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Official Records

President: Mr. Kőrösi (Hungary)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m. (spoke in Russian)

Agenda item 59

The situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine

Statement by the President

The President: We gather today for a so-called regular and scheduled debate. But the situation is far from regular. There have been 509 days of war, tens of thousands of deaths, scores of thousands injured, almost 6 million refugees scattered across Europe and more than 6 million people internally displaced and facing an uncertain future. Is that what it means to uphold the Charter of the United Nations? Is that what Article 2, paragraph 4, of the Charter means when it says that members shall refrain “from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State”?

For 17 months now, the fundamental principles that we have all agreed to cherish are being violated daily. To speak of principles may sound theoretical or even philosophical, but these are far from abstract. They are concrete, and when we tolerate their erosion, these are the symptoms — the targeting of critical civilian infrastructure, the use of ecological warfare, the threatening of the world with nuclear warfare, consistent and systematic violations of international law and widespread and well-documented violations of human rights law. Such relentless acts of warfare severely undermine trust in and within our institution.

Let me express myself clearly, just as the Charter does. We cannot allow the unleashing of war to become the norm. Aggression against a neighbouring country is illegal. Annexation is illegal. Launching strikes on civilian targets is illegal. That was true in 1945 and 2014, and it is still true today.

(spoke in English)

We must remember that behind every number lies a mother, a father, a child, a grandparent. Turning a blind eye to this would be an affront to the memory of those who have already perished. While the Security Council has failed to adopt a single resolution related to this conflict, the General Assembly, resolute and active, has refused to let the international community become numb to it. We have convened emergency special sessions and adopted six resolutions, condemning aggression and annexation and affirming our unwavering support to Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.

(spoke in Arabic)

Despite all of that, we must acknowledge that the effects of this war extend far beyond its scale. It is intrinsically linked to our 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, and represents a serious threat that could jeopardize the prospects for a sustained future for humankind and the planet.

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(spoke in English)

How can we expect to end or even effectively address food and energy insecurity, climate change, water security and biodiversity loss when conflicts have ripple effects across the globe?

(spoke in French)

Simply put, this war is fundamentally irreconcilable with the achievement of our common goals — those that we hope to accomplish to ensure the survival of humankind. We do not need to fight one another when we have a common enemy, which is the cascading crises happening across the world.

(spoke in English)

On that note, let me acknowledge the critical importance of the Black Sea Grain Initiative, which is a lifeline to millions of people around the globe. I applaud the tireless efforts of the Secretary-General and Türkiye over the past 12 months, and I deeply regret the Russian Federation's decision not to extend that vital instrument. I implore all the parties to come together in dialogue and diplomacy to restart negotiations, for it is always the most vulnerable who suffer the consequences. Let them not pay the price of political games.

Amid the turmoil, the threat of a nuclear catastrophe looms ominously over our heads, with Europe's largest nuclear power plant located in an active conflict zone, posing grave and imminent danger far beyond the region. The risk of a cataclysmic disaster or accident rises every day that the war goes on. I strongly support the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency and urge Member States to recommit to the nuclear non-proliferation regime. Nuclear rhetoric must be stopped. I feel compelled to repeat what I have said before, which is that nuclear weapons will not solve any conflict. We cannot play with a nuclear Armageddon. Let us remember that we cannot expect military solutions to end this war, but leadership, diplomacy and political commitments from all sides will. A political solution, founded on the Charter and international law, that restores Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, will. The General Assembly has consistently called for political dialogue, negotiations, mediation and other peaceful means. But let me appeal directly to Russia and its leaders.

(spoke in Russian)

Like many others, I respect the Russian nation, culture and country. Russia started this war, and it has it in its power to end it. And as one of the most influential countries deciding issues in the world, it can do that if it so desires.

(spoke in English)

Too many lives have been lost, families torn apart and communities across Ukraine shattered. It is imperative that all recognize and accept what the General Assembly and the international community know to be true, which is that this war, like all wars, will end. And it will end with a sovereign and independent Ukraine and a sovereign and independent Russia. The Russian Federation and Ukraine will coexist as neighbours, as Member States within the same multilateral system. This war must be ended. And everyone should recommit to the values and principles of the Charter. I urge Member States to redouble their efforts to help achieve peace.

I now call on His Excellency Mr. Dmytro Kuleba, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine.

Mr. Kuleba (Ukraine): I thank you, Mr. President, for your statement. Today we are debating agenda item 59, on "The situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine". But I believe that no numbers or statements can make one feel or comprehend what is really going on in Ukraine's occupied territories. This is why I want to give voice to some Ukrainian children who have lived through occupation and suffering. What I am going to read now are excerpts from the real wartime diaries of three Ukrainian children. The first is eight-year-old Yehor Kravtsov. On 3 March 2022, he wrote in his diary inside blockaded Mariupol.

"I slept well, woke up, smiled and counted up to 25. Also, my grandpa died. I have a wound on my back and the skin is torn out. My sister has a head wound. There is flesh torn out of my mother's arm, and she has a hole in her leg".

On the next day, he wrote,

"My birthday is coming. Two of my dogs have died since 24 February. So have my Grandma Hala and my beloved city of Mariupol".

Another Ukrainian girl, Violeta Horbachova, was 13 when the full-scale invasion began. She had spent

around four months in occupied Nova Kakhovka. In February 2022, she wrote,

“We do not go outside at all. I am scared that if I step outside the block, they will shoot me down. The streets are almost empty. Dad goes to work and brings things home. The village across from the hydroelectric plant is being shelled. I have been texting my friend there, but he has not replied. It is scary to think how many people I know may soon die”.

In May 2022, she wrote,

“Mom tells us not to go for walks to places where there are no people because many girls get raped. On 27 May, all mobile networks were fully shut down. People stood near a closed café like zombies in small groups because the local Wi-Fi was still working there”.

The third girl, Arina Pervunina, was 11 when Russia launched its full-scale invasion. She hid in a basement in an occupied village. She was afraid that Russian soldiers might rape her, and she called her father, who was in the Government-controlled area, crying and asking him to take her away. In an effort to save his daughter, he somehow managed to drive to the village, but on their way back, Russian soldiers opened fire on the car and killed her father in front of her. A week later, she wrote in her diary,

“I do not want to live. What is my life without a father? Am I just a helpless child who cannot do anything on her own? But this is probably a punishment for me. Maybe because I failed to keep silent. I called my father that day instead of just carrying on. If I had not called, everything would be fine. Everyone would be alive. I hate myself. Why am I so helpless?”

She still addresses her father in the diary now. Almost every entry begins with the word “Daddy”. On 26 May, she wrote,

“Daddy, I just finished seventh grade and I have really good marks. I love you so much. I will do everything to make you proud of me. Love you, Daddy.”

It is impossible to read those lines without tears. These are the only ones that I managed to bring here, but there are thousands of children like them who are suffering in the same way. Arina gave me this diary. It sparkles. She should have been writing her thoughts about her

life, about boyfriends, about new music. But instead it is full of pain and suffering. She allowed me to read out those intimate entries and I am grateful to her for her bravery.

Now the Assembly knows how Ukrainian children feel and what Ukrainians have been going through for almost a year and a half. Why have these and millions of other Ukrainian kids been robbed of their childhood? Just because Putin has an imperialist tumour in his head. Because Russia does not mind children suffering so that it can achieve its sick political goals. I have no doubt that many here in this Hall have kids and would never want them to live through this kind of hell. No kid in the world, whether in Ukraine or in any other country, deserves it. No political reason can justify the tears of a child.

The Russian invasion has deprived all of Ukraine’s 7.5 million children of their normal lives. Almost two thirds of them have been internally or externally displaced. Russia has killed at least 494 Ukrainian children and injured 1,052 more. At least 379 have gone missing during the hostilities. Right now, as we speak, Russia is continuing its mass abduction and deportation of Ukrainian children, in a disgusting, heinous and genocidal crime for which Putin and his Commissioner for Children’s Rights are already wanted by the International Criminal Court. To date we have identified 19,474 illegally transferred kids, including 4,390 who are orphans or lacking parental care. As a result of our efforts so far, only 383 have been returned and reunited with their families, with thousands upon thousands still waiting desperately for our help. In that connection, we welcome the Secretary-General’s decision to include the Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups in the annex to his annual report on children and armed conflict (A/77/895) for the serious crimes they have committed against children in Ukraine. We should jointly demand that Russia immediately provide a list of the children it has taken from Ukraine and grant international human rights and monitoring missions access to them. Russia must free Ukraine’s children and return them to their families. I urge all Member States to put maximum pressure on Russia in their national capacities. I am doing that on behalf of all the parents of Ukraine who want to be reunited with their children. We can force Russia to end its violations against children and return them safely if we demand it together with one strong voice.

Another horror is Russia's abduction of civilians in the occupied territories. According to the Ukrainian national police, since the beginning of the full-scale invasion 8,800 civilians have become victims of enforced disappearance and remain illegally detained, with more than 10,200 people considered missing. The detention of civilians may constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity, according to articles 7 and 8 of the Rome Statute. But given the scale of this unlawful practice by Russian occupiers, we are not talking about isolated cases. We are talking about Russia taking civilian hostages as a tool in its genocidal war. No other conflict in modern times has seen such a crime on such a scale, and the international community lacks the tools to address the problem. For instance, unlike prisoners of war, civilian hostages cannot be returned in exchanges because that will only prompt Russia to abduct many more. We are in urgent need of new international instruments for punishing the abduction of civilians and ensuring the safe return of civilian hostages. And I propose that we begin to develop such instruments.

The stories of Ukrainian children that I read today show that Russia's war has brought immense suffering. However, Russia's aggression against Ukraine is not the only war going on in the world. Unfortunately, similar stories are familiar to children in Africa, the Middle East and every other part of the world where we see war and lawlessness. Today the voices of Ukrainian children are also the voices of the children worldwide who are victims of armed conflicts. We must save them all. We must restore peace for them. In Ukraine, Russian aggression must end. We need a comprehensive, just and lasting peace based on the formula proposed by President Zelenskyy and the relevant General Assembly resolutions.

While Ukraine fights for its survival, exercising its right to self-defence under Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, we keep hearing some call for abstract peace. What most of them really mean is not peace but something else. And I will dare to translate some of those calls from the language of diplomacy into the language of common sense. For instance, some ask why we do not just sit down at the negotiating table and end this war now. What they are really saying is, let Russia keep the land it has stolen and keep killing, torturing, raping and intimidating people in the occupied territories. Others say cynically that it is Ukraine that is dragging out the war. What they are really saying is, Ukraine must give up and let Russia complete its

genocide as soon as possible. We also hear voices telling people to stop sending weapons to Ukraine, because it does not help peace. That sounds great, but what these people really mean is, leave Ukraine defenceless and Russia will win faster. It will be bloody and terrible but the whole thing will be over sooner. We will then mourn the Ukrainian victims at commemorative events from one year to the next and condemn Russia's brutality while doing business as usual with it. After resisting the Russian full-scale war for more than a year and a half, our nation of 40 million people has one thing to say in reply to all of those suggestions — no. No to genocide in the guise of peace. No to fake pacifism that excuses the aggressor for its crimes. No to territorial concessions for the sake of the illusion of peace. No, and again no. We will fight and we will prevail, because we want to live. Because our children, like those of the people here in this Hall, deserve to have full families and a life free of fear and suffering. We will ensure that the aggressor is accountable, because that is the only way to restore real justice, to introduce just and lasting peace for Ukraine and respect for the Charter in every corner of the planet.

Last week, the members of the Group of Seven (G-7) agreed on security guarantees for Ukraine. Since then, 10 more countries have joined them. I call on every Member State to consider joining last week's G-7 declaration, which is open for signature. Members can make their own practical contribution to the security of Ukraine. By helping Ukrainian children have a safe future, they are also ensuring a safe future for their own children. When Ukraine comes out of this war safer, the probability of any aggression against their countries and their children will be significantly lower.

As we speak, our soldiers are shrinking the temporarily occupied territory of Ukraine. Step by step, kilometre by kilometre, the area of war is becoming smaller and the area of peace is expanding by the day. Every step forward made by a Ukrainian soldier is a step towards peace. Every liberated kilometre is a kilometre of safety where Ukrainian children will be able to live their lives without fear of being raped, stolen or killed. Every liberated kilometre also means additional Ukrainian grain to feed the world and ease the global food crisis. The cost we are paying for those kilometres is the lives of our people. When foreign customers receive Ukrainian grain, I want them to understand that every kilogramme was paid for with the ultimate price, the lives of our soldiers. And Russia

is not only killing our soldiers. Yesterday it killed the vital Black Sea Grain Initiative, the deal that helped save millions of people from the threat of hunger. But just as we are fighting to protect life in Ukraine, we will be fighting to restore food lifelines for the world. With 603,700 square kilometres free of invaders, peace will be fully restored. That is the size of Ukraine, and I urge all States to be realistic about this.

