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Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Dame Barbara Woodward	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
<i>Members:</i>	Albania	Mr. Hoxha
	Brazil	Mr. De Almeida Filho
	China	Mr. Zhang Jun
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Gabon	Mr. Biang
	Ghana	Mr. Agyeman
	India	Mr. Raguttahalli
	Ireland	Mr. Coveney
	Kenya	Mr. Kimani
	Mexico	Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez
	Norway	Ms. Juul
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	United Arab Emirates	Mr. Abushahab
	United States of America	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield

Agenda

Maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine

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

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine

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

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Kelly T. Clements, United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees, and Mr. António Vitorino, Director General of the International Organization for Migration. Ms. Clements and Mr. Vitorino are joining this meeting by video-teleconference.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Clements.

Ms. Clements: I thank you, Madam President, for inviting me to discuss the situation in Ukraine on behalf of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to the Security Council.

I am joining you tonight from Hungary, a country to which almost a half a million Ukrainians have fled, a fraction of the almost 5 million who have been forced to leave their country and in addition to the more than 7 million who remain displaced within Ukraine. The United Nations also estimates that there are 13 million more in the hardest-hit areas, many of them unable to move and difficult to safely reach with aid. Earlier today I was in the Czech Republic, and before that in Austria, and the compassion and solidarity in those countries, together with others, continue to be unprecedented. Our fervent wish is that this will also extend to other refugees who have been uprooted from their homes and who find themselves on this continent, unable to return and in need of the same international protection and solidarity.

My visit, which will continue to the Slovak Republic, complements the visits, including to Ukraine, of Filippo Grandi, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and Raouf Mazou, Assistant High Commissioner for UNHCR Operations, who has been in Moldova and Romania since he addressed the

Council (see S/PV.8998). While the sheer scale and speed of the displacement is immense, we must not lose sight of what the statistics mean. Our teams on the ground continue to be confronted by the same scenes and shared stories. Women, children and the aged have left their homes, lives, sons, fathers and husbands. Just this morning in Prague, I met Lyuba, a 25-year-old from Odesa. Like so many others, she was forced to leave her family behind in Ukraine. Her father, a military reservist, remains there with her mother. Her grandmother, who lives in Melitopol, just a few hours west of Mariupol, has been completely unreachable since the war began two months ago. Each one of the millions who have been displaced have been forced to make impossible, heartbreaking decisions and have left behind almost everything they hold dear.

At the same time, we have also seen consistently remarkable acts of humanity. Apartment and office buildings, windows and balconies and street lamps on every corner are covered with messages of support. Local authorities, communities and individuals are rallying to provide what they can — food, medicine, transportation and a place to sleep. I saw such tremendous solidarity and support in Prague today. Thanks to the commitment of concerned States, borders have been kept open. Those seeking safety are given access to protection and aid, and we call for that to continue in a non-discriminatory manner for all people in need. That inspiring response is surpassed only by the strength and composure of the refugees themselves, who continue to exude both courage and resilience as they describe their flight to safety, bravely talking about their separation from their families and fearful that the war will pursue them. Most of all, they emphasize their hope for peace, so that they can return home as soon as possible. Many are therefore staying close to Ukraine. Some are even returning now, anxious to connect with family and check on property.

Some in the Council may have joined the briefing last week by Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffiths (see S/PV.9011) when he described the chilling scene in Bucha and throughout Ukraine, with heartbreaking stories of those killed, those lucky to escape and those left behind or with loved ones whose whereabouts remain unknown. He spoke of dire humanitarian conditions for civilians forced to withstand unrelenting fighting, but also of the tireless efforts by many to save lives and help people in besieged areas such as Mariupol.

When the High Commissioner visited Ukraine two weeks ago, he spoke with the Government about scaling up cash assistance to reach 360,000 vulnerable people inside the country. He also conveyed our commitment to extending our expertise on shelter to help those with damaged homes and with the repair of reception centres. UNHCR is now signing agreements with three key ministries in Ukraine to take that work forward in support of the Government, which is determinedly leading that effort. Let me reiterate what the High Commissioner conveyed at that time, which was that we will continue to expand our life-saving aid to the internally displaced throughout Ukraine, especially in the centre and the east, where a brutal humanitarian nightmare is unfolding. That requires not just resources but also safe and unhindered access to people in need, wherever they are in the country, so that they too can receive desperately needed help safely.

I would like to stress that even as news coverage has shifted to other aspects of the conflict, people are still fleeing in desperation and fear, and not just from Ukraine but from other countries in turmoil around the world — Yemen, Myanmar, Ethiopia, Syria, Venezuela, the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The list goes on. We ask the Council to continue, even as we focus today on Ukraine, to consider the needs of all refugees from all corners of the globe. All who are uprooted from their homes need the same solidarity, the same compassion and the same protection.

In Ukraine, the vast majority of people on the move are women and children, and the risk of gender-based violence, trafficking and sexual exploitation and abuse is high. Anecdotal information is already coming in about persons approaching the displaced with too-good-to-be-true promises of work, accommodation and transport. The first identified cases of trafficking confirm that those risks are coming true. At UNHCR we are working, including with Mr. Vitorino's organization, the International Organization for Migration, to prevent, mitigate and respond to those trafficking risks. In addition to strengthened gender-based-violence programmes, we have deployed coordinators expert in preventing sexual exploitation and abuse to support the response from Governments. We are also partnering with UNICEF on safe spaces, called Blue Dots, at main border-crossing points, transit and reception centres, to provide information and specialized aid for mothers, adolescents, children and other vulnerable refugees. It is the first time we have done that so early in an emergency response, and

we expect that it will serve as a best practice going forward. However, States have the strongest role to play, especially on the issue of trafficking. We call on them to end impunity for traffickers, help identify the international protection needs of survivors and persons at risk, and most of all redouble efforts to address the root causes of the conflict, which allow predators to exploit the opportunities that war presents.

