dialogue on practical measures to minimize human suffering in Ukraine. Civilians wishing to flee the hostilities must be able to do so in safety, and those who decide to stay cannot become targets of attacks. In the same vein, parties must grant safe passage to relief consignments to those in need.

The situation in Mariupol is particularly concerning. We call on all parties to work towards concrete agreements to allow civilians to leave the city if they wish to do so. Parties should spare no efforts to prevent people from going missing and to share information on the status of protected persons under their control.

Once again, Brazil reiterates the call for all parties to fully respect and ensure respect for international humanitarian law. No matter the causes of the conflict, once it erupts, civilians must be safe. The wounded must receive medical care, humanitarian assistance must reach those in need, and detainees must be treated humanely in all circumstances. There must be no politicization of humanitarian messages, nor selective applications of international humanitarian law. Also, geopolitical objectives must not supersede the endeavour for peace, nor prolong the human suffering caused by war.

The forecasts of most humanitarian organizations were already catastrophic for 2022. This conflict, apart from the enormous human suffering and devastation caused in Ukraine, will have spillover effects on the entire world, making it even more difficult to alleviate the dire situation of civilians in conflict-torn countries. The longer the conflict drags on, the higher the risk of further instability, hunger and devastation in Ukraine and elsewhere.

It is high time to return to the path of dialogue and diplomacy for a peaceful settlement of the conflict. We urgently need the cessation of hostilities. De-escalation of tensions and negotiations are the only way out of this

conflict, not only for the countries directly involved, but also for the whole world.

Mr. Dai Bing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Joyce Msuya and Executive Director Beasley for their briefings, which gave us a worrisome account of the situation on the ground.

The conflict situation in Ukraine remains ongoing. Effectively protecting civilian lives and meeting their humanitarian needs is a must. China calls for respect for international humanitarian law to avoid civilian casualties to the maximum extent and to protect civilian facilities, to provide safe passage for evacuation and humanitarian access, and to ensure a continuous supply of basic necessities, such as food, drinking water and medicines. Protection of vulnerable groups, such as women and children, must be strengthened.

We support such agencies as the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the World Food Programme (WFP) in upholding the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality as they continue to mobilize and coordinate international support in providing emergency humanitarian relief to conflict-affected populations and help Ukraine and its neighbouring countries meet the enormous humanitarian needs. We must also be cognizant that the other escalating, sweeping and indiscriminate sanctions have hit global markets in energy and food, and across the economic, trade and financial sectors, and will continue to do so, affecting the life and livelihoods of the general public and giving rise to new humanitarian problems.

Developing countries, which make up the majority of the world, are not parties to this conflict and should not be drawn into the confrontation and forced to suffer the consequences of geopolitical clashes and sparring among major Powers. Right now, global food security is being seriously challenged, which warrants due attention. Sanctions and economic blockades, artificial as they are, will only exacerbate food shortages and price distortions, further disrupt food production and the food-supply chain across the world, push food prices up and put burdens on developing countries that they do not deserve.

We call for enhancing international coordination to stabilize the food supply and food prices, refraining from unjustified export restrictions, keeping the market working in a stable manner and ensuring global food security. The United Nations, the WFP, the Food and

Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Trade Organization and other agencies should actively contribute to coordinating food production and trade among countries and helping developing countries survive the shocks.

If the crisis continues and escalates, further damage is on the way, which is not in the interest of any party. The most conclusive way to achieve a ceasefire and end hostilities is through dialogue and negotiation. The international community should encourage and support continued direct negotiations between Russia and Ukraine until a positive outcome is achieved and peace is restored. Security is indivisible, and seeking absolute security by pitting one bloc against another is precisely the most assured way to achieve insecurity.

The United States, NATO and the European Union should also engage in dialogue with Russia, accommodate the legitimate security concerns of all parties and build a balanced, effective and sustainable regional security architecture through dialogue and negotiations. China will continue to work towards, and play a constructive role in, easing the situation and resolving the crisis.

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

I thank both the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Ms. Joyce Msuya, and the Executive Director of the World Food Programme (WFP), Mr. David Beasley, for their valuable briefings.