Some wars are not merely conflicts between two parties. Some are wars of aggression, with one country bluntly attacking and trying to destroy another. Some wars are genocidal. They cannot be ended by simply sitting down and allowing the aggressors to take what they believe is theirs. Those wars have to be won, and unfortunately on the battlefield and at a high cost, so that the aggressors drop their plans to conquer and kill and learn their lesson.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all here who have taken a strong position on the side of truth and to say that we are relying on their further resolve in defence of the purposes and principles of the Charter. I urge everyone else not to pretend to be neutral anymore. There can be no place for neutrality in a situation of genocidal war and mass atrocity crimes. My wish and the wish of millions of Ukrainians, including the Ukrainian children who allowed me to read their diaries to the Assembly today, is for this war to end as soon as possible with a Ukrainian victory and the restoration of a just and lasting peace. When that happens, agenda item 59, on the situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, will no longer exist, because there will be no occupied territories of Ukraine, and no other Ukrainian children will have to suffer. Let us be true to ourselves about how this can be achieved and unite all of our forces to bring that day closer.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Today's meeting represents yet another attempt by our Western colleagues to impose their conception of the situation in Ukraine on the rest of us. It would be difficult to view the agenda item that we have been formally convened today to discuss in any other way. It is obvious that the situation on the ground has fundamentally changed and that we are now already in the hot phase of the Ukraine conflict. In that connection, we believe it would be appropriate to use our statement to assess the situation on the ground and the prospects for a peaceful settlement of the crisis in Ukraine.

I hope that in the time that has passed since our special military operation in Ukraine began, a majority of our colleagues from developing countries have reached a clear understanding of what has happened. Because whatever the Western backers of the Kyiv regime may allege about the unprovoked war of choice that Russia is waging in Ukraine, the facts indicate otherwise. Obviously, if the Kyiv regime that came to power in 2014 as a result of an anti-constitutional, Western-sponsored coup d'état had not declared war on all things Russian and sent its forces to the eastern regions of its country against peaceful, unarmed cities, we would not be discussing the Ukrainian crisis here today. And Crimea, followed by Donbas and a number of other Ukrainian territories, would not have separated from Ukraine and united with Russia. For that, the Ukrainian authorities would only have had to respect the rights of the country's Russian-speaking citizens, who by the most modest and very reduced Ukrainian estimates numbered more than 40 per cent of the population in 2014. Is demanding the right to respect for speaking your own language, professing your own faith and honouring the heroes who freed your land from the fascists really something unlawful?

In other States that is called democracy, intranational peace and respect for diversity, and that is the approach to such issues everywhere except post-Maidan Ukraine, where all things Russian have been outlawed and the new heroes are those who joined with the fascists in the Second World War to kill tens or hundreds of thousands of peaceful Jews, Russians, Poles, Roma and other Ukrainians. Of course, the Ukrainian Minister who spoke before me is not going to tell that story because it is extremely difficult if not impossible to find a rational explanation for the kind of policy that is against one's own people. But that is only if we view Ukraine as an independent, sovereign State standing up for its interests in the international arena and within its own country. However sad it may be, it has been impossible to consider Ukraine such a State since 2014. We can see by now that the 2014 coup was stage-managed by Western countries, first and foremost the United States, with the clear aim of making Ukraine an anti-Russia, arming it and preparing for a war with our country. As we all now know, the Minsk agreements, which neither Kyiv nor its Western sponsors were ever going to implement, were used for that purpose.

Another of their aims was moving the conflict into a hot phase, and that is what happened in February 2022. The upshot is that we can now all see how the Kyiv

regime, having lost almost all of its own weaponry and hundreds of thousands of soldiers, like a drug addict is managing to survive only thanks to massive injections of Western arms. At the same time it is busting itself in its efforts to show that it can defeat a nuclear power so that it can get even more weapons. And tens of thousands of young Ukrainians are dying in that vicious cycle. As we can see on social networks, they are being picked up off the streets and thrown without proper training into the Azov meat grinder, which is what Ukrainians call the infamous stalled counteroffensive of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

In order to distract the population from that depressing reality and from the failure of the recent NATO summit, the Zelenskyy regime is using high-profile but militarily meaningless actions borrowed from international terrorists, such as murdering or attempting to murder public opinion leaders in Russia, shelling parts of Russia and acts of terror such as yesterday's blowing up of a Crimean bridge, all of which looks pathetic and more like death throes.

The question then arises as to where Ukraine's interests are in all of this. It is clear what the West's interests are. In classic colonial tradition, they want to pit two brotherly peoples against one another, try to weaken and bleed Russia dry as much as possible so as to prevent its re-emergence as a global power or at least delay the birth of a new multipolar world. They want to get rid of their old written-off weapons in Ukraine, test new ones to the extent possible and extract money from their taxpayers to re-equip their own armies. And at the same time they are helping their arms manufacturers make money, which of course the upper echelons of power are not doing selflessly.

So where are Ukraine's interests in all this? Is the goal to become a ruined de-industrialized country — a process that as we all know began immediately after the signing of the European Union–Ukraine Association Agreement — with a large part of its working-age population lost to the West as migrant labourers? Is it poisoning Ukraine's fertile soil with depleted uranium shells from Britain and cluster munitions from the United States? Raising an entire generation in a spirit of hatred for everything foreign, of frenzied nationalism and worship of Nazi criminals? Using its citizens as guinea pigs for American biolaboratories in Ukraine? Because that is the legacy that Zelenskyy will leave behind — Zelenskyy, who was elected by almost three quarters of voters in 2019 thanks to slogans

about protecting the Russian language and reaching a peaceful settlement of the Donbas issue — that is to say, thanks to promises not one of which has he even attempted to keep.

He will also leave behind a legacy of unimaginable corruption and a rampant totalitarian dictatorship in which opposition and freedom of speech are prohibited, where dissenters and people suspected of Russian sympathies are thrown in jail or duct-taped to lampposts in the streets, with unprecedented persecution of the canonical Orthodox Church, with raids and seizures and arson against churches and arrests and punishment of clergy and parishioners. Is that what Ukraine's national interests are all about? I truly do not want to believe that. After all, we still see Ukrainians as brothers and sisters, and we will always be willing to live in good-neighbourly peace and harmony, as we did before 2014. Several millions of Ukrainians voluntarily settled in Russia following the Maidan coup and the start of the hot phase of the crisis in Ukraine. Despite whatever the Assembly may hear from Western and Ukrainian propagandists, we have never aimed to destroy Ukrainian identity or Russify Ukraine. We were perfectly happy with it the way it was. However, we cannot and will not be reconciled to glaring violations of the rights of the Russian-speaking population — incidentally something that is contrary to Ukraine's own Constitution — or to the whitewashing or glorification of Nazi henchmen or the shelling of peaceful cities in Donbas.

It was first and foremost to protect that those cities that we began our special military operation in 2022 after Ukraine and its Western backers had rejected the Minsk agreements once and for all. We were always prepared to fulfil the aims of the operation through peaceful and diplomatic means, but that was not in the interests of Washington, London and Brussels, which would not allow Ukraine to conclude the agreement initialled in March 2022, an agreement that, among other things, provided Ukraine with security guarantees acceptable to it, without having to join NATO. The result was that Ukraine was made to believe that with the help of arms from the collective West it could defeat Russia, and that it was supposedly fighting for some sort of democratic values and freedoms. And in order to make sure that there was no way back and that world public opinion saw it the right way, the vile provocation in Bucha was organized and the myths of crimes

allegedly committed by Russia began to circulate. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, who spoke before me just now, was repeating those same myths.

Of course we will hear more about those myths today. But they are worth a lot less than the paper they are printed on. It is not facts and truth that are important in Western society today but the way information is presented, even if it is a total lie. We have already been through that with the accusations that Russia interfered in American elections, destroyed Malaysia Airlines Flight MH-17 and poisoned the Skripals and Navalny. Western society has long been living in a world where the truth is unimportant. The question is simply whether other States want to live in that world or whether they will nonetheless insist on facts and evidence. That is a scenario that our Western opponents are very afraid of because they have neither facts nor evidence. They have only an unconcealed, primitive Russophobia and a desire to ban Russia and everything connected to it — language, culture, sport.

Many of our colleagues from non-NATO, non-European Union States and their satellites have come to us to ask what must be done to achieve peace in Ukraine and what international mediators can do to help. We are grateful to all who sincerely want peace in Ukraine and who are concerned about what is going on. If peace depended on ordinary Ukrainians rather than the puppet regime in Kyiv, it would have happened long ago. However, what Russia is dealing with first and foremost in Ukraine is Washington and its NATO allies, waging a proxy war on Russia down to the last Ukrainian, and for the time being, peace in Ukraine is not part of their plan. For the time being they have not completely abandoned their impossible hope of defeating Russia at the hands of Ukrainians on the battlefield, although they have begun to realize that somewhat over the past two months. But for the time being their so-called creative thinking has been incapable of coming up with anything other than the infamous Zelenskyy peace plan, which of course is not even close to a peace plan. Neither have they got rid of all their old weaponry, so no one in the West is easing control over the Zelenskyy regime yet. And therefore we have to achieve the aims of the special military operation militarily. We have to demilitarize and de-Nazify the criminal Kyiv regime, destroy its logistics and energy infrastructure in order to weaken and nullify its military capabilities and ensure that no threat to our country and our citizens will emerge from Ukraine ever again.

However, the more members of the Assembly who are not afraid to tell the truth about the root causes of the conflict in Ukraine and about the fact that the West cares not about protecting Ukraine but about its own interests and about weakening Russia, the greater the chances there will be for the crisis in Ukraine to end quickly. That is how States can truly help peace today. I would like to believe that we will hear similarly realistic assessments from unbiased States as early as during this meeting.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Hungary.

Mr. Szijjártó (Hungary): I am taking the floor on behalf of a country that has been living in the neighbourhood of the war in Ukraine for more than 500 days now and that has already paid a high price for this war in the form of skyrocketing inflation, energy prices and food prices. The citizens of Hungary, as a neighbour of Ukraine, have already paid a high price for this war, even though none of them can be held responsible for it. I am also representing a nation more and more of whose members are now dying in this war. I am not sure if everyone in this Hall is aware of it, but there is a significant Hungarian community living in Ukraine — almost 150,000 people. Since they are Ukrainian citizens, they are being mobilized into the Ukrainian army and deployed to the front line, and many of them unfortunately are dying. I imagine that no one in this Hall should be in doubt about what we all think about the war. I am pretty sure that all of us, or almost all, think similarly. The war must be condemned. It is bad, it is brutal, and it must be stopped because its consequences are casualties, destruction and devastation.

We have been saying the same thing for more than 500 days. The international politics have focused on those things for more than 500 days. The problem is that the international politics are only concerned about what we think about the war. It is therefore high time to speak about what we think about peace. How do we achieve peace? How do we stop the war? Where and what is the solution? As a representative of one of Ukraine's neighbours, I believe that the solution is not to be found on the battlefield. What we find on the battlefield is dead people, and the longer the war takes, the more people will die and will be found on the battlefield. The solution is and must be around the negotiating table. The sooner the negotiations start, the fewer people will die. Of course, we have heard the

opinions and statements that say it is too early to start negotiations. We have a different opinion. It would have been very late if we had started discussions yesterday, and it will be very late if we start tomorrow. And the longer it takes for the discussions to start, the more people will die. So those who argue in favour of starting a dialogue and discussion later are risking more casualties, more children losing their daddies and a much longer and much more expensive reconstruction.

That is why we pay tribute to all the countries and leaders who have recently put efforts into establishing peace missions and peace plans. We appreciate the efforts of the Holy See. We appreciate the efforts of the African countries. We appreciate the efforts of the President of Türkiye and of the People's Republic of China. We believe that those efforts should be strengthened, and it would be great if the United Nations could serve as a platform for such dialogue. We wish the agenda of United Nations events were full of such peace plans.

I come from Europe, representing a European Union (EU) member State. Whenever we Foreign Ministers of the EU come together and discuss armed conflicts or wars around the world, some of them very far from Europe, we usually urge for peaceful solutions. We usually urge discussion. Unfortunately, now that the war is in Europe, the mainstream position is totally different. I find myself wondering why we in Europe are unable to say the same kinds of things that we say about wars outside Europe. Why do we not argue for peace?