We will continue our work to provide life-saving aid in Ukraine. At the same time, and in line with the Global Compact on Refugees, Ukraine's neighbours are increasingly including refugees in their national education, health and social programmes. That inclusive approach is, bar none, the best way for refugees to sustain their lives in exile, and it requires more international support. But no pile of blankets, no sum of cash, no amount of medicine will halt the death and destruction. Aid alone will not stop people being forced to flee by war, nor will it give them what they really want and need — peace and safety at home and a chance to return voluntarily, sustainably and safely.

While we will continue our job to deliver aid, we also need the Council to do its job. When the High Commissioner last addressed this body (see S/PV.8504), he warned that without an immediate end to the shelling, we were planning for up to 4 million refugees. Now, eight weeks into the conflict, we are at 5 million and counting, with 5 million unique stories of loss and trauma. We therefore call again on all the members of the Council — and, yes, we are aware of the deep divisions — to put aside their differences and find a way to end this horrific and senseless war.

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

I now give the floor to Mr. Vitorino.

Mr. Vitorino: I thank the Council for giving the International Organization for Migration (IOM) the opportunity to address it today.

As Ms. Clements has just said, more than 12 million Ukrainians and third-country nationals have already been forced to leave their homes since the beginning of the war. According to data collected by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), approximately 5 million people have fled the country. According to the most recent assessment by IOM's displacement tracking matrix, another 7.1 million people have been displaced inside Ukraine. Through our displacement tool, I hope that by the end

of this week I can provide the Council with updated overall statistics on new displacements, secondary movements and stranded populations, as well as the increasing numbers of people returning to Ukraine and of those inside the country returning to their regions of origin. However, we remain deeply concerned about the continued deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Ukraine, as we anticipate an increase in the number of people displaced, internally and externally. I therefore appeal to the parties to the conflict to honour all their obligations under international humanitarian law to protect civilians, their homes and civilian infrastructure. When I visited some of the neighbouring countries recently, I saw at first-hand the price that civilians are paying as a result of the conflict. Women and children, the elderly and people with disabilities have been disproportionately affected, as they all represent a highly vulnerable group of people. From our assessment and work with all of the United Nations agencies in Ukraine and our non-governmental partners, we have identified specific risks for internally displaced people, refugees and third-country nationals. I would like to highlight a few of them today.

First, in situations of mass displacement, we should always expect around 30 per cent of the population to experience, a negative psychological impact and mental health problems to some degree. However, as the war continues and even intensifies, psychosocial needs will undoubtedly increase. We are scaling up our efforts to address them in Ukraine and its neighbours, through activities ranging from training front-line responders in psychosocial first aid to increasing the capacity of our established hotlines, which provide psychosocial support. To that end, we are benefiting from the mobilization of the Ukrainian diaspora worldwide.

Secondly, we remain particularly concerned about the situation of women and children who have fled Ukraine and are internally displaced. Unfortunately, trafficking in persons was already a known phenomenon in the region. As has been observed in past crises, large-scale displacement, family separation and the disruption of civil protections and community networks render populations vulnerable to violence, exploitation and abuse. I think it is therefore a matter of enormous concern that instances of gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence, have been reported and in increasing numbers.

Setting up referral mechanisms and developing close cooperation with law-enforcement agencies

is essential to preventing the operation of criminal networks, trafficking and abuse. We know that more than half of the children in Ukraine have been displaced. Unaccompanied and separated children are particularly vulnerable, and measures to protect them must be strengthened. I urge neighbouring countries and those that have been affected in this crisis to ensure the immediate identification and registration of unaccompanied and separated children fleeing Ukraine. Effective international cooperation is urgently required to reunite children with their caregivers and families.

We applaud all of Ukraine's neighbours for the solidarity and openness they have shown and the enormous efforts that their Governments, civil-society organizations and private individuals have undertaken to support the Ukrainians and the more than 218,000 third-country nationals arriving at their borders. But despite the overwhelmingly positive response, we have unfortunately witnessed cases of discrimination, violence and xenophobia against third-country nationals fleeing Ukraine. Discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, nationality or migration status is, in my view, not acceptable. I therefore call on all States to ensure that protection and immediate assistance is provided in a non-discriminatory manner, particularly at border crossing points.

For our part, we have set up information and support hotlines for the populations affected in Ukraine, Poland, Romania, Lithuania and Slovakia. We have also established a referral mechanism to facilitate contact between third-country nationals and the relevant consulates, as well as to ensure safe, dignified and non-discriminatory support, information-sharing and advice, transportation, medical aid and assistance in their return to their countries of origin.

We are seeing that internally displaced people tend to move to urban areas in search of potential employment opportunities and social services. There will be an urgent need to scale up services and assistance to meet the needs of an increased population in those areas, as we are doing in close cooperation with Ukraine's Ministry of Social Policy. The situation in eastern Ukraine in terms of access to food and water is particularly concerning. Since the response to the crisis began we have identified cash-based interventions as one of the most feasible, efficient and effective ways to reach people in need, both inside Ukraine and in neighbouring countries. The IOM has already started providing multi-purpose cash assistance in Ukraine

and in some of its neighbours. As Ms. Clements just mentioned, preparations are under way to scale up that assistance in close coordination with UNHCR, the World Food Programme, the Government of Ukraine and local authorities. However, funding is desperately needed for that.

