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New York

President: Mrs. Frazier/Mr. Camilleri (Malta)

Members:

Algeria	Mr. Koudri
China	Mr. Geng Shuang
Ecuador	Mr. De La Gasca
France	Mr. De Rivière
Guyana	Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett
Japan	Mrs. Shino
Mozambique	Mr. Fernandes
Republic of Korea	Mr. Sangjin Kim
Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
Sierra Leone	Mr. George
Slovenia	Mr. Žbogar
Switzerland	Mr. Hauri
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
United States of America	Mr. Wood

Agenda

Maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine

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

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Miroslav Jenča, Assistant Secretary-General for Europe, Central Asia and Americas, Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations, and Ms. Edem Wosornu, Director of Operations and Advocacy, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I also invite Mr. Jean-Noël Ladois, Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

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

I give the floor to Mr. Jenča.

Mr. Jenča: Russia's invasion of Ukraine, launched in blatant violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, continues to take a heavy toll on the people of Ukraine. Since our last briefing to the Security Council almost a month ago (see S/PV.9578), Russia's attacks on Ukrainian cities and towns have become a daily destructive pattern and include intense and systematic targeting of Ukrainian energy infrastructure across the country.

We are appalled by the increase in civilian casualties as a result of those relentless attacks. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), in March at least 126 civilians were killed and 478 injured. That is a 20 per cent increase over the previous month. It is particularly disturbing that at least 57 children were killed or injured in March alone, double the number recorded in February. That deadly trend has continued this month, with daily drone, missile, rocket and artillery

attacks reported across the country. Overnight and this morning we saw additional countrywide attacks targeting Ukraine's energy infrastructure, with some reportedly resulting in casualties, including fatalities. On Monday, five people were reportedly killed in attacks in the Zaporizhzhya, Sumy and Poltava regions of Ukraine. Several more, including children, were reportedly injured. The Kharkiv, Odesa, Kherson, Dnipropetrovsk and Donetsk regions of Ukraine have also continued to suffer persistent attacks. Since February 2022, OHCHR has recorded 10,810 civilians killed, including 600 children, and 20,556 injured, of whom 1,357 were children. That is unacceptable.

We are also witnessing hostilities spreading across Ukraine's borders, with regular cross-border strikes into the Russian Federation. Attacks on civilians and on civilian infrastructure are prohibited under international law. They must cease immediately, and we continue to condemn them, wherever they occur.

The intensifying attacks come with a heavy toll on Ukraine's critical civilian infrastructure. Since March, large-scale coordinated attacks on critical infrastructure have destroyed or damaged more than two dozen energy facilities throughout the country, including the Dnipro hydroelectric power plant, and have disrupted access to electricity for millions of Ukrainians in both large cities and rural areas. The water supply was also disrupted in some locations. We are concerned about the humanitarian consequences of this, in view of reports that the disruptions may last for many months, owing to the widespread extent of the damage. In March the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights also recorded a total of 12 medical facilities and 32 educational facilities destroyed or damaged. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs will brief Council members in more detail about the humanitarian situation and the United Nations response in Ukraine.

In a disturbing reminder of the serious risks that this war poses, on Sunday Ukraine's Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant — Europe's largest, and currently under the military occupation of the Russian Federation — was directly targeted in military action for the first time since November 2022. Three people were reportedly injured in the attack. Subsequent drone attacks were also reported on Monday and Tuesday. According to the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), those attacks represent a serious threat to the safety and security of the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant and are a clear violation of the IAEA's five basic principles for

protecting the facility. We join Director General Grossi's call for an immediate end to such inexcusable attacks in order to avoid a major nuclear accident. No one can benefit, militarily or politically, from attacking nuclear facilities. Instead, the consequences of a nuclear accident, whether intentional or not, could be catastrophic for us all. Any action violating the basic principles that protect those sites must be avoided.

We welcome the renewal of the mandates of the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine and the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine. Monitoring and reporting on the scale of human rights violations are integral parts of steps towards accountability. It is therefore vitally important to ensure that those bodies can continue their crucial work of reporting on violations of human rights and humanitarian law resulting from Russia's invasion. We continue to urge the Russian Federation to cooperate fully and grant access for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and independent monitors to the areas of Ukraine Russia occupies. OHCHR continues to have a daily presence near the front line and in conflict-affected areas, enabling it to document first-hand accounts of the human rights situation. We continue to call for accountability for all violations of human rights, in line with international norms and standards.

The current trajectory in the escalation of this war is a direct threat to regional stability and international security. Most of all, it is an existential threat to the people of Ukraine. As we have said repeatedly, we need a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in Ukraine, in line with the Charter, international law and the General Assembly resolutions on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. We therefore reiterate the call made by the Assembly in support of de-escalation and a peaceful resolution of the conflict in its resolution ES-11/6, entitled "Principles of the Charter of the United Nations underlying a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine", adopted in February of last year. The United Nations remains ready to support all efforts to that end.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Wosornu.

Ms. Wosornu: We last briefed the Security Council in March (see S/PV.9570), and I thank you, Madam President, for the opportunity to update the Council again on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine.

As the Council has just heard from Assistant-Secretary-General Jenča, Ukraine is currently enduring some of the worst attacks since the start of this war. Not a day passes without air strikes shattering the lives of yet more families across the country. In Kharkiv, Kherson, Kyiv, Lviv, Mykolayiv, Odesa, Zaporizhzhya, Donetsk and Dnipro, wave after massive wave of attacks continue to kill and injure civilians and cause widespread damage and destruction to critical civilian infrastructure. The war has spared no region in Ukraine.

As the Council heard, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has verified that since 24 February 2022 the ongoing conflict has killed more than 10,810 civilians, the number that Assistant Secretary-General Jenča just cited, and injured more than 20,550. Tragically, the actual numbers could likely be higher. Ten million people across the country have now lost their homes and have been forced to flee since the escalation of the war. Fierce ongoing hostilities in front-line and border communities, especially in the Donetsk, Kharkiv, Kherson and Sumy regions, are driving even greater displacement of civilians. Women and children continue to be disproportionately affected, as in many other crises across the world. They often face additional barriers to accessing essential services and are more exposed to protection risks, including gender-based violence.

The damage and destruction to critical infrastructure caused by the most recent hostilities have disrupted access to electricity, water, gas and other essential services for hundreds of thousands of civilians. And the continued attacks affecting medical facilities and schools, as the Council has heard, have had far-reaching consequences for people's access to health care and education. The World Health Organization has now verified more than 1,700 attacks affecting health-care facilities, personnel, transport, supplies and patients since February 2022, which have significantly hindered the delivery of health-care services. Access to medical care for women and girls, including maternal and reproductive health care, is severely restricted in rural areas and near the front lines.

Over the same period, according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the hostilities have damaged or destroyed 1,000 educational facilities, interrupting the education of millions of children. I saw the importance of education first-hand when I visited Ukraine earlier this year. The

social isolation and constant fear caused by this war are having serious effects on children's mental health. More than 1.5 million children are in urgent need of support to cope with stress, anxiety and other mental-health challenges associated with hostilities.

Aid operations are also affected by the attacks. The already challenging operational environment is further affected by more frequent and bigger aerial strikes.

As said in the Council in March, so far in 2024, two humanitarian workers have been killed and 10 have been injured by the violence. That brings the total deaths of humanitarian workers to at least 17 since the escalation of the war. That is another stark reminder of the dangers to humanitarian workers, especially as national staff are the overwhelming majority of those killed.

Again, this was mentioned in our most recent briefing in March, there have been 14 reported incidents damaging humanitarian assets and facilities — eight incidents within 10 kilometres of the front line — further reducing the capacity and operational range of our response efforts.

Over the weekend, as mentioned, a humanitarian hub in Zaporizhzhya was hit, and last week, a Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) office in the Donetsk region was destroyed by a missile attack. Five civilians were injured, and MSF had to temporarily suspend critical medical activities.

We have seen in recent weeks a particularly troubling pattern in the sequencing of attacks. As first responders or emergency services rush to the scene of attacks, a second wave of strikes target the same location, killing the wounded and causing the death and injury of first responders who have rushed to the scene to assist those in need. That clearly compounds the suffering of the wounded and incapacitates first responders and emergency workers. Attacks directed against the wounded and those helping them are prohibited under international humanitarian law. They are cruel, they are unconscionable, and they must stop.

As we have mentioned in previous Council briefings, the lack of access is one of the most significant challenges to humanitarian operations in Ukraine. We remain deeply concerned about the lack of humanitarian access to the parts of Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk and Zaporizhzhya regions occupied by the Russian Federation. At least 1.5 million people need

humanitarian assistance in those areas. Their needs are undoubtedly similar to those in all other parts of Ukraine close to the front line, including access to health care and medicine, food, livelihoods and of course clean drinking water. It is imperative under international humanitarian law that humanitarians be granted access as a matter of priority.

The pattern of civilian harm in the conflict as a whole continues to be of grave concern. And it raises serious doubts about compliance with international humanitarian law. I want to recall that international humanitarian law requires parties to take constant care to spare all civilians and civilian objects throughout military operations. That includes protecting humanitarian personnel and assets, as well as infrastructure essential for civilians' survival.