Hungary has been attacked and criticized a great deal by the mainstream, especially in Europe, because of its position. But I have to say that those who say that Hungary is not in solidarity with Ukraine are ridiculous. We have received more than 1.1 million refugees in the past 500-plus days and have seen all those Sundered families arriving without fathers. We have seen the suffering. Hungary has received more than 1.1 million refugees. Once again, as a member of a nation some of whose citizens are dying in this war, we will not stop arguing in favour of peace. And regardless of any attacks, criticism, lies or fake news that may be put out against my country, we will continue to argue in favour of peace. In the meantime, we reject those who try to lecture us, because as a nation that lived through 1956, we are very well aware of how it feels to fight for freedom against a superior power. And unfortunately we also know very well how it feels to be let down and left alone for decades afterwards.

Finally, I would like to join you, Mr. President, in expressing regret about the fact that the Black Sea Grain Initiative has not been extended. I regret that together with you because we see its cancellation as a chance for another global security threat. A lack of grain deliveries is likely to further destabilize already fragile regions, and food shortages can always serve as a cause of further waves of migration. And those migratory waves can in turn constitute another global security threat. The significance of the transit of grain from Ukraine through Central Europe will therefore be increased. And we have not just kept open the possibility for transiting Ukrainian grain through Central Europe. We have invested in huge infrastructure developments in Hungary to enable an increased volume of grain from Ukraine to be transited to other ports from where it can be shipped to countries in Africa and the Middle East where it is badly needed. I want to underline that we are helping the Ukrainian grain to be transported where it is needed, to Africa and the Middle East, and not to so that it can stay in Central Europe. We do not want to see people use humanitarian reasons as a pretext for doing business. By delivering the grain of Ukraine through Central Europe to Africa and countries in the Middle East, we Central European countries can help to prevent food shortages there.

Finally, I would like to see more discussions of peace than of arms shipments in future. Those of us in the neighbourhood of the war hope that we will soon have a neighbour that does not have to suffer from that war.

The President: I now call on the Federal Minister for the European Union and Constitution at the Federal Chancellery of Austria.

Ms. Edtstadler (Austria): Almost one and a half years have passed since Russia launched an unprovoked, unjustified and illegal war of aggression against its neighbour Ukraine. As I said yesterday in the Security Council (see S/PV.9380), and as we heard today from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Mr. Dmytro Kuleba, in his moving statement, there are terrible consequences for the civilian population and the natural environment — unspeakable human suffering, with the lives of millions uprooted and their livelihoods destroyed, thousands of civilians falling victim to missile attacks and thousands of hectares of nature reserves and ecosystems eradicated. I witnessed the destruction and horror of the war myself during my visit to Ukraine in November and had to take shelter

myself from the missiles falling on Kyiv. I saw the ruined residential buildings where so many people have lost their lives.

We must never get used to that reality. Indeed, we should never get used to any war around the world. Like all wars, this war of aggression must end. I reiterate my call on the Russian Federation to immediately and without any conditions withdraw its forces from all of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. And I call on all of us here in the General Assembly. We cannot stand on the sidelines while the most fundamental principles of our legal and security order are under threat. None of us should remain silent when the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of a State is attacked or when the Charter of the United Nations is violated. With implicit but unmistakable nuclear threats, the Russian Federation has irresponsibly elevated the already unacceptable risks inherent in nuclear weapons. The catastrophic consequences would affect us all. Now is the time to ensure that the taboo against any use of nuclear weapons is safeguarded. Now is the time in the General Assembly and other competent institutions to redouble our efforts for real nuclear disarmament. In that respect, I welcome the policy brief on the New Agenda for Peace issued yesterday by the Secretary-General.

Today's debate focuses on the situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. It reminds us that this war did not start in February 2022. Indeed, the Russian Federation has been violating the Charter since its illegal occupation and annexation of Crimea in 2014. Since then, we have seen ethnic minorities such as the Crimean Tatars targeted, freedom of expression curtailed and access to independent human rights monitors denied. Throughout occupied Ukraine, human rights violations have reached a new dimension. Ukrainian cities such as Bucha and Mariupol have become synonymous with unspeakable human suffering, atrocities committed against the civilian population, rape, torture and extrajudicial killings.

The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine concluded in its last report (A/HRC/52/62) that the Russian authorities had committed numerous violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, including a wide range of war crimes. It also found that Russia's attacks on Ukraine's energy-related infrastructure and the use of torture by the Russian authorities may amount to crimes against humanity.

Women, girls, men and boys have become victims of rape and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence. I deplore those acts and their widespread use as a weapon of war. In its bilateral humanitarian support to Ukraine, Austria has therefore placed special emphasis on the protection of women and girls. There can be no peace without justice and accountability. All of these crimes must be investigated and the perpetrators held to account. We fully support all efforts to do so, including by the International Criminal Court and the Commission of Inquiry.

Austria stands in full solidarity with Ukraine, the Ukrainian Government and the Ukrainian people. Since the beginning of the war, our total support has amounted to more than €152 million. Only recently we provided €2 million to Ukraine for humanitarian demining. The focus of our support is on winterization, energy support and basic needs. More than 500,000 displaced Ukrainians have transited through Austria and nearly 100,000 have sought protection by registration in our country. Austria also stands ready to continue its support for reconstruction and economic recovery. We will do so in close collaboration with the Austrian private sector, which remains strongly and actively engaged with more than 200 companies represented in Ukraine.

I should not conclude without referring to the global consequences that this war has had for food security, energy prices and inflation. I commend the Secretary-General and President Erdogan of Türkiye for their leadership in facilitating the Black Sea Grain Initiative. It shows us that even in difficult times there is room for diplomacy. I again urge Russia to reconsider the decision it announced yesterday and enable the continuation of the Initiative.

Let me also assure the Assembly that we listen to partners from all around the world. We have heard the concerns and understand that we must not lose sight of the global consequences of this war. We must also not forget other crises, which is why Austria is continuing its strong and consistent financial support to humanitarian efforts in crises and conflicts around the world. Ukraine, like every independent State and member of the United Nations, is entitled to the stability and security of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace, a peace based on international law and the Charter. Earlier this year, an overwhelming majority of 141 States came together in the Assembly to support exactly that (see A/ES-11/PV.19). The General Assembly

called on Russia to stop the war, stop the suffering of Ukraine's population, stop the nuclear threats and stop its blatant breaches of the Charter, including its illegal attempt to annex whole regions of Ukraine. Let us use that overwhelming support and our shared strength to do everything to stop this war, ensure a just peace for Ukraine and bring all perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity to justice.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Investment, Regional Development and Information of the Slovak Republic.

Mr. Balík (Slovakia): Slovakia stands for its neighbour. We stand for Ukraine. We regret that we once again have to meet for the same reason — a blatant violation of international law by the Russian Federation, a State that as a permanent member of the Security Council has a primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement to be made by the representative of the European Union, and I would like to add some remarks in my national capacity as the representative of Slovakia.

Russia has demonstratively continued to disregard the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, including the prohibition of the use of force and the importance of the development of friendly relations. On the other hand, what Russia is undoubtedly familiar with is chaos, destruction and suffering, since in the more than 500 days since it decided to start its senseless war of choice, it has made the lives of Ukrainian citizens a living hell. That violent approach can be traced back to 2014, when Russia began its militant campaign by occupying Ukraine's Crimea and part of the Donbas. The Slovak Republic supports the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. We do not recognize and continue to condemn the Russian Federation's illegal annexation of Ukrainian territories, including Crimea. Since the illegal annexation, the human rights situation in the occupied territory has significantly deteriorated. The Slovak Republic backs President Zelenskyy's 10-point peace plan and will actively support his initiative. We see the plan as a demonstration of Ukraine's interest in engaging with the goal of achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace.

As Ukraine's neighbour, we have provided immediate assistance to Ukrainian refugees. But we need to think ahead. We are committed to fully supporting the post-

war reconstruction of ruined towns and infrastructure in Ukraine. The Slovak Republic supports ensuring full individual accountability for the perpetrators of the most serious crimes under international law committed in Ukraine. In that context, the Slovak Republic supports the activities of the International Criminal Court, which conducts independent investigations of crimes within its jurisdiction.

In conclusion, we condemn the fact that Russia once again continues to spread disinformation and promote hugely damaging false narratives instead of ending its unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine. We therefore call on it to immediately cease its military activities in Ukraine and to unconditionally withdraw all troops and the occupation administration of Russia from the entire territory of Ukraine.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Poland.

Mr. Rau (Poland): These days we are dealing with a new phase of colonialism. More than 500 days into the Russian aggression against Ukraine, we should have no doubt that Moscow is waging a twenty-first-century colonial war against its neighbour. Unlike regular wars, where the goals of the belligerents are limited, colonial wars tend to be absolute. The aggressor seeks to exert total and permanent control throughout the conquered territory and its population. The war in Ukraine has a long shadow. For the people in the temporarily occupied Ukrainian territories, it started long before the full-scale invasion in February 2022. In addition, even if the aggressor withdraws its forces immediately, the aftermath will remain much longer. Meanwhile, we keep receiving alarming reports of human rights violations committed by the Russian forces in Ukraine. We see the territories occupied by Russia becoming lawless zones. The Russians run a system of filtration camps that serve as instruments of terror against Ukrainians. Those who refuse to accept Russian citizenship are intimidated, threatened with deportation or the loss of their property, among other acts of oppression. We are deeply concerned about the forcible displacement of Ukrainian children. We are also appalled by the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the occupied territories. Limited access to drinking water in the ruined towns and an emerging threat of cholera are sad realities.

Moscow has repeatedly proved that it is capable of actions that for all intents and purposes not only constitute serious violations of humanitarian and

environmental law but bear the hallmarks of a war crime. We have seen drastic examples of such acts in the destruction of the Nova Kakhovka dam and the continuing air and artillery attacks on civilian targets. In recent weeks we have also seen that mercenary groups may further accelerate the conflict. These mercenaries are trained for terrorist and sabotage activities and can be used to wage hybrid war on neighbouring countries, for example by enhancing the artificial migratory pressure at the borders of Poland and the Baltic States. It is regrettable that Belarus is providing safe haven for such unconscionable groups, thereby confirming the damaging role it has played since Russia's invasion began.

We cannot allow a new imperial policy of brutal fait accompli to succeed. We have to support Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. We demand that the perpetrators of these crimes be held to account and that we take concrete steps to that end. We need to stand with those who have chosen freedom over bondage, peace and security over brutal aggression and the Charter of the United Nations over the ruthless dictates of a stronger country over a weaker one. That is a political necessity and a moral obligation of the whole international community.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of Luxembourg.

Mr. Asselborn (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): Luxembourg fully aligns itself with the statement to be delivered on behalf of the European Union, and I would like to make some additional remarks in my national capacity.

I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this debate on the situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. My Ukrainian colleague and friend Mr. Kuleba has just poignantly described for us what is at stake in this debate. At a time when the Russian armed forces continue to bomb Ukrainian cities and target the civilian population, I want to reaffirm that Luxembourg stands in full solidarity with the Ukrainian Government and people and condemns Russia's aggression against Ukraine in the strongest terms. Luxembourg resolutely supports the independence, unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. As is stated in the relevant resolutions adopted by the General Assembly since 2014, the Ukrainian regions of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhya, like Crimea, are

integral parts of the territory of Ukraine. Not only do Russia's actions undermine Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, they also call into question the very principles of the United Nations, multilateralism and the international order founded on the rule of law and the sovereign equality of States.

Twice in the previous century Luxembourg was a victim of the crime of aggression, at a time when the United Nations did not yet exist. It was precisely in order to put an end to that illegal use of force that the United Nations was founded. I would like to recall here the principle set out in Article 2, paragraph 4, of the Charter of the United Nations, which is that

“[a]ll Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations.”

Russia can put an end to the violation of the Charter at any time by complying with the provisional measures that the International Court of Justice indicated more than a year ago in its order of 16 March 2022. However, Russia has continued its aggression and its occupation of Ukrainian territories. We are deeply shocked by the indiscriminate violence and the growing number of testimonies and reports of indefensible and ruthless attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, including schools and hospitals, as well as rape and other forms of sexual violence, which particularly target women and children, and deportations of Ukrainian children to Russian territory. The destruction of the Nova Kakhovka dam is a humanitarian, economic and ecological disaster. Russia's aggression is also affecting food security worldwide. In that context, we strongly welcomed the Black Sea Grain Initiative promoted by the Secretary-General in cooperation with Türkiye. We call for its full implementation and long-term continuation and deeply regret Russia's decision to suspend its participation.