Moving forward, we need to seek to better understand the intentions of those who are fleeing, those forced to leave their homes and those who have been separated from their families due to the ongoing conflict. Many people, particularly those displaced to neighbouring countries, are willing to return to Ukraine as soon as possible, but their return must of course be safe. We are working with the Government and local authorities to support the internally displaced and identify safe and stable solutions for them. For those who have left the country, it will be crucial to plan ahead and invest in order to ensure that all have access to adequate support and services and to facilitate their full inclusion in education and health systems and the labour market, provide language opportunities and social housing and other necessary support. We welcome the decision by the European Union to offer temporary protection to people fleeing Ukraine, and I reiterate our readiness to support the implementation of that directive.

Let me conclude by reaffirming our commitment to staying and delivering in Ukraine and the neighbouring countries and to supporting and providing assistance to the Ukrainian people and third-country nationals who have been so severely affected by the war. I also want to reiterate and strongly echo the Secretary-General's repeated and extremely urgent call for a humanitarian ceasefire, and above all for peace.

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

I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Defence of the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Coveney (Ireland): I would like to thank the Director General of the International Organization for Migration and the United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees.

As we meet this afternoon, we do so in the shadow of a renewed offensive by Russian forces on eastern Ukraine — in the shadow of further bloodshed, further scenes of killing, further disregard for civilian lives and continued blatant violations of the Charter of the United Nations.

On Thursday of last week I travelled to Kyiv. I did so because I wanted to see for myself the situation on the ground and to express Ireland's solidarity with Ukraine and its people. What I saw was profoundly shocking. During my visit, I went to Bucha. Until two months ago, it was a pleasant and vibrant town, a place where many of us around this table could have happily imagined living. It now lies in ruins, with the stench of burning buildings and bodies in the air. Hundreds of family homes, shops and other civilian infrastructure have been blackened, burnt, looted, damaged and in some cases completely destroyed. Family cars stand riddled with bullets, their windshields smashed and bloodstains still evident.

I have been around long enough to know the difference between truth and staged propaganda when I see it. There was nothing fabricated about what I witnessed. I stood at the edge of one of the mass graves, where the work of carefully exhuming bodies continued. At that stage, 503 civilians had been identified and just four soldiers. Those men, women and children were not combatants, yet appeared to have been deliberately killed in a brutal manner — in some cases, after being tortured. Across Ukraine we have seen explosive weapons, including prohibited cluster munitions, being used in populated areas against civilian infrastructure. The toll of destruction on homes, hospitals and schools is testament to that. It speaks of an utter disregard by Russian forces for international humanitarian law and the protection of civilians. There can be no spinning that reality away with disinformation.

Ireland is a small country. We are not a member of any military alliance and we are certainly no superpower, but we fought to take a seat at this table and we have earned the right to be here. We did so because we fundamentally believe that despite all of the Council's well-documented flaws — and there are many — it is the ultimate arbiter on matters of war and peace. This group of 15 countries has been entrusted with protecting the weak and the innocent and holding aggressors to account, no matter how powerful they are. The only weapons that we have are diplomacy, dialogue, facts, collective leadership and, most importantly, a shared commitment to international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

Do we really have to keep repeating around this table that innocent civilians are never legitimate targets of war and that all parties to conflict must comply with international humanitarian law, including the

prohibitions against indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks and the obligation to distinguish between civilians and combatants? Those obligations are not optional — not least for those privileged enough to be seated around this table and who should be leading by example. During my visit to Ukraine, so many people spoke to me about the urgent need for accountability in order to expose the horrors of what has happened to them, preferably in a court of law. In all situations where war crimes may have been committed, we must ensure that timely, credible investigations are undertaken, that evidence is rigorously documented and that witnesses, victims and survivors are supported. For that reason, Ireland committed an additional €3 million in funding to the International Criminal Court last week. Without accountability and truth, there is no hope for sustainable peace in Ukraine or anywhere else.

Russia's war has driven millions of Ukrainians from their homes, as we have just heard. Almost 5 million people have become refugees and more than 7 million have become displaced internally in Ukraine. But the humanitarian consequences of the war are also being felt thousands of miles from Ukraine by some of the most vulnerable people on our planet. Countries across the Middle East and the Horn of Africa, but also in Latin America, are being increasingly impacted by the severe economic consequences of this conflict. The price of wheat and oil has risen by 300 per cent in Somalia, where more than 700,000 people are already displaced by drought. Wheat reserves in Palestine could be depleted in less than three weeks' time. As the Secretary-General has said so clearly, the most vulnerable people around the globe cannot become collateral damage in yet another disaster for which they bear no responsibility. Ireland cannot and will not remain silent while this senseless and devastating war continues, and neither should any member of the Security Council.

As it was on 25 February, so it is today. This is a war of choice. It can end immediately if President Putin so decides. And yet we are instead seeing a renewed and scaled-up offensive in eastern Ukraine. This is madness, which history will judge very harshly. We have to find a way to stop this war. And the Security Council has a unique responsibility to do that. I want to call today on Russia directly — to agree to an immediate humanitarian ceasefire, commit to negotiations, respect the Charter of the United Nations. We know that some progress was made in Istanbul between the key parties. There is clearly a basis for a peace agreement. President

Zelenskyy, to his credit, has continued to remain open to diplomatic solutions in the face of aggression and brutality against his people.

I hear the narrative, from far too many quarters, that peace will be possible only after the battle for Donbas. I cannot accept that logic, a logic that leads directly to further death, further suffering, further displacement. The Security Council must challenge that thinking today and every day. We must demand more.