International humanitarian law also requires the parties to allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief for all civilians in need. Obstructions that leave the civilian population without the essential basic services to survive run contrary to that obligation.

The continuing attacks on Odesa, including the city's port infrastructure, are also of concern owing to their impact on global food security. As we have noted in the Council several times before, Ukraine's Black Sea ports are an essential component of the global supply chains for grain and other key agricultural commodities. Attacks on those ports threaten to undo the progress made in stabilizing grain markets and bringing global prices down. With staggering levels of food insecurity persisting in parts of the world, safe navigation in the Black Sea and the protection and safe operation of ports and related civilian infrastructure must be assured.

I cannot underscore enough that the scale of humanitarian needs in Ukraine remains vast. As Council members know, more than 14.6 million people — 40 per cent of Ukraine's population, 56 per cent of whom are women and girls — require some form of humanitarian assistance. We are immensely grateful to the donors who have so far provided \$541 million or 17 per cent of the \$3.1 billion request for the humanitarian response in Ukraine. That has enabled humanitarians to provide life-saving assistance to 3 million people in the first two months of 2024 alone, despite the deteriorating situation. It has also allowed the United Nations and its partners — many of them

local organizations — to provide food, psychological support, services for survivors of conflict-related gender-based violence and sexual violence and other supplies. But more financial resources are needed urgently to sustain operations in that increasingly complex and dangerous environment.

The humanitarian community remains committed to doing everything it can to support the people of Ukraine. But if hostilities continue to escalate, the already dire situation for millions of people in Ukraine and the challenges we face in responding to it will only deepen.

Tolerating war is not normal. We urge the Security Council not to allow the war to grind on unchallenged and unresolved. It is causing unceasing death, destruction and hardship. Together Council members must do everything within their power to ensure respect for the rules of war, pursue peace and bring the suffering of the Ukrainian people to an end.

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

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

Mr. De La Gasca (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank Mr. Miroslav Jenča and Mrs. Edem Wosornu for their informative briefings. I also acknowledge the presence in this Chamber of the representatives of Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania, Denmark and the European Union.

Ecuador notes with concern the protracted crisis in Ukraine and regrets the reports of recent attacks on populated cities, which disproportionately affect the civilian population and contribute to the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the country. It is particularly disturbing to note the reports of civilian casualties in the first months of this year, which include dozens of children. In addition, we have seen damage to critical infrastructure, which has led to disruptions in fundamental services such as electricity, water and gas supplies, affecting hundreds of thousands of people and further deteriorating already difficult living conditions.

According to UN-Women, since the beginning of the conflict, 3,238 women and girls have been killed and another 4,872 have been wounded. In addition, 56 per cent of the approximately 4 million internally displaced persons are women. Those constant attacks on women and their livelihoods cannot continue. My

country calls on all parties involved to act with the utmost restraint. It is imperative that civilian lives and civilian infrastructure be protected, in accordance with the principles and mandates of international law, especially those that demand that all parties to a conflict act with distinction, proportionality and precaution.

Ecuador considers it essential that humanitarian personnel, aid workers and the facilities of aid organizations be respected and protected. It is essential to guarantee a safe environment for them to carry out their work free from the fear of violence.

International crises in places such as Gaza, the Sudan and Yemen have undermined the international community's ability to increase the delivery of humanitarian aid to areas affected by the conflict. It is vital to ensure the unimpeded delivery of assistance to those who need it most, so it is essential to urge donors to continue their invaluable support to those most in need.

The conflict is a tragedy for the peoples of Russia and Ukraine and therefore must end. Ecuador hopes that a resolution to the crisis will be found through diplomacy and dialogue in order to mitigate the prolonged suffering of the civilian populations and prevent any risk of escalation.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Jenča and Ms. Wosornu for their briefings.

For two years now, since the beginning of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, Russia has been violating international law and international humanitarian law on a daily basis. On the nights of 21 and 28 March, Russia deliberately targeted Ukraine's power-generation infrastructure, causing severe damage to seven thermal power plants and two hydroelectric dams. On 5 and 6 April, dozens of civilians were killed or injured in Kharkiv and Zaporizhzhya. Those strikes hit the town of Pokrovsk and destroyed the premises of Médecins Sans Frontières.

In Kharkiv, Russian missiles targeted residential areas and damaged houses, schools and kindergartens. A dormitory used as a collective centre for displaced persons was hit. Rescue workers are also being deliberately targeted. Since the beginning of 2024, more than 80 attacks have impacted health infrastructure throughout Ukraine, resulting in six deaths and 35 injuries. France condemns those violations of international humanitarian law.

The human toll is rising daily, with at least 10,500 civilians killed since the beginning of the conflict. More than 4 million people have been displaced, including 1 million children. More than 17 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance. In 2023, 50 humanitarian workers were killed or injured. On 1 February 2024, two French aid workers were killed by a Russian strike, a cowardly and outrageous act.

At the same time, Russia is continuing its strikes against Ukrainian energy infrastructure. Strikes against civilian populations and objects not taking part in hostilities constitute war crimes.

The perpetrators of all of those crimes cannot be allowed to enjoy impunity. France welcomes the renewal of the mandate of the Human Rights Council's Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine. The arrest warrants issued on 5 March by the International Criminal Court against two Russian officers are also an essential step forward.

Finally, France continues to support initiatives aimed at limiting the effects of this war, especially for developing countries. We are taking action to combat the food insecurity caused by Russia, including through the solidarity corridors and the Grain from Ukraine initiative. Within that framework, France facilitated the delivery of Ukrainian grain to Nigeria, the Sudan, Somalia and Yemen and will finance new operations to vulnerable countries in 2024. That initiative shows that Ukraine alone is talking about peace, even as it is being attacked. Ukraine alone is concerned about the consequences of a conflict from which the entire international community is suffering.

France calls on Russia to withdraw its troops from Ukrainian territory, without delay, and to respect the order of the International Court of Justice of 16 March 2022. We will continue to provide political, military and humanitarian support to Ukraine, in order to help it exercise its right to self-defence.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča and Director Wosornu for highlighting the devastation that is being wrought due to Russia's war against Ukraine.

Russia's war against Ukraine rages for a third year, and Putin continues to unleash horrors onto the people of Ukraine. No number of denials and lies or amount of propaganda can erase the sheer amount of evidence and documentation of the death, destruction and atrocities

left in Russia's wake. Overnight, Russia launched what some have termed one of the worst attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion. Initial reports indicate power outages across the country due to the overnight attacks. Reports indicate that the Trypillya thermal power plant, near Kyiv, was destroyed.

On 26 March, the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine published a report, with new findings regarding the systematic torture of Ukrainian prisoners of war in Russian captivity and an increase in credible allegations of executions. It is worth recalling that between December 2023 and February 2024, the Mission recorded credible allegations of at least 32 executions of Ukrainian prisoners of war, in 12 separate incidents. The true number may well be much higher. Nearly all survivors interviewed described unimaginable and unrelenting torture during their captivity — repeated beatings, electric shocks, threats of execution, prolonged stress positions, mock executions. More than 50 per cent recounted being subjected to sexual violence, as well as deprivation of adequate food, water and medical attention. And while Russia will trot out flimsy fabrications to justify attacking civilian infrastructure or deny the truth, the report also found that Russia's intensification of attacks against Ukraine in late December and January contributed to a spike in civilian casualties in areas far from the front line. It is impossible to ignore that the Mission verified a dozen medical facilities and close to 30 educational facilities destroyed or damaged by Russia's reckless attacks against Ukraine in March alone.

I am sure we are all also familiar with the 15 March report from the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, which documented similar allegations, noting that Russia's disregard for its international law obligations had led to mounting civilian suffering. New evidence strengthened the Commission's previous findings of widespread and systematic torture against civilians by Russian authorities in Ukraine.

It is time to recognize that without holding Russia to account for its actions, there will not be peace. We are witnessing not only a war of aggression and conquest, but a callous and well-documented assault on international law and the tenets of common humanity. Russia has intensified its attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure since 22 March, targeting its power-generation facilities, in addition to its electricity grid. Those attacks escalate the risk of humanitarian crisis in cities like Kharkiv.

While the Kremlin attacks energy and agricultural infrastructure in an attempt to destroy grain and food products and plunge the country into darkness, Ukraine remains resilient. Ukraine continues its efforts to feed the world's most vulnerable through programmes like Grain from Ukraine, through which Ukrainian grain has been delivered via the World Food Programme to places such as Ethiopia, Somalia, Yemen, Nigeria, the Sudan and Kenya. Ukrainian grain is also destined for Gaza.

While Ukraine seeks a just and lasting resolution to the war, while also supporting the international community, it faces a Kremlin that consistently chooses war and escalation. Russia brazenly procures ballistic missiles and other munitions from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, in violation of Security Council resolutions. Fearing the mounting body of evidence against Russia, the Kremlin chose to obstruct the work of the Council by utilizing its veto. By vetoing the draft resolution to extend the mandate of the Panel of Experts (see S/PV.9591) responsible for monitoring North Korea's and, in turn, Russia's violations of United Nations sanctions, Russia showed that it does not care about international peace and security. It cares only about itself and reducing the number of independent reports showcasing Putin's destructive policies and action.