This war, which was started by Russia, is not a European war. It is a war targeting the fundamental rules of democracy, the rule of law and the foundations of the Charter. Neither the European Union nor Europe can stop the war alone, and neither can the so-called West. Only a global coalition can end it. We must be very clear. Russia's actions constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity. Accountability for all crimes committed in Ukraine is a priority for our country. We

must do everything we can to hold the perpetrators of those crimes accountable and to bring justice to the victims, who must be the focus of our efforts.

Luxembourg welcomes the work of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine established by the Human Rights Council. We support the investigations being done by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court in cooperation with the Prosecutor General of Ukraine. We also welcome the creation of the International Centre for the Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine, which has just started its work. Luxembourg supports efforts to set up a special tribunal for the crime of aggression against Ukraine. That crime is at the root of all the other crimes committed in Ukraine. It is the supreme international crime. Those who are most responsible, that is, the people in high-level political and military leadership positions who made the decision to carry out the aggression, must be held to account. That can be achieved through the creation of a special international court established on the basis of an agreement between Ukraine and the United Nations and as a follow-up to a General Assembly resolution.

Since 2014, Russia has flagrantly violated the purposes and principles of the United Nations by attacking Ukraine and occupying its territories. Faced with the paralysis of the Security Council owing to the Russian veto, it was the General Assembly that mobilized for an international order based on the strength of the rule of law and not the law of the mightiest. We must remain mobilized until Russian troops leave the entire territory of Ukraine. Ukraine can continue to count on my country's support, whether in the United Nations or in other forums. Together with our European allies and partners, we will continue to help Ukraine defend itself in accordance with Article 51 of the Charter. Our commitment to a just and lasting peace in Ukraine will not waver.

Mr. André (Portugal): Portugal aligns itself with the statement to be delivered on behalf of the European Union.

This is the first time that we have discussed the situation in the occupied Ukrainian territories since Russia decided to launch its brutal, unprovoked and unjustified large-scale aggression against Ukraine. The Russian aggression has brought with it untold levels of human suffering, atrocities and destruction that may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity,

as we just heard from our colleague, Foreign Minister Kuleba. In the already occupied Ukrainian territories, Russia's armed forces seized the moment of armed conflict to double down on their repressive practices. The occupied territories are areas where violence is rife and human rights violations and abuses occur daily.

Portugal reiterates its unwavering support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders, including its territorial waters. It has been almost nine and a half years since Russia illegally annexed the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol and started militarizing the peninsula. In those nine and a half years, Portugal has consistently condemned those violations of international law, including of the Charter of the United Nations and a large number of bilateral and multilateral instruments entered into by Russia. They include the Helsinki Final Act, the Charter of Paris, the founding agreement of the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Budapest Memorandum and the bilateral treaties on Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership between Ukraine and the Russian Federation and between the Russian Federation and Ukraine on Cooperation in the Use of the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait.

For the past nine and a half years Portugal has argued that this was a global issue rather than one of merely regional concern, and that the illegal annexation constituted a direct threat to international security. Sadly, those arguments have proved correct in the light of Russia's large-scale aggression. The illegal annexation emboldened the authorities in Moscow, creating a sense of impunity regarding violations of international law. Now the war in Ukraine is having repercussions around the world, having led to a global energy and food crisis that disproportionately affects people in developing countries and vulnerable situations. We deeply regret the Russian Federation's decision to terminate the Black Sea Grain Initiative. As the Secretary-General reminded us yesterday, while participation in such agreements is ultimately a choice, struggling people and developing countries do not have that choice.

There is also a human rights crisis in the occupied Crimean peninsula. The Secretary-General's periodic reports show that restrictions on the civic space are increasing and journalists, media workers and human rights defenders are being persecuted and intimidated. Arbitrary detentions and enforced disappearances

are on the rise. Russia is systematically disrespecting the right to freedom of expression, movement and association. Ukrainians living in Crimea are being subjected to forced conscription and Crimean Tatars continue to be targeted.

Let me turn now to the situation in the Donbas and eastern Ukraine more broadly. At the end of September last year, after conducting sham referendums, Russia also decided to illegally annex the Ukrainian territories of Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk and Zaporizhzhia in yet another blatant violation of international law. Portugal does not recognize — and will not recognize — that illegal annexation. The violations of international humanitarian law in those occupied territories are deeply worrisome. The attacks on civilians and civilian objects, including schools, hospitals and critical infrastructure, are deplorable. We also have credible reports from a variety of international organizations, as well as civil society, of wilful killings, torture, rape, unlawful confinement and forced transfers and deportations of children.

The situation in the occupied Ukrainian territories was already a deep source of international concern the last time the General Assembly debated the issue (see A/76/PV.58 and A/76/PV.59). Now, 17 months after the start of the large-scale war of aggression, the situation has become even more worrisome. Portugal once more calls on Russia to give peace a chance and immediately cease its military hostilities against Ukraine. In the meantime, the international community must act to address the situation in the occupied Ukrainian territories. Acting means ensuring accountability for systematic breaches of international law. It means advancing the prosecution of the crime of aggression. It means supporting the efforts of the International Criminal Court, the Human Rights Council and its Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and its Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and its Moscow mechanism and the Council of Europe and its Register of Damage for Ukraine, among others.

We will continue to stand up for Ukraine and for multilateralism, diplomacy, a rules-based order and international law. We will also continue to assist Ukraine using all the means at our disposal, as we have done so far. For those who have sought refuge in Portugal, whose numbers we estimate at more than

60,000, we will continue to ensure that their human rights, including to housing, education, health and social security, are respected, protected and fulfilled.

Let me conclude by stating that international disputes must be resolved through dialogue and diplomacy, not armed conflict and occupation. But that dialogue must have a clear basis. Sovereignty and territorial integrity must be respected. Violations of international law, whenever and wherever they occur, affect the United Nations as a whole and all of its Member States. The international community must therefore not neglect the situation in the territories of Ukraine temporarily occupied by Russia. The General Assembly can always count on us to stand on the side of international law, justice, accountability and the primacy of the Charter.

Ms. Machon (Denmark): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Nordic and Baltic States — Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden and my own country, Denmark.

As Russia's brutal war rages on, we must recall that Russia's aggression against Ukraine did not just start last year. No, nine years ago, the Russian Federation launched a hybrid aggression in eastern Ukraine and illegally annexed Crimea and Sevastopol. But since its full-scale invasion of Ukraine last year, Russia has further illegally occupied annexed parts of the Kherson and Zaporizhzhya regions of Ukraine, in addition to parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions that it had occupied by proxy since 2014, all in clear violation of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations.

The human rights situation in the temporarily occupied territories has severely deteriorated since 2014 and has become critical since the full-scale invasion began. Critical reports show that residents, especially Crimean Tatars and those perceived as pro-Ukrainian, faced systematic restrictions on their human rights and fundamental freedoms, such as the right to freedom of expression, religion or belief, association and peaceful assembly. We have also continued to witness systematic violations of international humanitarian law, with reports of illegal detentions, torture, ill treatment, summary executions of prisoners of war and the rampant use of sexual violence and indiscriminate attacks against civilians, including children, as well as on civilian objects.

In addition, there have been reports of illegal deportations and transfers of Ukrainian children from Ukraine, as the Foreign Minister of Ukraine alluded to in his statement, as well as forced adoptions, which constitute a potential war crime. In that regard, we have taken note of the decision of the International Criminal Court to issue arrest warrants against President Putin and his Presidential Commissioner for Children's Rights, Maria Lvova-Belova. Moreover, reports show that Russia has continued to force people to accept Russian passports in territories under its temporary illegal occupation, leaving Ukrainian citizens who do not acquire Russian passports at real risk of being deported from their homes, in violation of international law. And in yet another violation of international law, Russia has announced its intention to hold so-called elections in September in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine.

All of those violations are compounded by the severity of the humanitarian needs of the civilian population in the temporarily occupied areas. We are deeply concerned about the fact that it has become nearly impossible for international monitoring bodies and humanitarian actors to gain safe and unhindered access to those areas, dramatically worsening the humanitarian situation on the ground. We reiterate our condemnation of those actions as clear violations of international law, and we call on Russia to immediately end all hostilities and completely and unconditionally withdraw all of its military forces from the entire territory of Ukraine. We also condemn the continued military support that Iran and Belarus have been providing for Russia's war of aggression. We reaffirm our unwavering support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders, including its territorial waters.

We emphasize the importance of accountability for the violations of international law, including human rights and international humanitarian law, committed in the temporarily occupied territories. We are committed to holding all the perpetrators accountable for the crimes committed in connection with Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, and we welcome progress towards the establishment of an appropriate mechanism for prosecuting the crime of aggression, which is of concern to the international community as a whole.

Impunity for such acts undermines the prospects for reconciliation and lasting peace and diminishes the possibility of justice for victims and survivors. We call

for a thorough and independent investigation into all alleged violations of international law, ensuring that those responsible are held accountable through fair and transparent legal processes. We welcome the Register of Damage agreed on at the Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe in Reykjavik as a first step towards an international compensation mechanism for the victims of Russia's aggression, and we look forward to the meeting of Ministers of Justice in Riga in September.

The Nordic and Baltic States stand united in their condemnation of Russia's brutal war of aggression against Ukraine, as well as the ongoing illegal occupation. We stand united in support of Ukraine's peace formula, and we call on the whole international community to work together to reach a comprehensive, just and lasting peace consistent with the Charter.

Ms. Cancela Rodríguez (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Spain fully endorses the statement to be made by the delegation of the European Union (EU) on behalf of the EU and all its member States.

Spain reiterates its most categorical and firm condemnation of the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine, which is in flagrant violation of the most basic norms and principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, including those of State sovereignty and territorial integrity. Russia's actions violate fundamental principles and values intended to ensure international peace and security.

Spain once again demands, here in this Hall and in all forums, the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of the Russian armed forces from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. We believe that Russia's continued armed aggression and temporary occupation of Ukrainian territory constitute a direct attack on our Organization and the values it represents, as well as an affront to all of its members. Russia's occupation has also been accompanied by serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. More than 24,000 civilians have been confirmed killed or wounded since 24 February 2022, and we fear that the real figures are much higher. Russia has directly attacked civilian targets, including hospitals, schools and universities and other critical civilian infrastructure, depriving millions of Ukrainians of electricity and access to heat during the winter and drinking water. Added to that are the sadly frequent cases of extreme violence

by Russian forces against civilians. Those responsible for the crimes committed in massacres such as those in Bucha and Izium will not go unpunished and will be brought to justice for their actions.

The General Assembly has already adopted four key resolutions on Ukraine by overwhelming majorities, all of which Spain has supported, and has confirmed its rejection of Russia's actions against that country. Today we want to reiterate our full support to Ukraine in all areas, with the aim of ensuring its effective use of its right to self-defence. Spain will continue to work with its partners and the international community as a whole to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine, which must be based on full respect for international law and the Charter.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine, a sovereign and independent country, did not begin on 24 February 2022. It began in 2014, when Russia illegally annexed Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, in clear violation of international law and the Charter. In October 2022 the Russian authorities once again made a mockery of those norms with their attempt to annex the Ukrainian regions of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhya. Spain did not recognize the illegal annexation of those territories at the time and never will, and we reiterate our full support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders, including Crimea. During the more than eight years of Russian occupation, the situation on the peninsula has only got worse. Russia's continuing militarization of Crimea has been accompanied by a serious deterioration in the human rights situation. The reports of torture and arbitrary arrests of the population, directed especially if not exclusively against people of Tatar origin, speak to an unacceptable situation. The progressive degradation of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights in the temporarily occupied Ukrainian territories is also unacceptable.

Spain reiterates its support for the work of the International Crimea Platform, of which it is a founding member, with the aim of reintegrating Crimea into Ukraine and fully restoring international law. The defence and promotion of international law, especially through respect for the Charter, is one of the fundamental pillars of Spain's foreign policy. Russia's aggression against Ukraine and the situation in its temporarily occupied territories represent a continuing attack on the purposes and principles of the Charter. That is why today we are once again urging

Russia to end its invasion immediately. We affirm our continued and lasting support for Ukraine for as long as is necessary to put an end to this tragic situation, which demands the continued attention of the entire international community. War is a horror. It is inhumane and particularly cruel to those who are most vulnerable. Its aim is precisely to cause the greatest possible pain to children, the elderly and, if I may say so explicitly, to women. It is women who are so often used as targets in war. The fight for peace is always, always worthwhile. But in no circumstances should we consider the attackers and the attacked on an equal footing.