Mr. De La Fuente Ramírez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ms. Kelly Clements, the United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees, and Mr. António Vitorino, the Director General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), for their briefings. I also want to recognize the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Defence of Ireland, whom we just listened to attentively and whom we welcome to this meeting.

Mexico and France requested this meeting in the light of the many humanitarian consequences of the Ukraine conflict, especially the massive exodus of people to neighbouring countries and others' displacement to more secure places within the country. Civilians in eastern Ukraine have been forced to flee westward in order to seek greater protection. In that regard, we deplore the attack today on Lviv, a city that has taken in hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons. Almost two months since this war began, and as the briefers told us today, this war has left us with more than 7 million internally displaced persons and some 5 million refugees, 90 per cent of whom are women and children who are exposed to all kinds of abuses. As in any conflict, the risk of sexual violence and human trafficking is high, but the predominating age and gender of the people fleeing in the case of Ukraine has multiplied those risks.

The situation on the ground presents complex logistical and statistical challenges for collecting precise information on the numbers of women and children who have been victims of traffickers. But although those numbers are very significant, what is even more significant is each and every person who is at risk of being taken advantage of by opportunistic criminals who would exploit their vulnerability in their situation as refugees or nationals of third countries. The Security Council should take every measure available to it to prevent that from happening.

Given this situation, we recognize the efforts of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the IOM and other agencies on the ground who, working together with the national authorities of Ukraine and neighbouring countries, can counter that threat. We would especially like to recognize the efforts by the agencies in the area of mental health and psychosocial support. The protection centres such as the Blue Dots, for children and families, and campaigns such as Stay Safe, aimed at protecting anyone who needs specialized assistance, are commendable because they are vital and in many cases the only support option for those persons.

Mexico would once again like to acknowledge the solidarity of Ukraine's neighbours, which have welcomed millions of refugees and support the efforts of UNICEF to strengthen protection systems for boys and girls. We also want to once again stress the importance of host countries' cooperation in order to combat trafficking and abuses. Among the dreadful images that the conflict has left us with, those of discrimination, violence and xenophobia against third-country nationals stand out. In critical situations when people's lives are at stake, there is no justification for discriminating against or rejecting anyone because of their ethnicity, religion, gender nationality or migratory status. We support the new call of the Secretary-General for a humanitarian pause to allow those civilians who are most exposed to move to safer places, and we insist on the need to investigate any incident that violates the rights of refugees. In conclusion, I would like to make a couple of final comments.

First, one of the main challenges for humanitarian personnel continues to be the problem of reaching those in need. It is therefore vital to guarantee safe and unimpeded access, and we urge all parties to facilitate that immediately.

Secondly, reports of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law cannot go unpunished. It is crucial that the Security Council work to ensure that the parties respect international law and insist that the relevant investigations are conducted and the mechanisms for seeking justice available to us are activated.

Finally, we reiterate that the only way to end this serious humanitarian crisis is through a cessation of hostilities. Mexico once again calls for an end to the war and support for the territorial integrity of Ukraine in accordance with its internationally recognized borders.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Ms. Clements and Mr. António Vitorino for their briefings and to applaud the remarkable work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Organization for Migration, the United Nations agencies and all the humanitarian actors in Ukraine and its neighbours. They can continue to count on our full support.

We must do everything to assist and welcome refugees, without any distinction or discrimination. More than a quarter of the Ukrainian population has been forced to flee. Almost 5 million people have had to seek refuge in neighbouring countries. Russia's ongoing aggression will inevitably continue to have an impact on the displacement of people.

France welcomes the solidarity shown by the European Union (EU), its member States and other European States, such as Moldova. The activation of the EU Temporary Protection Directive has enabled rapid and effective assistance to be provided to those fleeing the war. As a result, refugees within the EU have access to education, medical care and the labour market. We also welcome the actions of the International Organization for Migration in providing assistance and in organizing the return of third-country nationals, including from African States. It is essential to step up efforts to that end.

We must also increase our efforts to combat human trafficking. Ninety per cent of displaced persons are women and children, thousands of whom are unaccompanied and vulnerable.

The Russian army has been killing civilians, including children, humanitarian and medical personnel and journalists, for almost two months. Schools and water facilities have been destroyed. Some 1.4 million people no longer have access to water in eastern Ukraine. Hospitals are also being targeted. The World Health Organization has confirmed 136 attacks on medical facilities. I recall that the killing and maiming of children, as well as attacks on schools and hospitals, are among the grave violations of children's rights in times of war.

Those crimes will not go unpunished. France is firmly committed to working with Ukraine and national and international courts, in particular the International Criminal Court, to that end. Following the terrible abuses committed in Bucha, France deployed a technical team to provide expertise in identification and the collection

of evidence. We support the commission of inquiry set up by the Human Rights Council to establish the facts.

We call on Russia to respect the order issued by the International Court of Justice and to stop its war of aggression against Ukraine. The priority remains an immediate cessation of hostilities and full respect for international humanitarian law. The protection of civilians is an absolute imperative. Humanitarian access must be ensured. In that regard, we fully support the Secretary-General's call for a four-day humanitarian pause, starting this Thursday.

The whole world is affected by this war, which risks driving up to 1.7 billion people, more than a fifth of the world's population, into poverty and food insecurity. There is an urgent need to act. As we commemorate in the coming days the opening of the San Francisco Conference 77 years ago, France will continue to work with its partners to ensure respect for the Charter of the United Nations and to support Ukraine and the Ukrainian people.

Mr. Biang (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Kelly Clements, from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and Mr. António Vitorino, from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), for their informative briefings. I welcome the presence of His Excellency Mr. Simon Coveney, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Defence of Ireland.