The path forward is clear: Russia must cease its aggression and immediately and fully withdraw from all territory within Ukraine's internationally recognized borders.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): I would like to join others in thanking the representatives of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for their informative briefings.

Again the Council meets following a brutal campaign of air strikes by Russia, a permanent member of the Council, against Ukraine. Since 20 March those attacks have intensified, with more than 1,000 missiles, drones and guided aerial bombs dropped in a single week. Dozens of civilians, including children, have been injured or killed in the past few days alone. As a result of Russia's continued aggression, approximately 40 per cent of Ukraine's population will need humanitarian assistance this year. I would like to make three points.

First, Russia is deliberately targeting energy infrastructure. Just this morning, Russia's strikes destroyed the Trypillya power plant, one of Ukraine's

largest providers of electricity and heat to civilians. Russia's attacks are leaving millions of people without power and water, cutting electricity to hospitals, threatening the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant and delaying life-saving humanitarian operations. We urge Russia to immediately cease its targeting of civilian infrastructure and comply with its obligations under international humanitarian law.

Secondly, since Russia first invaded the international community has come together in support of the people of Ukraine. The United Kingdom has committed more than £350 million in humanitarian aid since February 2022 to support the valiant efforts of the United Nations and international and local non-governmental organizations to help the people who are in the direst humanitarian need. However, millions of them are currently living on the front lines and in Ukrainian territory illegally controlled by Russia, where Russia continues to deny humanitarian aid access. We urge Russia to heed the repeated calls of Council members to allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access so that the aid can reach those who need it most.

Thirdly, Russia's aggression in Ukraine is enabled by repression at home. The Russian authorities are curtailing freedoms of association, assembly and expression in Russia. They also continue to disregard the declining health of the British national Vladimir Kara-Murza, held in a Russian prison. Today the second anniversary of Vladimir's arrest, we urge the Russian authorities to release him immediately on humanitarian grounds.

Ukraine is facing a protracted humanitarian emergency. There is an easy solution to the suffering. Russia can end the war, withdraw from Ukrainian territory and respect its commitments under international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Mr. Miroslav Jenča and Director Ms. Edem Wosornu for their briefings.

The fighting in Ukraine is still ongoing and the humanitarian situation is growing dire. The risks of a spillover continue to emerge. China believes that the conflict is becoming complicated and protracted, which is a cause for concern. A continuation of the fighting will only aggravate the suffering of innocent civilians in Ukraine and bring more unforeseen risks and challenges to the region and the world. There can be no winners in conflicts and wars. Dialogue and

negotiation represent the only viable way out of the Ukraine crisis. China once again calls on the parties concerned to engage in direct dialogue and negotiation, take first steps towards a political settlement and jointly promote the de-escalation of the situation in order to achieve a ceasefire as soon as possible. The international community should intensify its efforts and work actively to create the necessary conditions for that.

China has always taken an objective and impartial position on the Ukraine issue and advocated talks for peace. It has always maintained that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries should be respected and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations should be observed. All countries' legitimate security concerns should be taken seriously and all efforts conducive to a peaceful settlement of the crisis supported. China will continue to maintain communication with all parties and play a constructive role in promoting a political settlement of the Ukraine crisis.

Mr. Žbogar (Slovenia): I too would like to thank the briefers for their contribution and insights, and I also want to welcome the participation of the representative of Ukraine in today's meeting. I would like to make a couple of points on behalf of my delegation.

First, regarding Russia's persistent bombing of Ukrainian cities, not a day passes without strikes by Russian armed forces that kill and maim citizens and reduce civilian infrastructure to rubble. This year alone more than 7,000 drone and missile attacks have been recorded across Ukraine. As Ms. Wosornu confirmed this morning, in many cases such attacks are followed by a second strike, killing first responders after they have arrived at a site to save civilian lives. That approach to war must end. Slovenia condemns such double-tap tactics in the strongest possible terms. It is a worrisome pattern that we have seen in Gaza and now in Ukraine as well.

Secondly, regarding Russia's unrelenting attacks on critical civilian energy infrastructure, in the past month we have witnessed a string of Russian missile strikes that have caused blackouts throughout Ukraine. In the 22 March attack alone, Russia unleashed 150 drones and missiles, the most substantial assault on Ukraine's energy infrastructure since the start of the war. The March attacks were localized and aimed at doing permanent and irreparable damage to Ukraine's

power plants. As we have heard from Mr. Jenča, one of the strikes hit the Dnipro hydroelectric power plant dam, which is the largest in the country after the destruction of the Kakhovka dam in June of last year. That once again put us millimetres away from another environmental catastrophe orchestrated by Russia in this unnecessary war. And sadly, the aggressor has continued this tactic systematically. Just last night Russia directed more than 80 missiles and drones at power plants and energy infrastructure across Ukraine. Several hundred thousand people were left without electricity and a hospital was hit. Civilians, including two children, were killed. Those attacks on civilian objects and critical infrastructure are a blatant violation of international humanitarian law, which Russia is trampling on each and every day. Next week we will be marking the International Day for Monuments and Sites, so I also want to point to Russia's systematic targeting and destruction of Ukrainian cultural and religious heritage sites. They too are protected by international law.

While Russia is very concerned — and rightly — about the destruction of Gaza and the suffering of Palestinians there, it is demonstrating different standards when it is destroying civilian infrastructure and killing civilians in Ukraine itself. We call on Russia to cease subverting every attempt to achieve peace in Ukraine. While it claims it is ready to discuss peace, its attacks prove the exact opposite. The violations of international law need to stop. The suffering of civilians needs to stop. And the aggression needs to stop.

Mr. Sangjin Kim (Republic of Korea): I thank you, Mr. President, and I also thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča and Director Wosornu for their briefings. I welcome the participation of the delegations of Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania, the European Union and Denmark in today's meeting.

It is truly deplorable that Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine is creating indescribable human suffering, despite the international community's repeated call to end it. Assistant Secretary-General Jenča and Director Wosornu updated us on the situation on the ground in terms of the number of casualties. But while sheer numbers cannot fully describe the brutality of this unjustifiable war, I want to again call attention to alarming developments on the ground so that we can understand how brutal the war is. This month marks the second anniversary since the mass killing of civilians in the town of Bucha in Ukraine was revealed,

but tragically, the war's cruelty did not stop there. According to a United Nations report released this week there was a sharp increase in civilian casualties in Ukraine in March, with 604 killed or injured, including 57 children, as Russia's attacks on Ukraine intensified. That is now added to the already staggering number of casualties — more than 10,000 civilians killed, including nearly 600 children — over the past two years. The World Health Organization also estimates that a total of 9.6 million people in Ukraine are now at risk of living with a mental health condition owing to war-related traumatic experiences. Tens of millions of people have had to take refuge in foreign countries or have been internally displaced, numbers that are unprecedented in Europe since the Second World War and which are ushering in long-lasting negative socioeconomic effects in the region.

My delegation also wants to shine a light on the attacks on humanitarian workers and first responders, which are intensifying the cruelty of the war. It is reported that 50 aid workers from various countries were killed or injured in Ukraine last year alone, and two French aid workers were just killed in February while they were providing humanitarian services. Moreover, on 4 April, Russian strikes claimed the lives of three rescuers who were responding in the aftermath of earlier strikes. And on 5 April, a Russian missile attack destroyed the Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) building in Donetsk, injuring five people, including MSF staff, and resulting in a suspension of medical humanitarian relief work in the region. My delegation deeply deplores the fact that one of the most basic principles in international humanitarian law — the protection of humanitarian workers, let alone civilians — is not being upheld.

It bears repeating that all of those tragic consequences are the result of Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine. It is deeply concerning that Russia keeps undermining international law and the Charter of the United Nations by continuing its brutal war on Ukraine, in clear violation of Ukraine's sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity. And it is deeply regrettable that Russia's relentless attacks on the Ukrainian people are bolstered by its illegal military cooperation with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The supply of North Korean ammunitions and ballistic missiles to the Russian Federation constitutes a clear violation of multiple Security Council resolutions. It is indeed dismayed that Russia even vetoed the draft resolution on renewing the mandate of the Panel of

Experts monitoring United Nations sanctions against North Korea (S/2024/255), because it did not want the Panel to investigate the reports of those arms deals.

We reject Russia's persistent attempts to normalize its illegal invasion as a fait accompli. We also want to remind the Council that human history has been on the side of justice. In that regard, it is our view that all the perpetrators of war crimes in Ukraine, including killing, torture, rape and other sexual violence, must be held accountable if we are to prevent future atrocities. All violations in this war will be rectified one way or another, as the international community has been thoroughly recording those crimes since the war began. My delegation reiterates its call on Russia to withdraw its military forces from the territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders, as that is the only way to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine in line with the Charter of the United Nations. The Republic of Korea will continue to stand in solidarity with the Ukrainian people until they achieve just and lasting peace in their lands. We will also remain on the side of justice, the rule of law and the Charter.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett (Guyana): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča and the Director of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Ms. Wosornu, for the updates they provided, and I welcome the participation of the representatives of Ukraine, Lithuania, Denmark, Poland and the European Union in today's meeting.