Mr. Baluțel (Moldova): At the outset, we reaffirm our unwavering commitment to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its international recognized borders. We reiterate our strong condemnation of the ongoing military aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, and we stand in full solidarity with Ukraine and the Ukrainian people. It is our moral duty as the international community to continue to support Ukraine, which is defending its own territories and its own people against foreign military aggression.

We would like to remind the Assembly that any annexation of a State's territory by another State through the threat or use of force is a violation of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. We do not recognize any modifications of the status of the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. In that regard, we condemn the decision by Russian authorities to hold so-called elections in Ukraine's temporarily militarily occupied territories, which is inconsistent with the Charter and violates Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Any escalation would increase the security risk for the entire region and to the Republic of Moldova as an immediate neighbour of Ukraine, and now those risks, unfortunately, include not only those posed by the use of conventional weapons but also by that of nuclear ones and attacks on the critical energy infrastructure.

We are deeply concerned by the threat of the use of nuclear weapons against a non-nuclear sovereign nation and about the critical situation around the nuclear power plant located near the military action zone. In that regard, we call on the Russian Federation to abide by the international agreements in the field of strategic weapons and nuclear safety. Such threats are unacceptable and must cease.

The Republic of Moldova is deeply concerned at the continuously increasing death toll and the number of injured civilians, as well as the significant destruction of civilian and energy infrastructure as the war continues to ravage Ukraine. We deplore the dramatic human rights situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine and are particularly appalled by the reports of violations against children.

In that regard, the Republic of Moldova highlights the importance of upholding international human rights and humanitarian law. Furthermore, we urge the Russian Federation to ensure immediate and unimpeded access to humanitarian assistance in the civilian population areas affected, including the areas under Russian military control.

The Republic of Moldova firmly condemns the unilateral Russian withdrawal from the Black Sea Grain Initiative, disregarding the relentless efforts made by the United Nations and Türkiye. Last night's bombing of the Odessa region, including the port, reveals Russia's tactic of weaponizing food and depriving those most in need. The violation of the Charter of the United Nations that we are witnessing today is an attack on the international community. We stress the need to ensure accountability for the autocrats who are killing civilians and damaging critical infrastructure through timely, fair and independent investigation, at both the national and international levels. That is of tremendous importance not only for ensuring justice for all victims of this war but also for preventing anyone from committing such violations ever again, in Ukraine or elsewhere.

We support the efforts of the international community to establish a special tribunal for the crime of aggression against Ukraine, and our country associates itself with the Council of Europe Register of Damage Caused by the Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine to hold Russia accountable for the war crimes and all violations of international humanitarian law committed in Ukraine.

The Republic of Moldova expresses its support for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine, in accordance with the Charter and the General Assembly resolution adopted in February last year. We stand in full solidarity with our neighbouring country and will continue to provide support to Ukraine and the Ukrainian people.

In conclusion, the Republic of Moldova aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the representative of the European Union and would like to reiterate its respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its international recognized borders.

Mr. Oliphant (Canada) (*spoke in French*): This debate is an opportunity to reflect on the effects of Russia's illegal, ongoing occupation of Ukrainian territories and the atrocities that it has committed. Canada continues to call for sustained action to address those evils.

How bravely have ordinary Ukrainians endured occupation, and to what depths has Russia sunk in adapting itself to the role of aggressor and occupier?

After the explosion of the Kakhovka dam, we witnessed two wholly different realities. On the right bank of the Dnipro River, Ukrainian authorities worked tirelessly to evacuate the population. On the left bank, in the Russian-occupied areas of Kherson, people sat, stranded, on their roofs, as the water level rose. Those ordinary Ukrainians were callously abandoned and left to their own devices while Russian authorities denied the obvious state of emergency.

Locals who tried to flee the towns of Oleskhy and Kardashynka were turned away by Russian soldiers, who told them to go back and wait for official lists of those who would be evacuated. Russian occupiers blocked Ukrainian officials from trying to help. Those are not the actions of liberators. Nor are the rampant human rights abuses, the pauperization of the people and the cultural assimilation being perpetrated by Russia in the temporarily occupied territories.

(*spoke in English*)

Canada condemns in the strongest terms Russia's deplorable actions in those occupied areas. With each new city reclaimed by Ukraine, new evidence is unearthed, and we learn more about the brutal practices of Russian soldiers, civilians and police authorities — from torture rooms to mass graves, to forced deportations, kidnappings, involuntary adoptions and labour camps.

Last 12 October, in the Assembly, 143 Member States voted to condemn Russia's illegal attempted annexation of four Ukrainian regions (resolution ES-11/4). We demanded that Russia "immediately,

completely and unconditionally withdraw” from Ukraine’s land. President Putin cannot redraw the map as he pleases.

As each day passes, Russia continues to violate Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. It continues to disregard international law and the Charter of the United Nations, which form the basis for all we do here. And, as we have already heard mentioned, Russia’s illegal occupations in its full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine were certainly preceded by its illegal occupation of Crimea.

Russia’s efforts to annex Ukrainian territories have followed a playbook it first set out in Crimea in 2014: sham referendums, replacement of school materials, replacement of Ukrainian place names with Soviet names, replacement of local officials and replacement of official documents. But it has gone still further.

What have we learned in the past year? We have learned that Russian authorities act in occupied territories as a police State. Civil liberties and freedom of speech are violently curtailed. Ukrainians are interrogated, abducted and forcibly detained under false pretences.

Russian authorities are also guilty of theft and looting. In the Luhansk region, Russian officials have taken combines, trucks and other expensive equipment from farmers who cannot show certain ownership documents. In Berdiansk, Russian occupiers have started removing valuable paintings — cultural works — from the art museum. Those actions are part of Russia’s annexation playbook. We know them only too well. We saw them in Crimea, and we are seeing them again.

Russian authorities have militarized the Ukrainian territory that they are temporarily occupying, undermining the cohesion of Ukrainian civilian communities and forcibly coupling them to Russia’s illegal war effort. That includes forced conscription and mobilization, and reports that Russia is now exploiting mobilization as a form of extortion by pressuring Ukrainian men to pay Russian military authorities to postpone their recruitment. Civilians have limited access to hospitals, which have been handed over for treatment of Russian soldiers.

In the case of the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant, Russia’s occupation of a civilian energy facility is the

root cause of all nuclear safety and security threats at that facility.

Russia’s continued military presence has significantly raised the risk of a nuclear incident. Ukrainian civilian staff at the plant continue to work under immensely challenging circumstances and are forced to perform their essential functions under undue pressure and coercion.

It is perhaps the greatest tragedy that children’s lives have been ruined by this war. I was deeply moved by the excerpt from the diaries read by Ukraine’s Minister for Foreign Affairs here today. Children should know peace, prosperity, education, culture and the fullness of life. That includes not only across all of Ukraine but also in the territories that Russia temporarily controls. The education of more than 5 million Ukrainian children has been seriously disrupted. Schools have been damaged, even looted or destroyed. Thousands of Ukrainian children have been deported or abducted by Russia.

In the Ukrainian territory that it occupies, Russia has pursued a policy of forced cultural assimilation, including closing schools and Russifying the school curriculum, imposing the Russian language and Russian documentation, and deliberately erasing Ukraine’s cultural heritage. Some students and teachers have been forced to attend Russian schools for indoctrination, and Ukrainian textbooks have been banned and at times destroyed.

Meanwhile, the occupying Russian authorities have set 1 September as the deadline to obtain a Russian passport, after which their Ukrainian passports will be rejected. That will include a requirement to present a Russian passport before signing any new supply contracts for electricity — essential services. In some areas, Russian officials have denied medications or threatened eviction to pressure the population to accept Russian documents.

This debate is taking place even as we commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Rome Statute. Canada is proud to support the International Criminal Court’s investigations into Russia’s actions in Ukraine. For as long as it takes, Canada will be there to support Ukraine’s fight for freedom, justice and accountability.

Ukraine’s borders will not change. Ukraine’s territory will remain Ukraine’s. President Putin cannot redraw the map as he pleases.

As I said, we, with, I think, everyone in this Hall, hail the ongoing resilience and courage of ordinary Ukrainians. They are courageous, they are tenacious, they are proud, and they are worthy of our respect. We will continue to support them as we call on Russia to withdraw from Ukraine's land, and we urge other members of the General Assembly to do the very same.

Mr. Takei (Japan): My heart breaks every time I see the horrifying images in Ukraine — people fleeing and civilian infrastructure destroyed.

My home prefecture of Miyazaki, in Japan, a city of 1 million people — just as many as Kherson Oblast, in Ukraine — hosts refugees from Ukraine. I am proud that Japan, including Miyazaki, has provided a safe environment for more than 2,000 Ukrainian refugees, although the number may sound modest. We have also decided to accept injured Ukrainian soldiers in Japan.

Japan has announced that it will provide \$7.6 billion of assistance to Ukraine and has been steadily implementing that. We will also strongly support recovery and reconstruction in Ukraine.

Let us remember that we have seen too much suffering caused by Russia's unlawful aggression: refugees, the food and energy security crises, human rights abuses, victims and casualties. There would be no more such suffering if Russia heeded the resolutions of the General Assembly.

I condemn Russia for taking the rest of the world hostage and choosing to terminate its participation in the Black Sea Grain Initiative. Japan strongly urges Russia to return to the international framework and stop blaming others for the crises that its aggression has created.

In the absence of the President, Mr. Wallace (Jamaica), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In that regard, I admire Secretary-General Guterres and his team. Their tireless efforts have alleviated some of the collateral damage to the rest of the world.

Let us remember that it has been almost 10 years since the General Assembly declared that the so-called annexation of Crimea had no validity (resolution 68/262). What we have been witnessing since then is consistent and long-term disrespect for the Charter of the United Nations by a permanent member of the Security Council.

The complete and unconditional withdrawal of the Russian military forces should be integral part of a just peace in Ukraine. That peace would become an unjust one if the aggressors were to be rewarded. A just peace must be based on the principles of the Charter.

We are at a crossroads. It is not about choosing camps, nor is it about taking the middle ground between opposing camps. The choice is about the rules, not just the rules for some but the rules for all — the Charter of the United Nations. We have to unite for the rule of law and defend the Charter. Justice based on international law must always prevail.

Ms. Tripodi (Italy) (*spoke in Italian; interpretation provided by the delegation*): The annexation of Ukrainian territory by the Russian Federation is the result of a direct attack not only against Ukraine but against the fundamental principles of international law and of the very Charter of the United Nations.

The system proposed by the Russian Federation is an international order in which a justification exists for the use of force by the stronger against the weaker. The latter thus is deprived of the guarantees of international law and of the freedom to choose its preferred institutional framework or its own future standing in the global arena. That is unacceptable to Italy.

Italy stands with the Ukrainian people and the Kyiv Government. The appalling consequences of that aggression go well beyond the European continent, threatening the more fragile segments of the world population owing to its negative impact on food and energy security.

Given the criminal choices imposed by the Russian Federation with respect to the correct functioning of the Black Sea Grain Initiative, we must respond with renewed vigour to facilitate exports of Ukrainian agricultural products along other routes.

In this way we believe that the European corridors of solidarity remain an essential tool to contain the impact of the war on global food security — a war, and we must underline this, that only increases inequality, hunger and poverty. Russia did not only attack Ukraine but has also occupied its territories and formally claimed annexation, denying the country's internationally recognized borders. Any action that verges on recognizing that occupation or that promotes its consolidation opens very dark and dangerous scenarios for the entire world — dynamics that, at

the end of the Second World War, the international community intended to end. In 1945, the United Nations was founded with the mission of guaranteeing for future generations peace, the abandonment of violence as an instrument to resolve conflicts, and prosperity.

We therefore encourage all members of the Assembly, in line with resolution ES-11/6, of 23 February, to work to bring about a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in Ukraine and to work together on a solution that can guarantee the full sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

Italy supports the 10-point Ukrainian peace proposal because it aims to ensure such a solution without compromises on the nature of the aggression and the occupation of Ukrainian territories. Ukraine can count on Italy's support for as long as it is necessary to create the conditions for a just, comprehensive and lasting peace, and anyone who is interested in working towards that end can count on us.

Mr. Matušić (Croatia): It has been more than a year and a half since the Russian Federation began to carry out its brutal war of aggression against Ukraine. The unprovoked and unjustified Russian aggression against Ukraine has severely affected both the regional and global security architectures, including the pillars of nuclear safety and security. It has undermined the principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty and the right of States to freely choose their political destiny.

There are frightening reports of the continuous worsening of basic human rights in the temporarily occupied areas of Ukraine, among them numerous cases of detentions, forced disappearances, deportations and the destruction of civilian infrastructure. Many United Nations reports have documented widespread patterns of executions, torture and ill-treatment of prisoners of war and civilians by the Russian Federation.