Each meeting and briefing that we hold on the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Ukraine serves to underscore the war's devastating impact on the lives of civilians and the failure of the international community to alleviate their suffering. We are deeply concerned about the increasing casualties, destruction and damage to civilian infrastructure.

In particular, we deplore the rate of displacement, which has seen nearly one quarter of Ukraine's population — more than 10 million internally displaced persons and refugees, most of whom are women and children — flee their homes in just one month of fighting.

We reiterate the importance of the immediate cessation of all hostilities throughout Ukraine. We also welcome yesterday's request from the Secretary-General that Martin Griffiths work with the parties involved to

explore the possibility of a humanitarian ceasefire in Ukraine, and we were pleased to hear today from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) that there was a positive response on both sides. We strongly support aid agencies as they uphold the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence and coordinate with all parties to ensure safe and unhindered access for humanitarian workers.

In the light of the dire situation, the United Arab Emirates believes that it is important to focus on the following key points in order to help those in need most effectively.

First, we commend the role of humanitarian organizations and OCHA in rapidly responding under extreme pressure to the needs of civilians. Their efforts during the conflict have made it possible to provide aid to nearly 1 million people. We also commend the push to develop an integrated system of aid operations throughout the country. We support OCHA's efforts to create a humanitarian notification mechanism for the safe delivery of aid. We would also like to see work done building on the United Nations coordination with Ukraine and the Russian Federation, which has led to humanitarian convoys delivering aid to Sumy and, most recently, to Kharkiv.

Secondly, the United Arab Emirates reiterates the importance of all parties complying with international humanitarian law, especially to protect civilians, limit military operations to exclusively military objectives and take every precautionary measure. We stress the need to keep lines of communication open among all parties in order to coordinate the safe delivery of aid in a practical and effective manner, as well as to follow through on proposals for the dignified treatment of the dead so that they can be identified, their families informed and their bodies returned on all sides.

We further emphasize the importance of securing temporary ceasefire agreements in specific areas in order to allow civilians to evacuate to safety, securely deliver aid to civilians in need and ensure the protection of humanitarian workers.

Thirdly, we call for intensifying diplomatic contacts between the two parties to find a peaceful solution, and we fully support all mediation efforts in that regard. We took note of the positive reports from the talks conducted in Istanbul today, as well as other ongoing mediation efforts. It is our sincere hope that they will lead to a diplomatic solution.

In that context, we also stress the important role of women in conflict resolution and peace negotiations, including to ensure their sustainability and durability.

We should all be alarmed by the WFP Executive Director's briefing today. As he noted, Ukraine and Russia together are a critical breadbasket for the world. The increasing food insecurity is wreaking havoc on pandemic recovery, particularly for developing, least developed and small island developing States. In the Middle East and Africa, the conflict jeopardizes significant sources of wheat, including for many countries on the Security Council's agenda. That could lead to further unrest and instability around the world.

In conclusion, the United Arab Emirates reaffirms its commitments to the humanitarian response, to which we have contributed both bilaterally and through the United Nations flash humanitarian appeal for Ukraine. We also reiterate the importance of constructive Security Council engagement in alleviating the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine and, more broadly, in helping to encourage an urgent diplomatic resolution of the conflict.

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.

Ms. Sherman (United States of America): I thank you, Madam President, very much for giving me this opportunity today. It is much appreciated.

I feel that I must make four critical points.

First, I want to be clear that the conflict that is being suffered by the Ukrainian people is not about the Russian Federation versus the West. Just last week, the representatives of 140 countries spoke in support of ending the conflict and the need to end the humanitarian crisis; 141 countries supported the initial resolution in the General Assembly (resolution A/ES-11/1) to say that the invasion by Russia should stop. I would say to the Russian representative, with all due respect, that this is not about Russia versus the West. This is about support for the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and the right of all countries — all countries — to choose their political orientation and foreign policy.