Guyana continues to register its grave concern about the immeasurable human suffering in Ukraine that has resulted from this ongoing war — a war that should never have been waged in the first place and that has shattered the lives of millions. The rapid needs assessment report published by the World Bank, the United Nations, the European Commission and the Ukrainian Government estimates that it will take at least 10 years to rebuild Ukraine, at a cost of \$486 billion. But while that is the amount in dollars, the reality is that the fighting and hostilities have destroyed millions of lives, many of which may never be fully rebuilt and to which a cost cannot be attached.

More than 10,000 civilians have died and more than 20,000 have sustained injuries since the start of the war. More than 6 million Ukrainians have been forced to live as refugees across Europe, while 3.6 million are internally displaced. As alarming as those figures are,

they fail to capture the full impact of the war. Equally devastating is the fact that many of those attacks are being committed indiscriminately in populated areas, in clear violation of international humanitarian law. They are damaging schools, medical facilities, houses and other critical civilian infrastructure, with far-reaching consequences. Under international humanitarian law, that critical infrastructure is considered to consist of civilian objects and is meant to be protected from attacks during an armed conflict. Yet despite the principles of international law, it continues to be targeted.

The latest report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine paints a very grim picture of the severe impact of the war, documenting many instances of violations. They include cases of torture, rape and other sexual violence, as well as transfers of children. Guyana calls for an immediate end to those illegal actions and demands that the parties respect humanitarian principles and adhere to international humanitarian law and international human rights law, including by ending and preventing all grave violations against children and ensuring their safe return to their families.

We maintain that prolonging the war poses increasingly grave risks and consequences for all concerned and for international peace and security. We call for an immediate end to the hostilities and the complete withdrawal of Russian military forces from the internationally recognized territory of Ukraine. We also call for the parties to cease all human rights violations and to take all possible measures to prevent attacks on children and sexual and gender-based violence against civilians and prisoners of war. We further call for unhindered access to be granted to humanitarian workers in the occupied territories and urge the international community to scale up humanitarian support to Ukraine.

In conclusion, we once again encourage the parties to commit to a serious political and diplomatic process aimed at ending the conflict, and we urge the international community to continue to engage to that end. We welcome the peace initiatives announced by some Member States and pledge our full support.

Mrs. Shino (Japan): I thank Mr. Jenča and Ms. Wosornu for their valuable briefings.

For more than two years we have been witnessing too many blatant violations by Russia of the Charter of the United Nations, resulting in the suffering of countless innocent civilians. Waves of attacks in the unprovoked

war of aggression against Ukraine have not only killed and injured innocent people but have worsened the entire humanitarian situation on the ground. Last weekend another series of missile strikes in the Kharkiv region reportedly killed civilians. In the repeated attacks of that kind that we have seen since the beginning of this year, not only are people being killed or injured but hundreds of thousands are also suffering from disruptions to critical electricity, water and gas infrastructure.

Japan is deeply distressed by Russia's continued disregard for international law, including international humanitarian law. Attacks on civilians and critical infrastructure are prohibited by international humanitarian law. Japan will not tolerate impunity for those who are responsible for such attacks, and the perpetrators of violations of international humanitarian law and all such heinous acts must be identified and held accountable. Japan is deeply concerned about the fact that there have been constant attacks on Ukrainian hospitals and schools in particular, as we heard from the briefers. In 2023 the United Nations recorded more than 300 attacks on hospitals and schools in Ukraine, one of the highest on record worldwide. Between January and March of this year, nearly one fourth of attacks on health-care facilities around the world happened in Ukraine. In 2024 alone, in the space of just three months or so, more than 90 schools in Ukraine have already been damaged or completely destroyed. The United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator in Ukraine, Ms. Denise Brown, called on the international community not to accept the normalization of the war. We loudly echo her call. We must not grow used to this horrific situation.

As the war continues, the World Health Organization is warning that nearly 10 million people are currently at risk of suffering from mental disorders, and children are particularly vulnerable, as we heard from Ms. Wosornu this morning. In that vein, among the various initiatives Japan has been taking this year, we have announced a \$14.6 million contribution to UNESCO for its activities in Ukraine, including training educators to provide mental health and psychosocial support to children and students who are under psychological stress.

The people of Ukraine do not deserve to keep living in fear. We continue to urge Russia to stop its aggression and to immediately and unconditionally withdraw from the internationally recognized territory of Ukraine. Japan will continue to stand with the Ukrainian people.

Mr. Koudri (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Miroslav Jenča, of the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations, and Ms. Edem Wosornu, of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, for their briefings.

Algeria reiterates its concern about the continuing deterioration of the humanitarian situation that has resulted from the Ukrainian crisis, given the growing numbers of civilians killed, the continued suffering of the population, including millions of refugees and internally displaced persons, and the destruction of vital civilian infrastructure. It is important and urgent that we work together closely and intensify our collective diplomatic efforts to end the crisis and address human suffering without discrimination. It is also crucial that all parties prioritize the protection of civilians and abide strictly by their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

It is equally important and imperative to reduce tensions, avoid hostilities and refrain from any action that might lead to confrontation between the parties, in order to create conditions conducive to dialogue and comprehensive and constructive negotiations, in line with the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes. We also want to once again warn the Council that exacerbating the current polarization will only contribute to prolonging the crisis and increasing escalation, with dire repercussions for international peace and security.

In conclusion, Algeria reiterates its call for intensified international diplomatic efforts aimed at finding a solution to this crisis, in order to achieve a just and lasting peace based on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the legitimate security concerns of all the parties.

Mr. George (Sierra Leone): I am grateful to you, Madam President, for convening this briefing requested by Ecuador and France. Let me also thank Mr. Miroslav Jenča, Assistant Secretary-General for Europe, Central Asia and the Americas, and Ms. Edem Wosornu, Director of Operations and Advocacy for the Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), for their important briefings. I acknowledge the presence and participation here today of the representatives of Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania, the European Union and Denmark.

Sierra Leone is deeply concerned about the dire humanitarian situation in Ukraine, which continues to deteriorate amid the ongoing conflict. Two

years of this devastating conflict — among other things, characterized by intense fighting and heavy bombardment across Ukraine and attacks in parts of the Russian Federation — have resulted in large numbers of civilian deaths, widespread damage and the destruction of homes, schools, hospitals and vital civilian infrastructure, including essential service infrastructure such as power plants.

Regrettably, the reports of the use of double-strike tactics — especially when rescue operations are under way after an initial attack, leading to fatalities for civilians, including first responders — are also deeply concerning. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the civilian casualties in Ukraine exceed 30,000, with more than 10,000 killed and more than 19,000 injured since the start of the conflict.

The attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure remain seriously distressing. They have reportedly led to the fastest-growing and largest displacement crisis in Europe and have precipitated a regional refugee response of commensurate scale. The recent air strikes and missile strikes in Kyiv, Odesa and Kharkiv have destroyed energy infrastructure, disrupted electricity supplies and forced evacuations, exacerbating the already challenging circumstances facing the people affected. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees also reports that as of March, approximately 10 million people had been forcibly displaced by the war, including 3.7 million internally displaced and 6.4 million refugees who fled abroad. OCHA has reported that there are now more than 17 million people in dire need of humanitarian assistance, including the 10 million forcibly displaced and 3.3 million living in front-line communities, grappling with severe resource shortages and under constant bombardment. As hostilities along the front line continue to hamper humanitarian organizations' ability to deliver aid and services to people impacted by the conflict, Sierra Leone urges the parties to the conflict to comply with their obligations to protect civilians and allow unhindered access of humanitarian personnel and aid to reach people in dire need.

Children have not been spared from the brunt and severity of the conflict. Allegations of gross violations of the protection measures for children during armed conflict have been reported. Such reported violations have the potential to impact in the long term the mental health and well-being of children.

With over 1,500 attacks on and the destruction of health-care facilities verified by the World Health Organization since February 2022, nearly half of health centres have been rendered non-functional in some parts of the east and south of Ukraine. In addition, millions of children have been exposed to increased trauma and mental health issues.

Furthermore, the attacks on schools have had a significant impact on education, with almost half of all educational institutions damaged or destroyed in the Kharkiv and Kherson regions and a staggering 80 per cent in Donetsk, as reported. Across the country, it is reported that only one third of children are attending classes entirely in-person, while one third are learning through a mix of in-person and online approaches and another one third are fully learning online. Those varied forms of learning have created a tiered system with some students accessing a more robust education than others. That has serious implications for the educational future of Ukraine.

Additionally, the International Organization for Migration has verified the destruction of residential buildings, which has left nearly 720,000 people in the worst-affected parts of Ukraine with no access to adequate and safe housing. In Kherson, for example, nearly 30 per cent of people live in damaged buildings.

Sierra Leone reiterates that all attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure are prohibited under international law. We call on all sides to ensure compliance with applicable international law, including international humanitarian law.