The impact of Russia's aggression on children is particularly worrisome. Minister Kuleba read us emotional quotes from the diaries of teenagers that best describe how the brutal Russian aggression affects their lives. In the past few years, Russian forces have reportedly abducted thousands of children from the temporarily occupied regions of Ukraine. Well over a million women, children and elderly people have been forced to go on the run to escape the horrors of war.

In this era of insecurity, the economic and social consequences of war threaten global prosperity

and negatively impact the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The war also has had economic repercussions on many areas. One of the most dramatic global effects of the Russian aggression is the food crisis and the threat of food shortages looming over large parts of the world. The aggression against Ukraine is leading to rising prices and to food and energy scarcity. Russia's recent decision not to extend the grain deal is yet another blow to food security in many countries, including developing ones. Croatia is ready to help find new directions for exports of Ukrainian grain. Croatian railways and especially Croatian ports on the Adriatic Sea could be one of the alternative routes.

The humanitarian situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine is of grave concern. Russia refuses to comply with its obligations under international humanitarian law by preventing evacuations and the free passage of humanitarian convoys and severely restricting access for the established international humanitarian mechanism to Ukrainian prisoners of war and captured civilians. We urge Russia to enable rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access to populations in need of assistance, in particular in the temporarily occupied territories. Aid cannot be denied to those in need.

Since the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Croatia has unequivocally stood firmly by Ukraine and its people. To date Croatia has supported Ukraine in the amount of almost €230 million, and temporary protection status in Croatia has been extended to nearly 25,000 persons from Ukraine. What is more, Croatia will host in October an international donor conference on demining Ukraine.

Croatia has condemned violations of human rights and international humanitarian law on numerous occasions in international forums, including at sessions of the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly.

Sadly, there are no signs of the war slowing down. In fact, it appears that the most likely scenario we are facing is prolonged war. With that in mind, the importance of continued support to Ukraine will continue to be vital. Croatia is committed to supporting Ukraine as long as is necessary.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for the Environment, Climate, Communications and Transport of Ireland.

Mr. Ryan (Ireland): We welcome the fact that the General Assembly is meeting again today to address Russia's repeated attacks on Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

With its invasion of Crimea, the fostering of violent separatism, its illegal and unjustified full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the attempted illegal annexation of the Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk and Zaporizhzhya regions, Russia has made clear its disregard for the Charter of the United Nations, for international law and for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States.

Let me make three points.

First, Russia's war of choice is a war not only on the people of Ukraine but also on the Charter of the United Nations and the multilateral system.

Russia seeks to impose its will on a peaceful neighbour. It has blatantly violated the Charter's principles of the sovereign equality and territorial integrity of States as well as the obligation of all States to refrain from threatening or using force against another State. Ireland unequivocally condemns that, including Russia's nuclear threats.

Here in the General Assembly, we all rely on the rules-based international order as a guarantee of our independence, our sovereignty and our security. If we fail to hold Russia accountable, if we fail to respond to Russia's attack on the Charter of the United Nations, we will leave the world a more dangerous place for us all.

We must remain fully committed to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. Those borders have not changed, and Russia's use of force will not change them.

Secondly, it is essential that international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law, be fully respected and upheld.

Russia's war has been fought with utter disregard for human life. Russia has attacked civilians, schools, hospitals and other essential civilian infrastructure. That includes targeting humanitarian workers and civilians fleeing the conflict. Civilians in occupied territories have suffered appalling sexual and gender-based violence.

Russia's war has caused the deaths of tens of thousands of men, women and children, and forced millions of others to flee their homes in search of safety.

More than a million more have been forcibly deported to Russia, including thousands of children kidnapped in an effort to deny Ukraine a future.

The war risks environmental catastrophe, not only through events such as the destruction of the Kakhovka dam but also in Russia's reckless activities around the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant. We should be clear: the protection of civilians must come first, and Russia must be held accountable for its actions.

Thirdly, Russia's war of aggression is threatening global food security. The world's most vulnerable people are being directly impacted by increased food and economic insecurity as well as the rising cost of energy and commodities. Russia's weaponization of food is unacceptable.

We support the work of the Secretary-General on the Black Sea Grain Initiative. We deeply regret Russia's decision to withdraw from the Initiative. We urge it to stop playing games and to immediately return to the Black Sea Grain Initiative, put it on a sustainable footing and allow life-saving grain to reach those who need it most.

This war is entirely of Russia's making. Just as Russia chose to start this war, it can choose to end it. We call on Russia to immediately cease hostilities and unconditionally withdraw from the entire territory of Ukraine.

Ireland stands fully with the people of Ukraine in the face of that brutal aggression. We support the tireless efforts of the Secretary-General and Ukraine itself to put an end to the conflict and for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace, based on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Štucin (Slovenia): Slovenia aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the representative of the European Union and would like to make the following remarks in our national capacity.

Earlier in the month, we passed the 500-day mark of the brutal and illegal war in Ukraine — a mark at which yet another States Member of the United Nations put aside the Charter of the United Nations and its principles of sovereign equality and territorial integrity and decided to use force against another country.

Slovenia once again strongly condemns Russia's act of aggression, its violation of international law and its infringement upon Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial

integrity, which undermine global security. We firmly reject the attempted illegal annexation of Ukraine's Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhya regions as well as the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol and remain committed to the policy of non-recognition. Any attempt to hold elections in the occupied territories would be a further violation of international law.

I would like to reiterate Slovenia's unwavering support for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders, as well as its inherent right to self-defence. We therefore call for an immediate cessation of hostilities, the withdrawal of foreign forces from the occupied territories and the restoration of peace and stability in the region.

We remain dismayed by the devastating and far-reaching impacts of that war on the Ukrainian people. Millions of refugees are seeking shelter abroad. Millions of people in Ukraine have no access to basic requirements, and thousands have lost their lives as a direct result of the hostilities. We must prioritize the well-being and safety of the affected civilian population and ensure access to humanitarian assistance.

Many internally displaced women and children are at risk of human trafficking, exploitation and conflict-related sexual violence. Slovenia has always prioritized its humanitarian response to respond to the plight of children when their childhoods are at risk of ending prematurely. We are therefore glad to be able to also answer the call of Ukrainian children by providing psychosocial support to youth from Kyiv, Bucha and Irpin.

The war's impacts do not end within the borders of Ukraine or Europe. The Black Sea Grain Initiative has been vital in alleviating the impacts on global food security and providing hope for people in dire need of food. We are deeply concerned about Russia's decision to terminate the implementation of the initiative.

As the Secretary-General pointed out yesterday, the global effects on food prices were immediate and felt most by the people who already faced hunger. Slovenia commends the United Nations and Türkiye for their efforts in brokering the initiative, and we call on Russia to reconsider its decision and renew the Black Sea Grain Initiative.

Global concerns extend also to the safety of Ukraine's nuclear facilities. We support all efforts by the International Atomic Energy Agency to reduce the risks of nuclear accidents, and we call on all parties to implement safety measures.

Slovenia condemns the deliberate, repeated and targeted attacks on civilian and critical infrastructure by the Russian army, which constitute a clear violation of international humanitarian law. The massive environmental damage that we are witnessing will linger in Ukraine and beyond for years and decades to come.

My country is a firm advocate of the fight against impunity and ensuring accountability for the perpetrators of atrocities, including those committed in Ukraine. In May Slovenia hosted a diplomatic conference that resulted in the adoption of the Ljubljana-The Hague mutual legal assistance Convention on International Cooperation in the Investigation and Prosecution of Genocide, Crimes against Humanity, War Crimes and other International Crimes. We call on all countries to become parties to that Convention as soon as possible.

Diplomacy, dialogue and negotiation are the only viable means of ending this conflict. We believe that peace initiatives such as the recent African leaders' peace mission are an important contribution to that end as well.

I would like to conclude by reaffirming Slovenia's unwavering support for the efforts of the United Nations and other international organizations that are working towards a peaceful solution to the war in Ukraine. We continue to stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine, whose lives have been irrevocably altered by this senseless war.

Mr. Collet (Kingdom of the Netherlands): The Kingdom of the Netherlands aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the representative of the European Union.

At the outset, let me state clearly that the Kingdom of the Netherlands is unwavering in its support for Ukraine's independence and sovereignty, its territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders and its democratic freedom.

As ordered by the International Court of Justice (ICC), with binding effect, and as stated in a crystal-clear fashion by the General Assembly, the

Russian Federation must immediately suspend its military operations against Ukraine and pull back its troops. There is no doubt about what needs to be done to stop this war, and it needs to be done immediately.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands remains deeply concerned by the continuous and large-scale violations of human rights in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, and we profoundly appreciate the work done by the United Nations to document findings and develop reports. We find specifically disturbing, first, reports from the United Nations Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine that Russian security forces deported and forcibly transferred civilians, including children, from the Kherson, Zaporizhzhya, Donetsk and Luhansk regions to Crimea and Russian territory. Those actions constitute grave violations of international law. We call on the Russian Federation to immediately halt the deportation and illegal transfer of persons, including children, and ensure that all are allowed to return home. In that context, we welcome the ICC arrest warrant.

Secondly, we are concerned at reports of summary executions, torture, mistreatment, arbitrary detention and forced disappearances of civilians by Russian troops, as reported by the United Nations human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine. Impunity is not an option. We therefore support both the Ukrainian authorities and the ICC in prosecuting and adjudicating international crimes.

Furthermore, we are proud hosts of the International Centre for the Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine, an important step towards an aggression tribunal. We are equally proud hosts of the Register of Damage Caused by the Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, a first step towards a full-fledged compensation mechanism.

Here I must also emphasize the importance of maintaining sustainable political and financial support for those accountability tracks and the need to effectively coordinate those tracks, *inter alia*, via the Dialogue Group.

Thirdly, we are also deeply troubled by the Russian Federation's most recent attempt to weaponize food by blocking the continuation of the Black Sea Grain Initiative. It is important to note that the Netherlands has always facilitated the transit of Russian fertilizer via the World Food Programme to those countries in need within the framework of the Black Sea Grain

Initiative. We therefore call on Russia, in order not to exacerbate world food insecurity, to reinstate the grain deal without delay.

In conclusion, it is high time that the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly confirming the territorial integrity and unity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders be implemented. We will continue to support Ukraine to help it defend itself and overcome the Russian aggression for as long as needed.

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

Mr. Skoog (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States.

The candidate countries North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the potential candidate country Georgia, as well as Andorra, Monaco and San Marino, all align themselves with this statement.

I welcome very much the opportunity to address the General Assembly on the situation of the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. Our most recent discussion under this agenda item took place on 23 February last year (see A/76/PV.58), on the eve of Russia's full-scale invasion of its neighbour. At the time, its delegation was still denying Moscow's plan to fully invade and occupy Ukraine. Since then, more than 500 days of death and destruction have passed.

The EU reiterates its resolute condemnation of Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression, which constitutes a manifest violation of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations and the resolutions of the General Assembly.

This discussion is not just about Ukraine but also about each and every independent country in this Hall. It is about respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all States.

Allow me to make three points in my intervention concerning, first, Russia's attempts to change by force the internationally recognized borders of Ukraine; secondly, the deeply concerning human rights situation in the temporarily occupied territories; and, thirdly, the need for full accountability.

Over the past 17 months, Russia has yet again tried and yet again failed to change by force the internationally recognized borders of Ukraine. We reiterate our condemnation and firm rejection of the attempted illegal annexation by Russia of Ukraine's Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhya regions. Those illegal attempts have no standing or legal force in international law. As in the case of Crimea and Sevastopol, we do not, and never will, recognize those illegal annexation attempts and urge all Members of the United Nations to do the same, in line with the Charter of the United Nations and the resolution adopted in October (resolution ES-11/4) by an overwhelming majority of States Members of the United Nations.

The recent decision by the Russian Central Election Commission to hold so-called elections in the temporarily military-occupied territories of Ukraine represents yet another serious violation of international law. Russia has no legitimate basis for any such action on the territory of Ukraine.

The human rights situation in the temporarily occupied territories is of grave concern. International monitoring mechanisms, including the United Nations human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine and the United Nations Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, have concluded that Russia has committed a wide range of violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in Ukraine. Those violations include indiscriminate attacks as well as intentional attacks against civilians and civilian objects, widespread and systematic summary executions, torture and ill-treatment and unlawful confinement, as well as inhumane detention conditions, rape and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence and forced transfer and deportation, including of children. Many of those amount to war crimes.