Secondly, I myself was engaged directly with Russian counterparts to find a peaceful way forward

to meet the concerns of the Russian Federation. I sat opposite Russian counterparts and put on the table many options to address the concerns. We provided, as did NATO, a paper of very specific ways in which we could reciprocally and mutually address security concerns. President Putin chose an invasion, not diplomacy.

Thirdly, in response to the representative of Russia, as a Jewish American, I cannot help but say, with all due respect, that this is not about Nazis in Ukraine. Last week, former United States Secretary of State and Permanent Representative to the United Nations, and one of my most cherished personal friends, Madeleine Albright died. She loved representing the United States here. She would have been outraged by the words of the Russian Federation today.

Later in her life, she learned that her parents raised her as Catholic to protect her from the Nazis because her family was Jewish. She learned that three of her grandparents died at the hands of the Nazis while in concentration camps. She knew that the Jewish President of Ukraine was certainly not a Nazi and that the citizens of Ukraine being slaughtered, starving, without food or medicine, and the subject of this humanitarian dialogue today are not, and never were, Nazis.

Finally, this dialogue today is about the humanitarian needs of Ukrainian civilians and the humanitarian needs of people around the world who, as David Beasley said so eloquently, are going from feeding hungry children to feeding starving children. It is about, as he said, going from a breadbasket to a breadline. We must all do whatever we can, of course, to stop war. But there is an easy choice here. And it is a choice that can be made today in Istanbul by President Putin — and that is to stop the war. Let us all then — more than 140 countries around the world — continue to stand with Ukraine.

The President: The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to respond to the statement by Ms. Sherman. I will not comment on the part about her participation in the negotiations. Of course, she is much more informed about that than I or my colleagues are. However, because the negotiations did not succeed, perhaps she fell short in some way in that area, and perhaps she should have worked better and should have made more serious proposals, but now we are where we are.

I would like to comment on her remarks with regard to Nazism in Ukraine. It has already become a common excuse for people to say that the Ukrainian President is Jewish, so he cannot be a Nazi. I will not try to convince Security Council members of the opposite, rather I will just cite some facts.

What do Council members think? Council members know who Stepan Bandera and Roman Shukhevych were. They know how many things those people did that were harmful and bad for humankind. They collaborated with Nazis and took part in the killings of Poles, Jews, Russians and Ukrainians. If Council members have any doubts, they should ask the Polish people — not Polish politicians — but ordinary people. I worked in Poland for three years, and I am well aware of how Poles view Bandera there. And yet Bandera and Shukhevych are national heroes of Ukraine, and their national battalions have Nazi symbols in their insignias.

NATO recently had to remove a picture of an Ukrainian female soldier from its official webpage because there was a Nazi symbol on her uniform. Of course, such symbols do not mean anything, and it does not mean anything if its military tortures prisoners of war and brands Nazi symbols on their bodies. Apparently, Council members do not consider that to be Nazism. If the President of a country considers the national hero of the country to be someone who fought alongside Hitler, killing Jews, Poles, Russians and Ukrainians, apparently that does not mean anything either in the view of Council members. However, we see things differently, and so do the majority of the people in Russia and Ukraine.

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

Mr. Kyslytsya (Ukraine): I recognize the members of the Security Council, Assistant Secretary-General Msuya and Executive Director Beasley.

I also recognize the representative of the aggressor State present in the Chamber in the permanent seat of the Soviet Union, who is not in fact authorized to speak on behalf of the Ukrainian people, as he just did.

At the outset, I would like to inform the Security Council that the demilitarization of Russia, conducted by the Ukrainian army and supported by the entire Ukrainian people, is well under way.

Since the beginning of the invasion, the Russian occupiers have lost more than 17,000 military personnel,

more than 1,700 armoured vehicles, almost 600 tanks, more than 300 artillery systems, 127 aeroplanes and 129 helicopters, almost 100 rocket launch systems, 54 air defence systems and seven ships. That is an unprecedented blow to Moscow. The numbers of Soviet losses in Afghanistan pale in comparison.

However, after listening to Russia's Ambassador, I regret to say that the process of "deputinization" is lagging behind so far.