In the light of the scale and complexity of the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, Sierra Leone further calls upon the international community to step up its financial assistance and resources to address the pressing needs of internally displaced persons and refugees, enhance living conditions and ensure access to essential services.

We commend the efforts of humanitarian aid agencies for dramatically expanding the humanitarian operations over the past two years to respond to the growing and deteriorating needs that followed the escalation of the conflict. We applaud the efforts especially of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and its partners to provide immediate support, including psychosocial assistance and emergency shelter, to those in need.

In February, in a bid to support Ukraine's recovery efforts, an updated joint Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment, undertaken jointly by the World Bank, the Government of Ukraine, the European Commission and the United Nations and supported by other partners, was released. The report revealed that the reconstruction and recovery in Ukraine would cost \$486 billion over the next decade. That figure is up from \$411 billion estimated a year ago. The targets set for 2024, encompassing various forms of assistance, protection services and socioeconomic inclusion, underscore the magnitude of the crisis.

As we navigate the complexities of the conflict in Ukraine and its grave humanitarian consequences, we call on all involved parties to actively pursue a peaceful resolution of the conflict. We continue to call for meaningful steps to be taken towards the immediate cessation of the hostilities and for the parties to the conflict to engage constructively in good faith with a view to finding a political and diplomatic solution, as envisaged in Article 33 of the Charter of the United Nations.

Let me conclude by reiterating our call for full respect for the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

Mr. Hauri (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Miroslav Jenča and Director of Operations Edem Wosornu for their briefings.

"The war in Ukraine should not be normalized." That was the call from Denise Brown, United Nations Resident Coordinator in Ukraine, after fresh attacks in the city of Kharkiv forced children to attend school in underground bunkers. Going to school underground is anything but normal. Putting oneself in danger while getting groceries, seeing one's house destroyed by missiles and fearing one might set off a mine during the harvest is anything but normal. And yet, for more than two years, that has been the reality for people living in Ukraine.

The war has been raging for 25 months, and Switzerland reiterates that Russia must put an end to its military aggression against Ukraine. Some of the consequences for the civilian population are invisible — we have just heard about them — such as war trauma and damage to the social fabric, but visible realities speak for themselves.

The humanitarian situation has further deteriorated since the beginning of the year. Switzerland condemns the increase in air strikes and the waves of massive attacks in recent weeks. They continue to hit populated areas, killing and wounding hundreds of civilians, including children, and damaging homes, health facilities, schools and other civilian infrastructure. We must not become accustomed to daily reports of new attacks and increasing numbers of civilian casualties. The attacks must stop immediately.

Hundreds of thousands of people have been deprived of electricity, water and gas owing to attacks on essential infrastructure. With regard to last week's International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action, I would like to emphasize the great importance Switzerland attaches to humanitarian demining in Ukraine. The vast majority of mine victims are civilians. The deadly legacy of mines and explosive remnants of war will remain dangerous for years, even decades, affecting future generations as well, including children who have not even been born yet.

With more than 14.6 million people in need in Ukraine, the importance of humanitarian initiatives, often led by women, cannot be overstated. However, humanitarian actors continue to face threats to their safety and lives, as demonstrated once again by last weekend's incidents, when first responders suffered secondary strikes and a Médecins Sans Frontières office was destroyed. We reiterate that humanitarian actors and medical personnel must not be attacked, and their mission must be respected and protected.

Even war has rules. What we are witnessing in Ukraine are violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law. We reiterate our call to all parties to comply strictly with their obligations, in particular by taking concrete measures to spare and protect the civilian population and infrastructure. That includes respect for the fundamental principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution in the conduct of hostilities.

Without a return to respect for international law, there can be no humankind and therefore no path towards normalcy. Switzerland remains determined to do everything in its power to contribute to a just and lasting peace in Ukraine, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. It is in that spirit that Switzerland will host the first high-level summit on peace for Ukraine in June.

Mr. Afonso (Mozambique): I thank Malta's presidency for convening this important briefing on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine. I also express my gratitude to Mr. Miroslav Jenča, Assistant Secretary-General, and Ms. Edem Wosornu, Director of Operations and Advocacy at the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, for their invaluable insights. I also acknowledge the presence of the representatives of Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania and Denmark.

We remain deeply concerned about the ongoing escalation of the conflict in Ukraine, which poses a serious threat to regional and international peace and security. Our concern is further heightened by the lack of prospects for a mutually acceptable solution to this prolonged conflict, despite repeated and consistent calls from the international community for a cessation of hostilities and a return to the negotiating table. As the conflict in Ukraine enters its third year, the humanitarian consequences have become dire and unacceptable. Civilians tragically bear the brunt of this prolonged conflict, facing loss of life, injuries and the destruction of critical infrastructure. The conflict's impact affects livelihoods, food security and stability in the region and require our urgent attention and a comprehensive response.

The longer the conflict persists, the more severe the humanitarian crisis becomes, with no signs of abatement. In that regard, we would like to highlight four important points.

First, the protection of civilians is of paramount importance. We therefore call on all parties to ensure their safety and fulfil their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

Secondly, the principles of distinction, precaution and proportionality must be scrupulously adhered to by all parties.

Thirdly, all parties must permit and facilitate full, safe, rapid and unimpeded access for humanitarian personnel and relief to civilians in need.

Lastly, ending this conflict is the sole way to address the tragic humanitarian consequences. We urge the conflicting parties to recommit to dialogue and engage in meaningful and constructive negotiations to achieve lasting peace.

This conflict challenges the fundamental principles of peaceful coexistence, good neighbourliness and collective security. Given the high stakes, we call on

both parties to prioritize the well-being of the civilian population and to work towards meaningful and constructive negotiations to achieve lasting peace.

In conclusion, Mozambique has consistently maintained its principled position on this grave matter in the Chamber. We fully adhere to this principle, which is anchored in the Charter of the United Nations and is borne out by our own experience of a long quest for peace and security.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We understand perfectly well that the only reason for convening today's Council meeting is the desire of the Kyiv regime's Western sponsors to keep the Ukrainian issue afloat in the Security Council, accompanied by the requisite optics. That requires a condemnation of the strikes carried out by the Russian Aerospace Forces against facilities related to the Zelenskyy regime's military capabilities, as well as an exaggerated portrayal of their consequences for the civilian population. That is entirely unconvincing, especially against the backdrop of Israel's ongoing slaughter in the Gaza Strip.

As usual, a number of European Union members have signed up to speak at this meeting. It is obvious that we will hear nothing new from them. But we look forward to their active participation in tomorrow's meeting, which is being convened at our request.

As for the massive precision strikes against Ukrainian fuel and energy facilities, they are a response to attempts by the Kyiv regime to damage Russian oil and gas and energy infrastructure. The strike did achieve its goal, having disrupted the work of Ukrainian military industry enterprises and the transfer of reserves to combat areas, as well as fuel supplies to the Ukrainian armed forces. As in all previous cases, the Russian military did not pose a threat to the civilian population, despite assertions to the contrary by the Zelenskyy regime and its Western sponsors. What is getting in the way of Western propaganda-mongers is the views of ordinary Ukrainians on social media urging fellow Ukrainians not to fear Russian precision strikes, but rather Ukrainian air defence systems deployed in residential areas, in violation of international humanitarian law norms. Since Ukraine, as it now recognizes, has fewer air defence systems, there have also been fewer incidents due to their use, which is being confirmed by ordinary citizens.

Incidentally, the Ukrainian military have begun to openly lament that local residents in Kharkiv, Odesa, Mikolayiv, Dnipropetrovsk and other cities and regions of Ukraine have begun sharing with Russian military the coordinates of the Armed Forces of Ukraine's arms depots and whereabouts of military reserves. That demonstrates clearly how civilians really see the situation. It is becoming increasingly clear for ordinary Ukrainians who poses a real, rather than alleged, threat to their lives. That is understandable, because they are concerned about things that our Western colleagues did not mention today.

For example, our Western colleagues did not say a word about violations of the rights of Ukrainian men of conscription age during their forced mobilization. That is a real thorn in the side of Ukrainian families today. Online we see increasing evidence that military commissions are treating Ukrainian conscripts more harshly, seizing them in the streets in violation of all norms and laws as if they were wanted criminals and sending them straight to the front, with little training, where the only hope for survival is surrendering to the Russian troops. However, that is not easy to do because of nationalist anti-retreat forces, which try to avoid direct combat with the Russian troops, preferring to shoot their compatriots in the back. Yet those with resources and connections, like members of Parliament and public officials, are dodging the draft and sending their relatives of conscription age abroad. In the Vinnytsia region, a ban was actually imposed on the men of conscription age entering into areas bordering Moldova in order to prevent them from fleeing the country.

As we see from a video report published recently by the German Deutsche Welle, in many Ukrainian villages there is no one left to draft. In the village of Luzanovka, Cherkasy region, with a population of 400 people, about 50 men have been conscripted. The head of the local village council lamented that there is no one left in the village to dig graves. That is happening all across Ukraine, against the backdrop of the overwhelming majority of Ukrainians openly being unwilling to fight to promote Western geopolitical interests.