The latest report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the detention of civilians documents 864 cases of arbitrary detention of civilians perpetrated by Russia and 77 summary executions of civilians and concludes that Russian authorities have engaged in widespread torture and ill-treatment of civilian detainees.

Furthermore, the report of the Secretary-General on the situation of children in armed conflict (A/77/895) lists the Russian army and affiliated armed groups as one of the perpetrators of grave violations against

children. We condemn in the strongest terms Russia's unlawful deportation and transfer to Russia and to Belarus of Ukrainian children and other civilians. Russia and Belarus must immediately ensure their safe return.

I express our full support for the work of the United Nations to monitor and report on human rights violations and abuses and to support efforts toward accountability. We call on Russia to uphold international human rights and humanitarian law. It must enable full, safe and unhindered humanitarian access through the front lines and stop willingly withholding aid from people in need in the non-Government-controlled areas.

Finally, the EU remains firmly committed to ensure that Russia is held accountable for its war of aggression against Ukraine. The International Centre for the Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine has started its support operations in The Hague. The work to establish a tribunal for the prosecution of the crime of aggression against Ukraine will continue.

We welcome the adoption of the Ljubljana-The Hague Convention on International Cooperation in the Investigation and Prosecution of Genocide, Crimes against Humanity, War Crimes and other International Crimes, and we call on all countries to become parties to the Convention as soon as possible. We welcome the establishment of the Council of Europe Register of Damage Caused by the Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine and calls for work to continue, in line with resolution ES-11/5.

We are unwavering in our support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders and its inherent right of self-defence against the Russian aggression. The EU will support Ukraine for as long as it takes and is more committed than ever to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace, in line with the Charter of the United Nations and the resolutions of the General Assembly.

Donetsk is Ukraine, Luhansk is Ukraine, Kherson is Ukraine, Zaporizhzhya is Ukraine, and Crimea is Ukraine. The world will not accept Russia's attempted land grab, and the aggressor will be held to account.

Mr. Al Shehhi (Oman) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is an honour for me to deliver this statement on behalf of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member States, namely, the United Arab Emirates, the Kingdom of

Bahrain, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the State of Qatar, the State of Kuwait and my own country, the Sultanate of Oman.

The GCC member States are following closely the developments of the situation in Ukraine, especially its humanitarian aspects, in the light of the increased number of internally displaced persons and refugees and the loss of life among civilians, especially women and children, not to mention the damage caused to infrastructure.

The GCC member States reiterate their firm position on the need to remain committed to the established principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, which govern relations among States and which are based on respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, non-interference in their internal affairs and respect for good-neighbourly ties. We would like to mention in that context Article 2 of the Charter, which requires Member States to settle their international disputes by peaceful means while refraining from the threat or use of force in international relations.

The GCC member States stress that resolving disputes and conflicts must take place through dialogue, negotiations, peaceful means and diplomatic channels.

All GCC member States enjoy friendly ties with all parties, and we encourage the international and regional efforts that are being made to resolve that issue, in accordance with the provisions of international law and the United Nations principles enshrined in the Charter. Moreover, the GCC member States commend the efforts exerted by the countries that are hosting refugees from conflict areas.

The GCC member States call on all parties to uphold their commitments under international law and international humanitarian law with regard to the protection of civilians and to refraining from targeting or destroying civilian property. Moreover, we would remind all parties of their commitments under international humanitarian law with regard to prisoners, the wounded and missing persons and facilitating the prompt and safe access of humanitarian aid to all those in need, as well as respecting and protecting those working in the medical and humanitarian fields.

In conclusion, and on behalf of the GCC member States, we can only commend the intensive efforts that the United Nations and humanitarian organizations are

making to promptly respond to the urgent humanitarian needs of civilians. In that regard, the GCC member States express their regret at the fact that the Black Sea Grain Initiative was not renewed, because it was not only a humanitarian one in terms of guaranteeing price stability and food security for the peoples of the world, especially in the developing world, but it also offered the possibility of keeping diplomatic work active in a manner that would benefit the world.

The GCC member States would like to commend the recent efforts by the Secretary-General to renew the Black Sea Grain Initiative through tangible solutions that guarantee the continued participation of the parties concerned therein. We encourage all parties to return to the negotiating table so that the initiative can be renewed, as it remains vital to global food security.

Ms. Chan Valverde (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Yesterday afternoon, the Security Council convened a high-level briefing on Ukraine (see S/PV.9380). That gathering served as an opportunity to discuss the latest developments on the ground occurring just over 500 days following the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine.

We received updates on numerous issues, but one was conspicuous by its absence: the concrete and immediate measures needed to end this war. Although more than 500 days have passed, there is still no plan for a ceasefire or for the Russian Federation to withdraw its troops and vacate the occupied territory. That silence not only keeps alive a dangerous situation with real potential to escalate to nuclear proportions, but it also does a disservice to those who endure the repercussions of that horrendous conflict.

Meanwhile, military spending has continued to escalate to historic highs, alongside an increase in the supply of modern military equipment by land, sea and air. The higher the production of weapons, the greater the number that will elude even our most rigorous management and control efforts.

Costa Rica unequivocally acknowledges Ukraine's legitimate struggle against Russian aggression. However, we are disturbed and dismayed by the transfer of cluster munitions to Ukraine. Cluster munitions do not win wars; instead, they inflict severe harm on civilians and on future generations by contaminating farmlands, playgrounds and yards with explosives that pose a threat to unsuspecting children and farmers alike. To say that the long-term damage and suffering

will affect predominantly civilians is no exaggeration. We urge all States that have yet to do so to sign the Convention on Cluster Munitions and to end the use, production, transfer and stockpiling of such weaponry.

Costa Rica expresses regret over the Russian suspension of the Black Sea Grain Initiative. We firmly believe that that conflict has implications that go beyond Ukraine's borders. It extends to food insecurity for States within and outside Africa, the Middle East and Asia, which rely on Ukrainian wheat. It affects national budgets already strained by a global pandemic, now recklessly delving into the global arms market, and States near the conflict zones, scrambling to secure alliances that may or may not ultimately provide safety.

It is urgent that a ceasefire in Ukraine be negotiated. That should be followed by the swift withdrawal of Russian forces. It will then be crucial to determine the most effective means to mend that latest breach in the mantle of credibility that still shields parts of our multilateral system. That rupture has serious implications for the millions living amid violence, with their rights violated and grappling with food and energy insecurity in conflict-stricken areas both within and beyond Ukraine. We cannot afford to waste time; that is a luxury that is beyond our means.

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein): The last time the General Assembly began consideration of this agenda item was on 23 February 2022 (see A/76/PV.58). We convened as a State member of the Assembly was about to execute a full-scale invasion of another Member State, in flagrant violation of the foundational principles of the Organization and its Charter.

Nearly 18 months on, the title of this agenda item is no less relevant, but its territorial ambit, sadly, is far more significant. Let me reaffirm again Liechtenstein's strong support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, and the inviolability of all its frontiers. We condemn all attempts to annex any part of Ukraine and will not recognize them.

The full-scale aggression against Ukraine has only increased the importance of Crimea to Ukraine's territorial integrity and its status as an integral part of the country.

The Assembly has responded strongly to the Russian aggression against Ukraine since February of last year. The six draft resolutions adopted as part of the eleventh emergency special session (resolutions A/ES-

11/1-6) have illustrated clearly the collective political will of the United Nations membership to oppose the aggression against Ukraine, to demand accountability for the crimes committed and to outline the parameters for a just peace, in line with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

The history of this agenda item makes it clear that the aggression against Ukraine did not begin last year. We must take an honest look at our past actions and omissions in this respect, as well as their consequences. The meek response of the Assembly to the invasion and annexation of Crimea in 2014 unfortunately helped create the conditions for Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022. No State or people should have to endure what Ukraine has endured, especially since February of last year. The Charter offers clear protections against aggression that we have an obligation to enforce, both in the context of Ukraine and with respect to any future occurrence.

So far, the Assembly's response to the full-scale invasion has put us on the right track to prevent a repetition of the mistakes of 2014. The Assembly has both reaffirmed the illegality of the aggression and outlined minimum standards that can underpin a comprehensive, just and lasting peace. It has demanded the complete withdrawal of all Russian military forces from the territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders and full adherence by the parties to their obligations under international humanitarian law. Going forward, we must hold fast to Article 1 of the Charter, which outlines the dual imperatives of the suppression of acts of aggression and the self-determination of peoples as a means for strengthening peace. Russia's leadership must be held accountable for the crime of aggression as a consequence of the Assembly's determination that Russia has committed acts of aggression against Ukraine. The Assembly should therefore recommend the creation of a special international tribunal for the crime of aggression on the basis of an agreement between Ukraine and the United Nations. For the sake not just of Ukraine but more importantly the international legal order generally, we have to reflect the fact that the crime is not only the manner in which the war has been waged but the waging of the war itself. Holding those responsible accountable is an essential investment in the rule of law and the protection of the Charter.

Revisiting the cardinal principle of self-determination is also key. In 2014 the Assembly did not effectively counter Russia's narrative that some

parts of Ukraine were not as Ukrainian as others and that consequently Ukraine's territorial integrity was negotiable. That is despite the fact that Russia's decision to annex Crimea abrogated parts of the Minsk agreements, notably those on local self-governance. Our investments in the rule of law and inclusive governance are not only investments in sustainable peace but a response to attempts to undermine sovereignty, territorial integrity and self-determination.

This week, which began yesterday with the World Day for International Justice and the anniversary of the downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH-17, as well as Russia's troubling announcement of its termination of the Black Sea Grain Initiative, illustrates the wide range of challenges that Ukraine faces and their implications for the world. Today we reiterate our full support to Ukraine and to the principles laid down in the Charter, and we look forward to working together with all Member States to ensure justice, accountability, self-determination and indeed peace.

Mr. Önal (Türkiye): More than 500 days have passed since the start of the war in Ukraine. Thousands of civilians have lost their lives. Millions have had to leave their homes and have become refugees or internally displaced persons. Many are stranded in areas affected by the conflict. The cost of the material damage is now in the billions of dollars. The heavy toll of the war on women and children in particular is very concerning.

Türkiye's position has been clear and consistent from the outset. We remain committed to Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. From day one, we have also activated diplomatic efforts and tried to help find a just political solution to the crisis. We have advocated for freedom of movement for the United Nations and other international organizations in providing humanitarian assistance. As things stand, establishing accountability is also critical to deterring and preventing violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. We call on all sides to conduct fair, prompt and impartial investigations into all the allegations of violations and to hold the perpetrators accountable.

The ongoing war continues to have negative repercussions on energy prices, supply-chain disruptions and global food insecurity. The Black Sea Grain Initiative has had a stabilizing effect on grain prices and contributed to food security globally for

almost a year now. We hope that the current halt will be temporary and the operations will be resumed as soon as possible in order to address the needs and expectations of all stakeholders.

Ensuring safety and security in and around the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant remains a sensitive responsibility, particularly after the destruction of the Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant. Any action that could lead to escalation around the plant must therefore be avoided.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate our long-held view that the trajectory and resolution of the conflict cannot be decided only through the dynamics of the battlefield. Diplomacy must be prioritized, and it should be part and parcel of all the efforts to end this destructive war and forge the elements of a just and viable peace.

Ms. Rodríguez Mancia (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): I appreciate the convening of this important debate. Russia's illegal, unprovoked and unjustified aggression against Ukraine is the greatest threat to the international rules-based order since the Second World War. Since Russia's aggression against Ukraine began, Guatemala has strongly condemned in various forums Russia's acts against Ukraine's territorial integrity and population, which are in clear violation of the Charter of the United Nations. As a founding member of the United Nations, Guatemala attaches the utmost importance to the Charter, since it outlines the highest ideals of multilateralism, promotes fundamental principles of international law and respects the sovereign equality, territorial integrity and political independence of States and the principle of non-intervention in their internal affairs, all of which all Member States must abide by.

We have also condemned Russia's flagrant violations of international law and international human rights law, which have caused the unnecessary loss of lives, including of men, women and children, all of them victims of an unjustified act that continues to threaten the region and global stability and security. Consequently, Guatemala has been a sponsor of all the relevant resolutions submitted to the General Assembly and other international bodies, including Human Rights Council resolution 49/1, which established the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, whose purpose is to investigate all violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law in the context of the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine since 2014.