Today's negotiations in Istanbul have demonstrated that Russia may be ready to take steps forward, although it is still a long way to a sustainable ceasefire and comprehensive de-escalation.

The parties will continue consultations to prepare and agree on the provisions of a treaty on security guarantees for Ukraine, a ceasefire implementation mechanism, the withdrawal of forces and other armed formations and the opening and safe functioning of humanitarian corridors on a permanent basis, as well as on the exchange of fallen soldiers and the release of prisoners of war and civilians.

The signing of the treaty on security guarantees for Ukraine will be possible only after the withdrawal of all Russian armed units to locations as of 23 February 2022.

The negotiation process, which is under way, by no means removes the need to provide to Ukraine additional assistance with weapons and to implement the new sanctions imposed on the Russian Federation for the act of aggression committed.

Last week, the overwhelming majority of the United Nations membership expressed once again its resolute stance against Russia's unprovoked and unjustified invasion of Ukraine. The strong humanitarian statements addressed to Russia left no room for misinterpretation. The attempts by the aggressor to shift responsibility to the victim left no room for misinterpretation either.

We demand that Russia immediately and unconditionally implement all provisions of General Assembly resolution ES-11/2, entitled "Humanitarian consequences of the aggression against Ukraine", in order to alleviate the humanitarian suffering on the ground.

I regret to say that, as of now, Russia demonstrates no willingness to give up its strategy of deliberate aggravation of the humanitarian situation on the ground.

There is a clear nexus between concrete security, the humanitarian situation and food security with regard to the Russian war against Ukraine. After the failure of its initial plan for a blitzkrieg, Russian troops have proceeded to plan B. That plan envisages provoking humanitarian disaster throughout Ukraine and destroying the agricultural potential of my country in order to intimidate the Ukrainian political leadership and people and incline them to surrender.

The toolbox is broad and extremely cruel. It includes the deliberate destruction of residential areas and critical infrastructure; missile shelling throughout the country; the siege of cities; the violation of arrangements for humanitarian corridors; and acts of terror against civilians in the occupied areas, including abductions and killings. As of now, the invaders have abducted about 30 local leaders, activists and journalists.

It is hard to imagine that Russia has fired 467 missiles at solely residential areas, with the overall number of missiles fired being more than 1,200. That includes ballistic missiles, cruise missiles and supersonic missiles. That number has already made the Russian actions the heaviest missile shelling ever in such a short period of time.

Mariupol remains a bleeding wound in the heart of Europe. According to local authorities, at least 5,000 people have been killed. Almost 150,000 residents remain under siege, deprived of all basic conditions to live.

They need to be evacuated, but not to the territory of the aggressor. Russian attempts to do so are not only cynical hypocrisy but also a gross violation of the laws and customs of war and the norms of international humanitarian law, in particular the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and Protocol Additional I thereto. As of now, about 40,000 Ukrainians have been forcibly deported to Russia and Belarus.

At the same time, Russian armed forces are resorting to firing at evacuation convoys trying to leave Mariupol for the non-occupied territory of Ukraine. According to UNICEF, a month of war in Ukraine has led to the displacement of 4.3 million children — more than half of the country's estimated 7.5 million children — including more than 1.8 million children who left the country as refugees. At least 143 children have been killed by Russian invaders, with 216 injured.

Humanitarian action is urgently needed. At the same time, we should bear in mind that the humanitarian disaster in Ukraine is an element of the Russian war strategy. To be efficient, any initiative should focus on changing the overall Russian approach towards Ukraine, instead of on idle attempts to engage the aggressor as a partner on the humanitarian track.

I also reiterate my call to join the Group of Friends of Accountability following the Aggression against Ukraine, which was launched on Friday and already includes almost 50 Member States.

The third element of the nexus — food security — is also under threat at the global level. We are aware that the entire world is deeply concerned about the disruption of food supplies from Ukraine, as one of the major food exporters. Before the war, more than 55 per cent of all sunflower oil in the world was exported from Ukraine. More than 55 per cent of Ukrainian wheat was exported to Asia and 40 per cent to African States. About 400 million people throughout the world, mostly in the Middle East, North Africa and Asia, depend upon grain supplies from Ukraine.