Recently, the President of the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology acknowledged that only 8 per cent of polled men are ready to voluntarily join the Armed Forces of Ukraine. The Kyiv regime rightly sees that as a deadly threat to its power, and it is therefore trying to tighten the screws any way it can. At the start of the

month, conscription age for Ukrainians was lowered from 27 down to 25 and, judging by the Ukrainian progress on the front lines, that could be furthered lowered to 17 or 18 years of age.

We know that, in his final throes, Hitler relied on the Hitlerjugend to defend Berlin. The Zelenskyy regime, also in its death throes, is ready to do the same, sacrificing not only Ukrainian men, but women too in the name of foreign interests. The bill on mobilization, now being prepared for adoption, once and for all turns Ukrainians into serfs, whose lives will be ruled by Zelenskyy and his posse.

Yet our Western colleagues prefer to keep silent about this, just as they were silent for many years about preparing Ukraine for a war with Russia, under the cover of the Minsk agreements, and how, in April 2022, they did not allow Ukraine to make peace with Russia. We undoubtedly will not hear anything today about the human rights situation in Ukraine, which is precipitously deteriorating. The head of the Kyiv regime has usurped power, cancelled elections and thrown anyone who disagrees with him in prison, yet none of his Western sponsors dares to criticize him. All the while, we see increasingly rabid neo-Nazi propaganda being promoted in Ukraine, accompanied by the glorification of Ukrainian Nazi associates, and nationalist and racist sentiments are being cultivated among large swathes of the population.

The persecution of the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church on a large scale has not diminished. The Kyiv regime takes pains to create an image of the Church and its ministers as “collaborators with the enemy” and in every way encourages the illegal seizure of churches. Everything Russian, including language, culture, education and media, is automatically subjected to “cancellation”. Let me give just one example. Last week, the odious Institute of National Memory declared the writer Mikhail Bulgakov, who was born in Kyiv, lived in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and died in 1940, to be a “raging Ukrainophobe” and equated the use of his name with “Russian imperialist propaganda”. In particular, the world-famous writer is accused of being “of all Russian writers of that time the closest to the current ideologues of Putinism and the Kremlin’s justification of ethnocide in Ukraine”. That is not something that a mentally normal person would ever write. A sane person would not fight art, destroy books or burn them in city squares. Only the Nazis in the 1930s and 1940s did that. And their ideological

heirs are doing exactly the same thing in Ukraine today, glorifying Bandera, Shukhevych and all those who helped the Germans to kill Jews, Poles, Russians, Roma and the very same Ukrainians during the war. Today’s Germans and other Westerners, instead of expressing condemnation, pretend to be deaf and mute and continue to supply the leader of the Kyiv clique with weapons, helping him to kill civilians. However, we will talk about that in detail at a separate meeting that we have requested for tomorrow.

Our Western colleagues have become so accustomed to automatically turning a blind eye to any of the crimes and ugly deeds of the Kyiv regime that they managed to ignore even the direct shelling and drone attacks on the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant, which were resumed a few days ago and risk causing a nuclear catastrophe in the very heart of Europe. We will raise that topic separately at the special meeting on 15 April. We hope that the International Atomic Energy Agency, whose staff are present at the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant and can observe Ukraine’s provocations with their own eyes, will also provide a fair assessment of those developments.

All of that is of course discouraging, but there is also good news, bringing optimism to who are tired of the Ukrainian crisis. The Russian Army is now advancing in virtually all directions, destroying the fortifications that have been in the making for many years. There is a dramatic shift in the military action that is taking place before our eyes, and neither new Western aid packages nor further so-called meat-grinder assaults and counter-attacks by the Kyiv regime will be able to change that.

The situation is extremely worrisome for the Western sponsors of the Ukrainian leader, who have already replaced their goal of “helping Kyiv to defeat Russia” with a new one: “to prevent Russia from winning”. Zelenskyy himself has also noticeably changed his rhetoric, warning his masters that Ukraine will lose without continued large-scale Western assistance. And that confirms what we have said repeatedly, which is that Ukraine today is nothing more than a private military company that is fighting to the last Ukrainian for the West, with Western weapons. All that remains for the Kyiv regime in the circumstances is to act with impotent rage in the worst terrorist traditions, purposely shelling peaceful neighbourhoods in Russian cities and committing true terrorist attacks. That is how it will go down in history, as an inhuman and misanthropic regime of terrorists and Nazis that

betrayed the interests of its people and sacrificed them for Western money and handouts for Zelenskyy and his inner circle.

In the circumstances, the attempts by the head of the Kyiv regime to promote his “formulas” and convene “summits” in support of the Kyiv regime are nothing short of baffling. Soon enough, the only topic for any international meeting on Ukraine will be the unconditional surrender of the Kyiv regime. My advice is that everyone should prepare for that in advance.

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

I would like to begin by thanking Assistant Secretary-General Jenča and Director Wosornu for their briefings.

Malta condemns in the strongest possible terms Russia’s ongoing aerial assaults on cities and critical infrastructure across Ukraine. Since the start of the aggression, Russian troops have damaged more than 120,000 civilian infrastructure facilities, including power plants, schools, hospitals, kindergartens and numerous residential buildings, in clear contravention of international humanitarian law. This month we have continued to observe Russia’s attacks on populated areas. On 5 April, the city of Kharkiv was severely hit once again, resulting in civilians killed or injured and damage to civilian infrastructure, including the electricity supply. Following another attack on Monday in Zaporizhzhya and Sumy, civilians were again targeted. That pattern of continued attacks affecting civilians and civilian infrastructure is reprehensible. It goes against the very principles of international law. Civilians, aid workers and first responders helping war-affected civilians must be protected at all times and respected without exception.

The international community cannot turn a blind eye to the tragedy that continues to unfold before it. Immense human suffering, loss and grief have become everyday occurrences in Ukraine. Countless families have been separated. More than 10,500 civilians have been killed and more than 20,000 injured. Those numbers do not even include the tens of thousands of Ukrainians who have died bravely defending their country. The tragedy in Ukraine has gone on for far too long and must not be normalized. Today it is estimated that 14.6 million people remain in need of humanitarian assistance in Ukraine. Unhindered humanitarian access remains a priority and all arbitrary impediments to the

entry of aid must be immediately removed. Furthermore, we are shocked by the missile attack on the Médecins Sans Frontières office in the Donetsk region on 5 April. It is not only a violation of international humanitarian law but jeopardizes humanitarian operations and the provision of life-saving assistance when it is needed most. Investigations and accountability for all attacks on medical and humanitarian staff in the conflict must be forthcoming, and the perpetrators must be held accountable.

The consequences of the Russian aggression against Ukraine have been felt far beyond Europe. The war has affected food security and energy prices. We must not forget that Russia unilaterally decided to suspend the Black Sea Grain Initiative. After that, it launched more attacks on Odesa’s ports, infrastructure and grain storage, depriving some of the world’s most food-insecure countries of Ukrainian grain.

The latest report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on the human rights situation in Ukraine refers to large-scale atrocities reportedly committed by Russian forces, including torture, sexual and gender-based violence, forced deportations of children and summary executions. Additionally, OHCHR reports that the Russian authorities have carried out deliberate efforts to suppress expressions of Ukrainian cultural identity. That is unacceptable, and Malta reiterates its firm commitment to ensuring full accountability for that aggression and for all other serious crimes committed, as well as for the massive damage that Russia’s war has caused. We fully support victims’ rights to justice and reparations, and the important work undertaken by the Register of Damage Caused by the Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, as an important first step.

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

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

Mr. Kyslytsa (Ukraine): I thank you, Madam President, as well as the members of the Security Council, Assistant Secretary-General Jenča and Director

Wosornu. I also recognize some junior Russian staff in the permanent seat of the Soviet Union, because apparently the big boys have already run away.

Their country has finally abandoned its attempts to invent plausible explanations for its aggression. Instead it is now openly declaring the true goals of the war, which are the complete annihilation of the Ukrainian state, the Ukrainian people and Ukrainian identity.

Indeed, it was difficult even for Russian propaganda to explain how the destruction of Ukrainian cities and the mass murder of Ukrainians could be considered the “liberation of a brotherly nation”. It was difficult to repeat the false mantra about bombing Donbas for eight years as a pretext for war against the backdrop of the Russian army persistently wiping out more and more Donbas cities and villages for over two years. Furthermore, it was extremely difficult to pretend that Russia fights against neo-Nazism while it replicated all the behavioural patterns typical of the Nazi Reich.

Moscow now seems to be aligning its words with its deeds. Including in today’s meeting, they are openly calling for the killing of all Ukrainians and the elimination of the Ukrainian State, as we can see from recent policy documents, statements from Russian officials and top propagandists. For instance, Putin’s close accomplice, former President Medvedev, called on his Telegram followers “to chop up Bandera pigs”, meaning all Ukrainians. As we know, Medvedev’s Nazi predecessors labelled Ukrainians and other Slavic peoples as *Untermenschen*. Actually, it seems that even the Shazam smartphone application may have trouble identifying to whom one or another quote belongs — Nazi criminals or their Kremlin followers.