Day by day, there is a heavier toll from the war. The scourge of those fleeing the war is estimated to have affected some 12 million people since the beginning of the hostilities. The number of refugees currently stands at approximately 5 million, the majority of whom, comprising women and children, have found refuge in Poland and other neighbouring countries. Among those refugees, there are more than 210,000 third-country nationals, including Africans, for whom the exodus is often more difficult owing to absurd discrimination. We have not stopped calling on bordering countries to consider the situation of those people, who, like the other victims of the war, are no less deserving of the compassion and relief granted to other civilians fleeing the war.

The humanitarian situation is one of the most worrisome. The attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure are particularly devastating and impact the supply of basic public services, such as water, electricity and gas, leading to health risks.

At the same time, the hosting capacities of the United Nations specialized bodies and agencies can barely cover the constantly increasing needs due to the ongoing fighting and movement of people.

The humanitarian workers in both Ukraine and the host countries are also on-site and trying to bring vital assistance to those in need through basic and specialized care services, including mental and psychological health care, as well as various kinds of assistance geared to facilitating registration, schooling for children and employment for refugees.

We express our support for the humanitarian workers and our sincere appreciation for their efforts and those of host countries. I commend the work of UNHCR and the IOM. Without that valuable assistance, the daily lives of many refugees would no doubt be even worse. We therefore reiterate our appeal to host countries to assist all those fleeing the fighting without distinction regarding country of origin. All those people are living in fear and distress, which does not allow for any bias.

A few days ago, the Security Council met to address the allegations of sexual crimes, the exploitation of women and children and the risk of human trafficking (see S/PV.9016). It has become common that trafficking networks, like vultures at the scene of a massacre, seek to benefit from the plight of the defenceless and those in need of protection. We all recall such dark stories in previous conflicts, which should heighten our vigilance so as to ensure an end to organized criminal networks preying on our turmoil, be it in Ukraine or in host countries.

There are many accounts of rape victims and cases of the exploitation of children, alone and without defence, picked up on the roads as they flee. If such reports are found to be true, they will represent serious violations of international humanitarian law, other relevant conventions and Council resolutions on conflict-related sexual violence, in particular resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 2106 (2013), which reinforce resolution 1325 (2000).

My country condemns any attack on women, children or civilians not involved in the hostilities. Likewise, my country reiterates its appeal for the launching of an independent, impartial investigation in order to establish the facts and determine the perpetrators.

We also reiterate Gabon's appeal for a cessation of hostilities. It is time for the fighting to stop. It is time

for the weapons to be silent. It is time for diplomacy to speak out and to put an end to the suffering and death of innocent people.

Ms. Juul (Norway): I thank the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration for setting out the devastating human consequences of Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

We are appalled by Russia's ongoing offensive in Donbas and the relentless attacks against civilians and vital civilian infrastructure across Ukraine, including in urban areas. Russia has intentionally created a humanitarian disaster, particularly in Mariupol, where civilians have been trapped in cellars for weeks without food, water, electricity, medicines and other basic necessities. At the same time, Russia continues to carry out missile attacks on Kyiv and Lviv. No one is safe in any part of Ukraine.

As we heard today, 12 million Ukrainians have now fled their homes. As internally displaced persons or refugees, they face increased risk of sexual and gender-based violence, trafficking, abuse, psychosocial trauma and family separation. Russia is solely responsible for creating that situation. All Russian attacks on civilians must stop. Russia's invasion is a blatant violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. We welcome the investigation of possible war crimes and crimes against humanity initiated by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, as well as the establishment of the commission of inquiry to investigate war crimes committed in the aggression against Ukraine. There must be accountability. Perpetrators must be brought to justice.

Russia is choosing to cause the largest humanitarian crisis in Europe since the Second World War. Norway echoes the Secretary-General's call for a humanitarian pause to allow safe passage for civilians and the delivery of life-saving humanitarian aid.

The brutality and sheer scale of this rapidly evolving crisis puts civilians at great risk and demands protective responses at unprecedented levels — from local communities and areas receiving internally displaced people and refugees to international humanitarian organizations and so many in between. All countries taking in displaced people must ensure their immediate identification and registration and put in place measures to protect them from further risk and harm.

Women and children account for 90 per cent of all those who have fled Ukraine. The response must therefore be gender- and age-sensitive and tailored to meet distinct needs, with particular attention paid to unaccompanied children, who are extremely vulnerable. Access to education and health services, including for sexual and reproductive health, must also be a top priority.

Norway is impressed by the resilience of the people of Ukraine. Local services, communities and responders — even those affected by the conflict — continue to serve people in need. And we commend the response mounted by local and international humanitarian organizations. As the needs grow, so must efforts to step up the response and engage directly with affected people.

We continue to call for safe, rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access to people in need. We also applaud the hospitality and solidarity extended by Ukraine's neighbours, and we encourage countries to keep their borders open to all those seeking protection, without discrimination.

Russia alone is responsible for the war in Ukraine and for its devastating global consequences. We are acutely aware of the war's negative impact on the cost of staple foods, fertilizers and energy across the globe and how it is exacerbating poverty, food insecurity and humanitarian needs. Russia can choose to stop this war — to end the aggression against its neighbour. That is the only way to end the humanitarian catastrophe in Ukraine and beyond.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We take note of the views voiced by Ms. Kelly Clements, United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees, and Mr. António Vitorino, Director General of the International Organization for Migration.