In addition, Guatemala co-facilitated the initiative in the General Assembly recommending the creation of an international register of damages to serve as a documentary record of evidence and information for claims of damage, loss or injury to all natural and legal persons concerned. We therefore support the peace formula introduced by Ukraine, whose aim is to establish comprehensive, just and sustainable peace and security based on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. We also support the Crimea Platform, which clearly represents the international community's willingness to mobilize and a decisive step towards encouraging withdrawal from the occupied territories and the restoration of Ukraine's control over them. Moreover, we support the establishment of a special tribunal for Russia's aggression against Ukraine based on an agreement between Ukraine and the United Nations, an option has the advantage of conferring maximum legitimacy, since the recommendation for the tribunal's creation falls within the purview of the General Assembly, based on its legal competence and in line with several precedents.

The duty to prevent and punish these inhuman acts falls to all of us as States Members of the Organization and in particular to the Security Council's permanent members, which have special obligations and responsibilities pertaining to the maintenance of international peace and security. In that regard, Guatemala, as a State that respects international law and has a deep desire for peace, calls for prioritizing diplomacy with a view to preventing an even greater escalation of the conflict from having disastrous consequences on a global scale. We also reiterate the importance of seeking a peaceful solution to the crisis while respecting the sovereignty, territorial integrity, human rights and security of all countries.

In conclusion, Guatemala would like to express its support for life and for international peace and security, with a firm commitment to leaving future generations a better world. For that reason we especially appreciated the statement of the Foreign Minister of Ukraine this morning in which he relayed experiences recorded by young Ukrainians in their diaries. May those accounts serve as an inspiration and an urgent call to all.

Mr. Hoxha (Albania): In 2008, in an effort to assert its influence and recover from the aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall, Russia occupied some parts of the territory of Georgia in a short but brutal war. The world rushed to make amends by using existing mechanisms,

believing that by accommodating Russian grievances, peaceful solutions would be found. Six years later, Russia went hunting again, and its appetite grew. The so-called little green men of the Russian army occupied Crimea and some other parts of the Ukrainian territory. In Crimea, Russia planted a flag and said, "This is mine". The world was wrong not to consider those moves a teaser for Russia's massive military aggression against Ukraine, which began on 24 February of last year. The rest is known and is still unfolding before our eyes.

While the Security Council has been taken hostage and is paralysed, the General Assembly has massively condemned the unjustified and unprovoked military aggression of Russia against Ukraine and has outlined the path to a just and comprehensive peace. But that has not stopped the war — a war that has caused unimaginable suffering, with devastating consequences that are not limited to Ukraine alone. While Russia has been destroying Ukraine's agricultural economy, food insecurity has had a severe impact on many regions of the world, and to make things worse, Russia is now withdrawing from the Black Sea Grain Initiative. And while killing civilians and flattening residential areas in Ukraine, Russia has repeatedly threatened the continent with the use of nuclear power.

According to United Nations reports, there is indisputable evidence that Russian forces and affiliated military groups have committed war crimes on a massive scale, including executions, torture and horrific sexual violence. It is our responsibility to do everything we can to prevent those crimes from going unpunished by working to ensure accountability. The International Criminal Court has initiated the process and has already launched an investigation into war crimes and crimes against humanity. Further modalities of the accountability process are under discussion.

If there is any place where we need to stand up and make a clear distinction between the attacker and the attacked, it should be the General Assembly, the place where the world meets every year. It is precisely here that we need to say loud and clear that we are for international law based on rules, for peace and cooperation, freedom and equality, and that we refuse to countenance the annexation of territory by force. It is here that we need to loudly condemn the aggression against Ukraine, support its sovereignty and territorial integrity and stand in solidarity with the country and its people until they are liberated. It is here that we

must renew our collective call on Russia to stop the war and unconditionally and completely withdraw all of its forces, proxies and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. And it is here that we need to make a strong case and work together for a just and lasting peace based on the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Ruidíaz Pérez (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Chile first spoke on this item last year during the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly (see A/76/PV.59). On that occasion, we, like others, called for a peaceful settlement of the conflict in eastern Ukraine, expressed concern about the recognition of independence for certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions and called for respect for the territorial integrity of Ukraine and of course for compliance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. We are disappointed that more than 500 days after that meeting, Ukraine's unity and sovereignty continue to be violated. We call for its internationally recognized borders to be respected. In that regard, we consider Kherson, Zaporizhzhya, Donetsk and Luhansk to be Ukrainian regions.

Chile promotes the full implementation of international humanitarian law to protect civilians, vital services and civilian infrastructure in the event of armed conflict. It should be stressed that in contexts of armed conflict, the warring parties must always comply with their international obligations and in particular must allow the delivery of humanitarian assistance to civilians and avoid damaging civilian infrastructure. We emphasize the fundamental principles enshrined in Article 2 of the Charter of the United Nations that govern international coexistence among Member States — refraining from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, settling disputes by peaceful means and fulfilling in good faith the obligations that States have assumed.

We would like to take this opportunity to strongly urge for continued efforts for dialogue and understanding, with a view to achieving peace and ensuring the welfare and security of the entire population, and we once again highlight the diplomatic efforts and negotiations being undertaken by friendly countries to achieve a peaceful solution to a critical situation.

Ms. Webster (Australia): Australia continues to stand with Ukraine today. It has been more than 500 days since Russia's unprovoked, full-scale invasion

of Ukraine began, and nearly 300 since its attempted illegal annexation of the Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk and Zaporizhzhya regions of Ukraine. Australia mourns the incalculable losses borne by Ukraine and honours the resilience of the Ukrainian people, who have displayed unwavering strength and courage in the face of Russia's aggression. We pay tribute to them and stand with them.

Ukraine is not just fighting for its own national sovereignty. It is fighting for the Charter of the United Nations and the international rule of law. This is a struggle that has implications for the entire world. We have seen the impact of Russia's aggression on global food and energy security and are concerned about the impact on developing countries and the world's most vulnerable people. In that context, Australia is deeply disappointed that the vital Black Sea Grain Initiative has not been extended. It was designed to contribute to the predictability of food supplies around the world, ensuring that grain could reach those who are most vulnerable to food insecurity, including in countries afflicted by drought and famine. We call on Russia to demonstrate its commitment to developing country partners, honour the Initiative and allow for a resumption of such vital trade.

Russia's aggression is a blatant violation of the Charter and international law. It cannot be normalized or minimized. Australia calls on Russia to immediately withdraw its military forces from Ukrainian territory, and on all Member States to hold Russia to account for its egregious violations of international law. We must never accept a situation in which larger countries determine the fate of smaller ones. We strongly support the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

Australia is deeply concerned about the findings of the Human Rights Council's Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine that Russian authorities have violated international humanitarian law and international human rights law and committed a range of war crimes. They include findings of wilful killings, attacks on civilians, unlawful confinement, torture, rape and the forced transfer and deportation of children. Australia continues to work with its partners to hold Russia to account, and we are committed to ensuring accountability for those serious international crimes in Ukraine. Our objective is to support Ukraine in resolving the war on its own terms and in line with international law. Russia's attack on Ukraine is an attack

on the principles that underpin peace and prosperity for us all. It is a terrible reminder of how much we have to lose if we fail to protect the rules-based world order.

Mr. Kulháněk (Czechia): As Russia's brutal war of aggression on Ukraine continues and the plight of civilians in the occupied territories worsens, it is important to ensure that the General Assembly continues to pay full attention to this horrible war. Russia's aggression against Ukraine represents a blatant violation of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and the rules-based international order. We should therefore all be alarmed. While more than 500 days have passed since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Russia's aggression started much earlier, with the illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014, which my country, Czechia, has never recognized. In 2014, Russia started its systematic persecution of the Crimean Tatar community and all pro-democratic residents of the Crimean peninsula. Since the full-scale invasion in February 2022, countless citizens of Ukraine have shared the same tragic fate.

Russia has established a repressive and lawless regime in the occupied territories and has committed systematic and widespread human rights violations, including the torture, rape and forced deportations of local residents, who are often held in isolation in Russia or areas controlled by Russia. The evidence of Russia's atrocities and unrelenting attacks on Ukraine's civilian population, including children, is overwhelming. Entire towns and villages have been wiped out. Mass graves and torture chambers have been found in many towns liberated by the Ukrainian army.

We condemn in the strongest possible terms the Russian occupation authorities' forcible deportations and adoptions of children from Ukraine, which intentionally hinder their reunification with their parents or other family members. Similarly, we condemn the coerced re-education of those children so that they are indoctrinated with Russia's aggressive nationalist and militarist ideology. Czechia shares the view of the Human Rights Council's Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine that Russia's forced deportation of Ukrainian children to areas under its control amounts to a war crime. We support the investigation into the situation in Ukraine by the International Criminal Court, welcome the issuance of arrest warrants against President Putin and his Presidential Commissioner on Children's Rights, Ms. Lvova-Belova, and trust in the obligatory

cooperation of States parties. The crime of aggression committed by the leadership of the Russian Federation must not go unpunished. We strongly believe that a special tribunal for investigating and prosecuting this crime on the part of the leadership is much needed. Its establishment must have a legitimate and legally sound basis.

We are concerned about Russia's deliberate attacks on Ukrainian civilian infrastructure, including nuclear facilities in Ukraine, and we strongly condemn the illegal seizure of the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant. Thanks to Russia's reckless behaviour, the nuclear safety and security situation at the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant continues to be extremely fragile and dangerous. Czechia is also deeply concerned about the destruction of the Kakhovka dam and its consequences. Russia made no effort to assist the residents affected by the flooding after its forces destroyed the dam, and we strongly deplore the inhuman treatment of the local population.

Last but not least, we cannot remain silent in the face of Russia's unilateral withdrawal from the Black Sea Grain Initiative, despite the best efforts of the United Nations and Türkiye. That deplorable and cynical decision has put the lives of millions of vulnerable people around the world at risk, and I want to say unequivocally that Russia bears full responsibility.

Russia must immediately, completely and unconditionally stop its aggression and withdraw its forces and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. We have stood with Ukraine from the beginning and remain committed to its desire for a just peace, as well as its undeniable right, in line with Article 51 of the Charter, to defend itself against Russia's aggression.

In conclusion, let me reiterate Czechia's unwavering support for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

Ms. Mocanu (Romania): My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the delegation of the European Union and welcomes today's General Assembly debate on the situation of the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine.

It has been more than a year and a half since the last time we tackled this item (see A/76/PV.58 and A/76/PV.59). Meanwhile, Russia has occupied more

areas of Ukraine. Russia's aggression is an illegal and blatant attempt to chip away at Ukraine's independence and sovereignty. It is completely unacceptable, and the international community has reacted in a decisive manner in this very Hall in defending the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations. The United Nations membership cannot treat this case as business as usual or ignore any attempts to change any internationally recognized borders by force.

With regard to the issue of territory, for Romania — a direct neighbour of Ukraine — things could not be clearer. Donetsk is Ukraine, Luhansk is Ukraine, Kherson is Ukraine, Zaporizhzhya is Ukraine and Crimea is Ukraine. Just as we have not recognized the attempted illegal occupation of the Crimean peninsula and the city of Sevastopol, we will not recognize Russia's most recent attempt to acquire Ukrainian land, which is a deliberate and spiteful violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

The population of Ukraine in the temporarily occupied territories is the worst affected in the country. That is because on one hand, the legitimate State authorities cannot take the necessary measures to protect citizens, while on the other, the human rights situation in the occupied territories is worsening, and reports of atrocities committed by the occupiers have been periodically coming to light. Reports by international governmental and non-governmental entities, including the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, highlight that Russia has committed violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law on the territory of Ukraine. The wide range of heinous atrocities committed by both Russian soldiers and private military contractors hired by Russia amount to war crimes. The perpetrators must be held

responsible for their actions. We cannot be bystanders when accountability is so badly needed, because when we are, we become accessories to impunity. It was in that context that my delegation welcomed the start of the operations of the International Centre for the Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine in The Hague.

Among the whole population affected by the war, children and young people in Ukraine suffer the most. We believe that there is a missing piece in the world puzzle that makes up Generation Z, and that piece is the children of Ukraine. On our side, through national and local initiatives, we try to bring normalcy to the lives of the children from the conflict areas in Ukraine. A week ago a new programme of summer camps for children from Ukraine held in Maramures county in northern Romania came to an end. It is a yearly programme that started after Crimea, Donetsk and Luhansk were temporarily occupied. Unlike the re-education camps in Russia, where children are taken by force, in Romania the children learned about science and culture, and especially astronomy, in their own language.

In conclusion, Romania remains an unconditional supporter of Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. We also recognize Ukraine's right to self-defence against the Russian aggression and remain committed to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine, in line with the Charter and the resolutions of the General Assembly. They are the basis for acquiring the widest possible international support for the key principles and objectives of Ukraine's peace formula.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item for this meeting. We will hear the remaining speakers at 3 p.m. in this conference room.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.