Nazi propagandist Goebbels used to say,

“We will strike until destruction. The Führer intends to wipe cities like Moscow or Saint Petersburg off the face of the earth. And it is indeed necessary”.

Now, what do members make of this quotation?

“Kharkiv must be wiped off the face of the Earth, just so that there are no illusions. But we need to start with Kyiv. We just need to destroy it all. Completely wipe it off, so that nothing remains, just radioactive dust”.

That is from Russian propagandist Solovyov, who echoed Goebbels on Russian State television.

To give another quotation, Goebbels used to say “we know that we are dealing in the East with an infernal political Satanism”. And his echo today said,

“the special military operation is a Holy War, in which Russia and its people ... protect the world from ... the victory of the West, which has succumbed to Satanism”.

That is a quotation from the so-called Order of the XXV World Russian People’s Council, “The Present and Future of the Russian World”. It is baffling that that structure, led by the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, has special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. What a disgrace for the United Nations to have such a consultant.

In general, it often seems that Russian officials and propagandists use Goebbels’ diary as their textbook. The latter, for example, wrote in February 1943 that

“the National Socialist Government is ready to use every means, and we do not care if anyone objects”.

There is also Putin’s Minister Lavrov, who, in January, responded in the same way to a question about how an overwhelming majority of Member States condemned Russia’s invasion as a violation of the Charter of the United Nations, saying that “it is not important for us who was voting what way” in the General Assembly.

Implementing its annihilation strategy, Russia has fired nearly 1,000 missiles, about 2,800 Shahed drones and almost 7,000 guided aerial bombs on Ukrainian cities and villages since the beginning of the year. The total explosive power of combined air strikes on Ukraine for this period exceeds 9 kilotons. Only 3 per cent of Russian missiles, drones and guided bombs hit military targets, while 97 per cent hit civilian infrastructure. As we heard today, Russia deliberately targets critical energy infrastructure, particularly power generation. Following the March attack, 80 per cent of thermal power generation was destroyed. Hydropower plants also sustained considerable damage. In particular, Russia targeted the Dniester hydropower plant and the Kaniv hydropower plant, indicating its intention to replicate the catastrophe they caused in Kakhovka in June 2023. It should be the common task of the international community, not only Ukraine, to ensure that such large-scale environmental disasters no longer occur in Europe.

Kharkiv, the second-largest city in Ukraine before the war, has become a particular target for the Russian forces. Russian State-affiliated expert, one Aleksandr Sytin, who is the Head of the so-called Centre for Political Studies of Northern and Eastern European Countries, openly admitted on a Russian federal television channel that

“the capture or destruction of Kharkiv will have a painful, demoralizing effect on Ukrainian society. But I believe that the will of this people needs to be broken over the knee”.

That is why Russia shells Kharkiv’s civilian infrastructure on an almost daily basis with rockets, drones and aerial guided bombs. Almost all critical energy infrastructure in the region was destroyed.

Overnight, Russia again attacked our critical infrastructure. The Trypillia thermal power plant — the main supplier of energy in the Kyiv, Cherkasy and Zhytomyr regions — was completely destroyed. It is practically impossible to add the latest updates to my statement, as Russian shelling continues even now, during this meeting of the Security Council.

To increase the scope of casualties, the Russian army resorts to the terrorist practice of “double strikes”, attacking the site of the first attack with a new wave of missiles or drones when the rescue operation is under way, and that was in fact confirmed today by the representatives of the United Nations. Among the most recent examples is the Russian attack against Kharkiv on 4 April. The first wave of drones hit multistorey residential buildings. As soon as first responders arrived on site, Russia attacked again. As a result of that attack, four people were killed, including three firefighters, who rescued people from a destroyed building. The terrorist practice of deliberate, heavy strikes against a city with a population of more than 1 million could result in thousands of civilian deaths. Overall, such tactics are employed everywhere, from the border territories in the north to Donbas and the south of Ukraine. After the destruction of Avdiivka, Russia is now levelling the next city to the ground — Chasiv Yar. Odesa, Zaporizhzhya, Kherson, Mykolayiv, Sumy, Khmelnytskyi, Lviv and other regions also remain under constant attack.

The United Nations in Ukraine has confirmed the inhumane Russian tactics towards Ukrainian civilians. As follows from its March update on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, the Human

Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine verified that at least 604 civilians were killed or injured in Ukraine last month — a 20 per cent increase as compared to February. The mission was clear in its assessment that the March increase in civilian casualties was mainly due to attacks by the Russian armed forces using missiles and loitering munitions across Ukraine and increased aerial bombardments near the front line. The increase in child casualties has been even more disastrous, as their number doubled since February. Fifty-seven Ukrainian children were killed or injured in March alone as a result — according to the United Nations mission — of the increased use of guided and unguided aerial bombs.

We remain concerned about the atrocities committed against Ukrainian prisoners of war (POWs). On 7 April, shocking new video footage appeared on Russian social media, showing Russian military personnel killing three captured unarmed Ukrainian servicemen in the Kherson region. In its latest report, covering the period from 1 December 2023 to 29 February 2024, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) documented a sharp increase in reports of executions of Ukrainian prisoners of war, reaching 32 such executions, significantly more than in any previous period. Overall, Ukrainian law enforcement agencies are investigating 27 criminal cases regarding the execution of 54 Ukrainian prisoners of war by Russians since the beginning of Russia’s large-scale invasion of Ukraine.

That relentless wave of violence against Ukrainian POWs has been substantiated by numerous credible sources, including reports verified by the United Nations. The findings of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine confirm a consistent pattern of widespread and systematic torture carried out by Russian authorities in detention facilities. Furthermore, Russia’s refusal to grant representatives of the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross access to POWs and civilian detainees only adds to the urgency of the situation. We urge the members of the Security Council to prioritize that issue and to contribute to determining the most effective strategies to address and put an end to those blatant violations of international humanitarian law.

Ukrainian law enforcement collected more than 9,000 documents on war crimes committed in Bucha and its outskirts. Some 1,800 civilians were killed. Ukraine identified 146 servicemen of the Russian

armed forces as suspects of war crimes committed in Bucha district, indicted 93 and convicted 19 Russian servicemen. Recently, we marked the second anniversary of the liberation of Bucha. That liberation put a stop to the outrageous crimes committed by the Russian forces during the occupation of the city in March 2022.

The Russian Federation continues to deny the killings of civilians in Bucha, including through the Security Council platform. It is a cynical, albeit common, behaviour of criminals denying their crimes, doing so despite the open-source evidence, satellite footage and the findings of international mechanisms, including the OHCHR, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine and the OSCE Moscow Mechanism — all of which have debunked Russian denials and confirmed that the killings took place weeks before the liberation.

Even if the Putin and Hitler regimes are not identical twins, they share the same toxic DNA. Eighty years ago, the near-decade spent on appeasement resulted in a world war. The attempts we observed from 2014 to 2022 to appease the new aggressor resulted in a full-scale war on the European continent. The lessons of history must be learned. If the Security Council had existed during the Second World War, would its members have sat at the same table with the Ribbentrops while the Nazis were destroying European cities and sending thousands of people to gas chambers? And yet, we now sit with modern reincarnations of the Ribbentrops. And tomorrow, we will again sit at a propaganda show, and we will listen to new allegations against the country that is defending itself and its people from elimination. And the Russian Government and the Russian church will continue to declare through its Government-sponsored non-governmental organization, mentioned earlier, that “the entire territory of modern-day Ukraine shall enter the zone of Russia’s exclusive influence”. We do not need such a mockery of diplomacy.

What we need is solidarity with Ukraine in exercising its inherent right to self-defence under Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations. What we really need is zero tolerance for Russian crimes and a vision of peace based on the Charter of the United Nations — the vision endorsed by the General Assembly resolution adopted on 23 February 2023 and developed within Ukraine’s peace formula (General Assembly resolution ES-11/6). The first peace summit will take place on 15 and 16 June in Switzerland, and we invite all responsible nations to participate and to contribute to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace for Ukraine and for the world.

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

Mr. Szczerski (Poland): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening today’s meeting, and I thank the briefers for their detailed inputs.

The international community needs to be reminded constantly of the atrocities of the Russian aggression against Ukraine and of how that aggression affects global stability. Just a few days ago, we marked the second anniversary of the liberation of Bucha. That once peaceful town will remain a dramatic symbol of Russian war atrocities committed since the very first day of the ongoing aggression, as we just heard. For 777 long days and nights, Russia — still a permanent member of the Security Council — has been blatantly violating international law, including humanitarian law, acting against all major United Nations principles and undermining the global rules-based order. Its full-scale war against Ukraine has led to an enormous humanitarian catastrophe and the largest refugee crisis in Europe since the Second World War.

At the same time, here at the United Nations, Russia engages in a peculiar game of deception. While mercilessly shelling Ukrainian cities and critical civilian infrastructure and using the shockingly aggressive rhetoric of the unconditional surrender of Ukraine — even today here at the Council — it hypocritically lectures others about the humanitarian conduct of war and the protection of civilians. We simply must not tolerate such trickery and duplicity. Russia’s objective is clear: to divert international public opinion from its wrongdoing in Ukraine. We deeply hope that, thanks to meetings like today’s, it will not succeed.