We heard many alarming conclusions and terrifying figures in their statements. In that context, we must recall that the Russian Federation faced the consequences of the deteriorating situation in Ukraine immediately after the anti-constitutional coup there in February 2014. As soon as the nationalist authorities showed their true face by unleashing a war against the Russian language and then undertaking the physical destruction of their eastern residents, Russia was flooded with refugees fleeing the Maidan lawlessness. According to official reports, since 2014 alone, at least 1.7 million people have applied for Russian citizenship, refugee status or

temporary asylum in our country. After the intensified shelling of Donbas by the Ukrainian side on the eve of the start of Russia's special military operation, that flow increased dramatically, reaching 863,000 people. In other words, at least 2.5 million Ukrainians have sought refuge in Russia since the Maidan coup.

By the way, the mass exodus of Ukrainians from their country is nothing new for that State. According to the Ukrainian Ministry of Finance, between 1990 and 2021 the country's population decreased by a quarter — from 54 to 41 million people. At the same time, according to the Ptoukha Institute for Demography and Social Studies of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, in 2021 there were even fewer Ukrainians — 38 million people. It is noteworthy that — according to the same Institute — 3 million Ukrainians left for seasonal work.

I am not providing those figures to downplay the scale of the migration challenges Ukraine and its neighbours are facing today. I merely wish to disagree with attempts to erase the history of post-Soviet Ukraine, turn a blind eye to all its problems and start counting issues only from the beginning of the Russian special military operation. Today our Western colleagues prefer to overlook not only the growing rate of emigration from Ukraine in recent years, as I mentioned, but also the staggering corruption, the skyrocketing political murders, most of which have remained unpunished, the unprecedented repression of opposition leaders and the mass closure of opposition media outlets, to name but a few.

Those who reproach us for human rights violations fail to recall the unprecedented persecution of the Russian language and those who speak it in that country. Understandably, when praising Ukraine, it is embarrassing to talk about the Mirotvorets website, which remains operational and posts publicly the personal data of inconvenient Ukrainians and foreigners who criticize the Maidan regime. Some of those whose lives are thus endangered are minors. None of our Western colleagues have commented on that disgraceful phenomenon.

In painting their picture of the world, they are striving to present Ukraine as a pure and innocent white lamb. That picture does not include the Kyiv regime's eight-year war on civilians in the east of its country or its many years of sabotaging the Minsk agreements. They simply try to forget about it and prompt others to do the same under threat of sanctions and direct political and economic blackmail.

Moreover, by baselessly portraying what happened on 24 February as an “unprovoked and unprecedented Russian aggression” or a “war of choice”, they hypocritically pretend that nothing more horrific has happened in the world since the end of the Second World War, sweeping under the rug the hundreds of thousands of victims of the military adventurism of Western States since the Cold War — in Afghanistan, Iraq, Yugoslavia and Libya. As recently as yesterday, our Syrian colleagues circulated a letter in the Security Council about the horrific consequences of the American razing of the city of Raqqa to the ground in 2017. That operation has become synonymous with inhumane action, which resulted in the city being practically wiped off the face of the Earth, along with its inhabitants.

Today they are trying to not only rewrite modern history with an anti-Russian lens, but also to encourage the insane speculations of some of our Eastern European neighbours about the role of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in the liberation of Europe, and the world as a whole, from fascism. Apparently, it is easier for them to ignore the egregious manifestations of neo-Nazism in Ukraine, whose de-Nazification is one of the goals of our military operation. That is necessary in order to ensure that there will never again be a threat — not only to the people of the Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic, but also to Russia and to the Ukrainians themselves, who are held hostage by those authorities — from the territory of this State.

I also cannot but note that the concerns of our Western colleagues about Ukraine and the Ukrainians are extremely short-sighted and selfish. They need Ukraine and the Ukrainians today only as cannon fodder in their indirect war with Russia “to the last Ukrainian”. At the same time, they are keeping their own interests front and centre.

For example, weapons manufacturers in Western countries are eagerly rubbing their hands together, calculating their profits from increased defence orders. After the first week of hostilities in Ukraine, the stock value of the leading British arms producer, BAE Systems, rose by 24 per cent and the stock value of Thales Air Defence Limited, a producer of anti-tank and anti-air systems, rose by 42 per cent. We have seen the same trends with the United States war industry. That is clearly to the liking of the Eastern European members of NATO, which have long been thinking about how to rid themselves of obsolete Soviet weapons.

Now, promising to supply modern NATO weaponry, they have been gladly offloading vehicles that no longer work to Ukraine, as they know that the Russian army will grind and crush those non-functional items and they will no longer have to think about its disposal.

In addition, our pragmatic United States colleagues, without one iota of conscience, are now attempting to reap maximum economic profits. By prompting Europeans to impose increasingly stringent economic sanctions, Washington, which will suffer the least in that scenario, intends to have other States gradually become addicted to their gas products. So what if American liquefied natural gas is considerably more expensive than Russia's?

Yet these are "molecules of freedom", as a United States official put it, that the Europeans, not the Americans, will pay for. The Russian economy, as is well known, is doing fine under these circumstances of sanctions pressure, finding in these new circumstances fresh areas of development and new, reliable partners. The only country that is losing in all respects as a result of the situation is Ukraine, and yet it seems that the Kyiv authorities have not noticed that, or perhaps they prefer not to notice it.

However, that is felt more and more by ordinary Ukrainians, who from the beginning of the special military operation have not been encountering terrorism or shelling by the Russian army, contrary to what Ukrainian or Western propagandists say, but ruthless hostility and indifference to the country's own population on the part of Ukrainian neo-Nazis and radicals, who have been seeking to save their own skins at all costs.