What we in Ukraine are also alarmed about is that 40 million Ukrainians may face food shortages as soon as this year. That has prompted the Government of Ukraine to work intensively on both tracks in order to secure the country's export potential to the largest extent possible and to ensure that Ukrainians, who bear the primary burden of Russia's aggression, will not suffer from hunger.

International solidarity with Ukraine and understanding that the only root cause of the current food crisis is Russia's war against Ukraine will be crucial to succeed in averting the worst-case scenario at the global level. It is therefore extremely important not to spam our discussion with references to issues that are not root causes, but rather focus on the implications of Russia's ongoing violations. It must be clear that vulnerable countries will remain at risk as long as Russia continues its war in Ukraine, which includes shelling the agricultural infrastructure, contaminating Ukrainian soil and deliberately targeting fuel storage facilities, thereby disrupting the sowing and harvesting season.

For instance, this weekend Russian missiles hit fuel storage sites in Lviv, Dubno, Lutsk and Rivne, all in the west of the country, far away from the front line. Just today, Russian troops shelled and launched missiles

at a farm enterprise in Dnipro, also far away from the combat area, destroying vehicles and equipment. Perhaps the representative of the aggressor State could explain the reason for that attack — “demilitarization” or “de-Nazification”?

All Ukrainian seaports remain blocked by Russia, thereby further aggravating the situation with supply shortages. Some of them have been occupied. De-occupation and lifting the blockade could quickly improve the situation, as Ukraine exports 60 per cent of its agricultural products through its seaports.

Under these extraordinary circumstances, the Government of Ukraine is taking comprehensive measures to respond to food security challenges. The sowing season is due to start on 70 per cent of our agricultural land. The Government has also launched an interest-free loan programme for farmers to strengthen their capabilities against the backdrop of the war. Steps to reorient the supply chains by switching to safe routes are being taken as well.

We are ready to discuss food security issues in detail with all interested actors. At the same time, we are unable to proceed to details in the presence of the representative of Russia, as food security — or, rather, food insecurity — remains one of the main elements of Russia’s military planning and its actions on the ground.

The Russian occupants act under the motto “the worse it is, the better”. And it is highly likely that, as soon as Moscow receives the report of the Russian Ambassador, the list of Russian targets will be amended with new items. We do not want all of Ukraine’s black soil to be sown with mines or all agricultural infrastructure destroyed.

Putin is not the first dictator to weaponize food against the Ukrainian nation. Moscow’s ideological apostle, Stalin, killed millions of Ukrainians 90 years ago in the orchestrated Great Famine. It is therefore

not surprising that Putin, who venerates Stalin as a forefather, resorts to the same practice.

Let me quote a written message recently conveyed from besieged Mariupol by one of its residents to his relative.

“Dima, mummy was killed on 9 March 2022. She died very quickly. Then the house was burned down. Dima, forgive me that I did not protect her. I buried her near the kindergarten”.

That written message, with its makeshift map, is a symbol of several lives ruined by Russia — several out of thousands in the city of Mariupol alone, but millions throughout Ukraine. That is the price for the war the world failed to prevent. That is the price for the sick mind of the Russian dictator and most of his people. Civilized nations have tolerated it for so long in a naïve hope that the Kremlin would at last stop.

It the meantime, Russian society remains in denial. However, as happened after the defeat of Nazism, when its supporters were taken to Holocaust sites to break their denial and open their eyes wide, the time will come when the supporters of Putinism will be taken Ukrainian cities and villages burned to the ground and to the mass graves of thousands of Ukrainians killed by the Russian invaders.

I will conclude by quoting from today’s video address by my President:

“The signals we hear from the negotiations can be called positive. But those signals do not drown out the ruptures of Russian shells. Ukrainians have already learned, during these 34 days of invasion and over the past eight years of the war in Donbas, that only a concrete result can be trusted”.

The lies poured out here like slop by Putin’s representative is a vivid confirmation of that.

The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.