Poland is consistent in calling for the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and of international law to be upheld, no matter which region or conflict is at stake. The victimization of all civilians, including first responders and humanitarian workers, is tragic and regrettable. And we clearly call those out as instances of violations of international humanitarian law. But we also believe that it is imperative that all who rightly condemn such acts in one region must also demand of Russia, with the same urgency, that it stop its atrocities in Ukraine. Those looking for support in their just cause should avoid making alliances with those who disregard international law and systematically apply double standards.

In conclusion, let me reiterate our conviction that the peace-loving world must continue to support Ukraine in its self-defence against Russia, including by strengthening Kyiv's military capacities. Our message to Russia is simple: there will be no fatigue syndrome with the Ukraine war on our end. We have enough empathy to stand for the victims of every conflict in the world. Our attention will not be diverted. Our support for Kyiv is unwavering and will be provided for as long as it takes.

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

Mr. Paulauskas (Lithuania): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the three Baltic countries — Estonia, Latvia and my own country, Lithuania. We also align ourselves with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union.

I thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's Security Council briefing. I also thank the briefers — Assistant Secretary-General Miroslav Jenča and Director Edem Wosornu — for their presentations.

We meet again to discuss the humanitarian consequences of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, including Russia's continued and increasing air strikes against civilians and civilian infrastructure in Ukraine. In sharp contrast to the repeated pleas from all Security Council members in numerous briefings focused on humanitarian issues and in violation of its obligations under international humanitarian law, Russia continues to make Ukrainian civilians' lives hell. Throughout the past month Russia has used over 400 missiles, more than 600 Shahed drones and more than 3,000 guided areal bombs, including glide bombs, to attack Ukraine's residential areas.

As stated in the recent report by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, attacks using explosive weapons in populated areas, including against hospitals and cultural objects, remain the leading cause of deaths and injuries among the civilian population in Ukraine. The Commission continues to find new evidence of violations of international human rights and international humanitarian law and corresponding war crimes in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. The systemic killings, torture, ill-treatment and sexual and gender-based violence against civilians, as well as the illegal transfer of children, are all conducted by, or under the control of, Russian authorities. We must

reiterate that humanitarian needs in Ukraine remain high, and humanitarian aid remains indispensable, especially to the millions of people in areas near the front line. Humanitarian access is hindered by constant shelling and attacks, while Russian attacks continue to kill humanitarian workers who have rushed to help people in need. Ukraine is today the largest minefield in the world.

As has been made evident by the currently ongoing General Assembly debate on Russia's use of the veto to block the extension of the mandate of the Panel of Experts for the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006) (see S/PV.9591), Russia is happily willing to use its veto to sustain the illegal actions of its geopolitical client States, which have become complicit in Russia's war against Ukraine. We condemn Iran, Belarus and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which are providing weapons and ammunition to Russia in its indiscriminate war against Ukraine and its killing of civilians. We once again reiterate our call for a United Nations investigation into the weapons transfers and a report to the Security Council.

Full accountability for the war crimes and the other international crimes committed in or against Ukraine should be ensured, including by the International Criminal Court. The Baltic States strongly support the establishment of a tribunal for the prosecution of the crime of aggression against Ukraine to hold Russia's political and military leadership accountable. We support the Council of Europe's Register of Damage for Ukraine and its opening of the claims submission process last week in The Hague, which is an important contribution to the future compensation mechanism. During the recent visit of Ukraine's Prime Minister, Denys Shmyhal, to Vilnius, Riga and Tallin, we reiterated our support to Ukraine. We will also do that here, at the United Nations, and by providing all needed assistance to the people and the Government of Ukraine until victory is secured.

We must collectively condemn violations of international humanitarian law and demand accountability for those responsible. The Security Council must take decisive action to protect civilians and ensure unhindered access to humanitarian assistance. We urge the Security Council to take immediate steps to address the escalating violence and human suffering. The Baltic States strongly condemn Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, which

constitutes a manifest violation of the Charter of the United Nations. We reiterate our full support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders and its inherent right to self-defence against the Russian aggression.

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

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

The European Union reiterates its resolute condemnation of Russia's illegal, unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine, which constitutes a manifest violation of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations and the resolutions of the General Assembly. In the past few weeks, Russia has intensified its attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure, launching its largest missile and drone attacks since the beginning of the war. Russian attacks have resulted in more than 30,000 civilian casualties, as verified by the Human Rights Monitoring Mission. They have caused major damage, including, recently, to the Dnipro hydroelectric power plant, leaving more than 1 million Ukrainians without access to electricity and water. Such systematic air strikes against civilian objects and critical infrastructure are unacceptable and must stop immediately. They add to the growing evidence of war crimes, as reported by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine.

Russia and its leadership must be held fully accountable for waging a war of aggression and for other particularly serious crimes under international law and for the massive damage caused by the war. The European Union is firmly committed to ensuring full accountability for all crimes committed in connection with Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, including victims' rights to justice and reparation and guarantees of non-repetition.

We also condemn the continued military support for Russia's war of aggression provided by Iran, Belarus and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We

continue to urge all countries to refrain from providing weapons and military equipment, including missiles and drones or other material, such as dual-use goods. We also urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Russia to abide by the successive Security Council resolutions, which clearly prohibit any arms exports or imports involving the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

According to the Ukraine Humanitarian Needs Response Plan, 14.6 million people are estimated to be in need of assistance across Ukraine. We are talking about a country, Ukraine, that before Russia's war of aggression was a breadbasket, producing food for more than 400 million people. European Union member States have mobilized to come to Ukraine's aid. We have provided temporary protection to around 4 million Ukrainian refugees. We continue to provide humanitarian and civil protection assistance to Ukraine. And since February 2022, the European Union and its member States have provided more than €3.2 billion in humanitarian funding for affected civilians. Russia must enable full, safe and unhindered humanitarian access through the front lines and stop withholding aid from people in need in the areas it has temporarily occupied. It must uphold international human rights and humanitarian law. We commend the brave efforts by humanitarian organizations and their personnel to deliver assistance, despite the hostile environment.

The humanitarian consequences of Russia's war of aggression are not limited to Ukraine. Russia's deliberate attacks on Ukraine's grain storage and export facilities, as well as its actions to hinder the freedom of navigation in the Black Sea, show that it continues to use food as a weapon of war and that it is deliberately undermining global food security. I stress the importance of security, stability and the freedom of navigation in the Black Sea, which is vital for sustainable food exports.

The path to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace is for the aggressor — namely, Russia — to immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraw all its troops and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine and respect Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, in line with the decision of the General Assembly (see resolution ES-11/6). Russia must immediately stop its systematic and brutal bombings, which it has been carrying out against the country and its people.

I reiterate the European Union's unwavering support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, as well as its inherent right to self-defence, in line with the Charter of the United Nations. The European Union will continue to support Ukraine for as long as it takes. We invite partners across the world to join that endeavour.

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

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

The Nordic countries reiterate our condemnation of Russia's illegal, unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine in blatant violation of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations and the resolutions of the General Assembly. We once again call on Russia to withdraw its troops from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders and to cease all hostilities. Russia must stop its attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure, including humanitarian actors. Such attacks are strictly prohibited under international humanitarian law. Russia must return the Zaporizhzhya plant to the full control of the Ukrainian authorities and allow the International Atomic Energy Agency unhindered access to the plant. It must also allow humanitarian actors safe and unhindered access to all areas in Ukraine, including those areas temporarily occupied by Russia.

We deplore the environmental damage caused by Russia's illegal war of aggression in Ukraine. The extensive use of anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions has left approximately 30 per cent of Ukraine's territory contaminated with unexploded remnants. The impact on Ukraine's ability to produce and export food is felt globally. Russia's deliberate attacks on granaries and its attempts to block free navigation in the Black Sea further deepen global food insecurity. The Nordic countries support Ukraine's increased mine action efforts to lay the foundations for recovery and reconstruction.

We join the widespread international condemnation of the military support provided by Iran, Belarus and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine. By transferring weapons and ammunition to Russia, those countries have chosen to stand with the aggressor.

We are gravely concerned by the mounting evidence of Russia's violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law in Ukraine. The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights have presented new evidence of sexual violence, summary executions, the systematic use of torture and forced deportation of Ukrainian children and other civilians in the temporarily occupied areas of Ukraine. We continue to support all efforts to ensure full accountability for Russia's international crimes in Ukraine, including progress towards the establishment of a special tribunal for the prosecution of the crime of aggression against Ukraine and a future compensation mechanism. The Nordics also reiterate their support for the work of the International Criminal Court and take note of the issuance of arrest warrants against two additional Russian officials for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity related to a campaign of attacks against electric power plants and substations.

The Nordic countries remain steadfast in their support for Ukraine and its people, who have shown exceptional bravery and resilience in defending their freedom and our shared values. We highlight the need to secure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in all matters related to peace and security. We support all efforts to advance a just peace, in line with Ukraine's peace formula and based on international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, in order to ensure full respect for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.