With each passing day there is more and more evidence of civilians being used as human shields, indiscriminate shelling of residential areas in their own cities in order to pin the blame on Russian military personnel, egregious, Goebbels-inspired provocations in Bucha and Kramatorsk and at the maternity hospital and theatre in Mariupol.

It is not possible to sweep the truth about that under the rug, and the fact that the Ukrainian military has been using prohibited cluster munitions in the shelling of residential infrastructure cannot be swept under the rug either. For example, this morning, cluster munitions targeted Golovchino, in Belgorod oblast of the Russian Federation, where there are no military facilities. This was put on record, and all relevant evidence has been

registered. However, for some reason, we do not see any willingness on the part of our Western colleagues to condemn that heinous crime and the radicals' breach of the norms of international humanitarian law.

One month into the siege of Azovstal plant, those same radicals and neo-Nazis suddenly declared that allegedly, there had been civilians inside the plant all that time, even though until yesterday, they had never uttered a word about it. They never mentioned any civilians; in fact, even hundreds of military personnel, once surrounded, moved to surrender. In that way they have once again disclosed the truth. The civilians in that facility were there only to be used as human shields. There is a multitude of such evidence that we will without fail share with the Council.

But will members wish to hear about this? For eight years they have studiously ignored the deaths of civilians — women, children and the elderly — in Donbas, and therefore we have our doubts in that respect. However, we are carrying out the special military operation not to find understanding or support from them. It would be naïve to trust in their support in the geopolitical game that they have initiated, in which they use Ukraine as a mere pawn.

We became aware of the dirty tricks that they are prepared to utilize to forge a so-called rules-based world order when we saw that the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in Ukraine, instead of monitoring and reporting on violations of the ceasefire, simply engaged in spying for Kyiv's benefit, handing over to the Ukrainian army's information from surveillance cameras so that they could adjust their firing positions and targets. The collection of evidence about that very inconvenient fact is ongoing.

However, another issue warrants specific attention. I am referring to the use by the Ukrainian armed forces of OSCE Mission armoured vehicles. According to media outlets, in late February Azov Battalion fighters turned up at the Office of the Special Monitoring Mission in Mariupol demanding that the keys to the vehicles be handed over. When rejected, they threatened the staff with guns, and, ultimately, obtained eight OSCE vehicles, including armoured ones. One of those vehicles was eventually found 5 kilometres from the Special Monitoring Mission's offices, in the Kirov market in Mariupol. It had clearly been used in hostilities. Not a single one of those vehicles was ever returned to the OSCE. Similar threats were made against the Mission's staff in Sievierodonetsk in late

February and early March. The OSCE leadership was aware of that issue but preferred to sweep that fact under the rug until the last moment. Those disclosures undermine trust in any international organizations whose officials include predominantly representatives of Western countries.

I will not conceal the fact that under these circumstances calls for peace and a ceasefire sound mendacious and insincere, and in practice they merely point to an aspiration to provide Kyiv nationalists and radicals with breathing room to regroup and obtain more drones, anti-tank guided missiles and man-portable air defence system, and in the meantime stage additional inhumane provocations and disseminate more fake information about the alleged actions of Russian soldiers. We will make a clear distinction between such tactical pseudo-peacekeeping calls and a genuine intent to help Ukraine to the only correct and long-overdue course of action.

The sooner that is done by the Ukrainians, contrary to the inclinations of those that are egging them on — those who wish to profit from the tragedy that has been unfolding since 2014, including the European Union's leadership, which has taken off its mask — the better it will be for that country, because in one way or another, the objective of the special military operation to liberate Donbas, which is aimed at demilitarizing and de-Nazifying Ukraine and eradicating the threats emanating from the area against the Russian Federation, will certainly be achieved.

Mr. Zhang Jun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, I thank Mr. António Vitorino, Director General of the International Organization for Migration, and Ms. Kelly T. Clements, United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees, for their briefings.

The Ukraine conflict has led to a dire humanitarian situation and other serious consequences. We are deeply concerned about that, and I should like to make four comments in that respect.

First, every effort must be made to reduce the harm caused to civilians by conflict. China once again calls on all parties to the conflict to exercise maximum restraint, strictly abide by international humanitarian law, protect civilians and civilian facilities and facilitate evacuation and humanitarian assistance operations. The parties concerned should strengthen communication on humanitarian issues and conduct coordination and cooperation on issues such as opening humanitarian

corridors and organizing the safe evacuation of personnel. China supports Secretary-General Guterres and Under-Secretary-General Griffiths in engaging with all parties on the humanitarian pause and on agreeing on relevant arrangements.

Secondly, the issue of refugees should be properly addressed. The neighbouring countries of Ukraine have provided safe havens and humanitarian assistance to millions of refugees, which China appreciates. The continuation of the conflict will result in more refugees and bring huge economic and social challenges to the host countries. The international community should strengthen coordination and provide more support to refugee-receiving countries in the spirit of shared responsibility. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration and other agencies should continue to mobilize and coordinate international aid, scale up humanitarian assistance to refugees and help ease the pressure on host countries.

We have noticed that in the past few days many refugees have returned to Ukraine, and we hope that their basic needs will be met as they return to normal life. All refugees, regardless of nationality, race or religion, should be treated equally. Vulnerable groups such as women and children should be given priority protection. Actions must be taken to crack down on human trafficking and other criminal activities targeting women and children seeking refuge. Agencies such as UNHCR, UN-Women, UNICEF and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights should also step up monitoring in support of the efforts of relevant countries.

Thirdly, diplomatic negotiations must be promoted with a greater sense of urgency. The prospect of an extended and prolonged conflict is worrying. A ceasefire and an end to the conflict as soon as possible is the fundamental way to resolving the humanitarian crisis. We call on Russia and Ukraine to adhere to the general direction of dialogue and negotiations, continuously narrow differences and accumulate conditions for a ceasefire. All other parties should focus on supporting diplomatic negotiations. Continuing to send more heavy or offensive weapons will not bring peace. It will only prolong and escalate conflict, which will further aggravate humanitarian catastrophe.

Fourthly, we must pay attention to and eliminate the negative impact of sanctions. All dimensional and unlimited sanctions have had serious spillover effects,

with developing countries bearing the brunt. Last week, at the launch of the first report of the Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance, Secretary-General Guterres said,

“We are now facing a perfect storm that threatens to devastate the economies of many developing countries”.

The vast number of developing countries that are not parties to the conflict have paid a heavy price for it. This is neither fair nor reasonable.

The international community should strengthen coordination to keep food and energy supplies and prices stable and avoid unnecessary export restrictions. It should also be pointed out that arbitrary freezes of foreign exchange reserves of other countries also constitute a violation of the sovereignty of other countries and are tantamount to weaponizing economic independence. Such practices undermine the foundation of world economic stability and bring new uncertainties and risks to international relations and should be abandoned as soon as possible.

China has always stood on the side of peace and justice and upheld the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter. We will continue to work tirelessly for a final resolution of the Ukraine crisis.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): I would also like to thank Deputy High Commissioner Clements and Director General Vitorino for their informative briefings on the situation on the ground in Ukraine. Right now, their agencies and non-governmental organization partners are doing such important life-saving work. Their teams are putting their own lives on the line as they work to assist others.

We were heartbroken to hear about the Caritas Internationalis staff members who were killed in Mariupol. I met with the Caritas staff when I was in the region, and I saw the life-saving work they were doing. Their deaths are tragic and unacceptable. Humanitarian aid workers do save lives. They are impartial, and they should be protected, not shelled indiscriminately.

As we have heard, Russia's unprovoked, unconscionable war keeps generating new sobering milestones. As of the latest count, 5 million refugees have left Ukraine in search of safety. Of course, the number of people internally displaced in Ukraine is even greater. And, yes, these numbers are alarming.

Today I would like to focus on what we can do to help both refugees and those front-line countries protecting people searching for safety. I want to start by thanking the countries that have initially taken in the vast majority of refugees: Poland, Moldova, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. These front-line countries deserve our sincere and heartfelt gratitude for their service and their sacrifice. They have opened their borders and their hearts to the people of Ukraine, and they have not just done the right thing, but they have also done the hard thing. When I visited Moldova and Romania, I saw for myself just how difficult and disruptive it can be for societies to integrate so many refugees in such a short period of time.

But I speak on behalf of many when I say that they have given us all hope for humanity. They have shown the world what it means to be gracious, hospitable, generous and kind — and what it means to be a good neighbour. I am so glad that many refugees from Ukraine are now being hosted by other European Union countries. That greatly alleviates the impact for all.

For its part, the United States is welcoming up to 100,000 Ukrainians, and we are funding efforts to support all those who have fled Ukraine.

As we do everything we can to support Ukrainian refugees, all of us need to provide just as much support, protection and grace to the many third-country nationals fleeing Ukraine. As I have said before, refugees are refugees, no matter their background, their race, their religion or the country they come from. Regardless of their age, their abilities, their nationality, irrespective of their sexual orientation, gender identity or creed, refugees are refugees, period. Upholding the human rights of those in need is a paramount concern, and I am proud that my Government has contributed to these efforts.

National Geographic recently highlighted some of the stories of the refugees fleeing Ukraine, featuring some of the thousands of Africans, many of whom were students living in Ukraine, who had to flee the country. I was particularly moved by the story of one, a young woman by the name of Blessing Oyeleke. She was a 25-year-old medical student from Nigeria who escaped Ternopil. Blessing had lived in Ukraine for five years, and she told reporters that coming to Ukraine was like a dream come true for her. One does not have to be a citizen of Ukraine to have one's dreams dashed or one's heart split in half. We are therefore beyond grateful to the countries that have shown such generosity and

hospitality and let in all those who are fleeing for their lives.

Finally, as Director General Vitorino made clear, we also need to address the threat of human trafficking. Because refugees and other displaced people have limited access to resources and employment and often lack proper identification documents, they are particularly vulnerable to exploitation, violence and human trafficking. As we emphasized last week (see S/PV.9013), 90 per cent of this refugee population are women and children. They are at immense risk of being trafficked and exploited and experiencing gender-based violence, and we must do everything we can to mitigate those risks. I know that some countries, such as Poland and Romania, are conducting targeted awareness campaigns and are also taking specific preventive measures such as instituting checks at the border and facilitating access to shelter and transportation. The United States is proud to be providing support for those important protection initiatives, both in Ukraine and in neighbouring countries such as Romania, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary. To that end, on my trip to the region, I announced \$50 million in additional assistance to Moldova, much of which went to border management and anti-trafficking efforts. With so many lives on the line, we must all increase our vigilance and support for such initiatives, as well as resources for survivors and accountability for those who exploit the most vulnerable. We cannot let the world's most nefarious actors take a horrific situation and make it worse.

At the same time, we need to work together. Supporting countries, partner organizations and United Nations agencies need to coordinate to ensure that we are doing everything we can to help the countries on the front lines of this refugee crisis and the millions of people fleeing violence. Yesterday the Secretary-General called for a humanitarian pause to enable humanitarian corridors to open. Every day I am asked if the United Nations and even the Security Council are irrelevant to the crisis. We know that the world is looking to the United Nations and wondering how to respond in the wake of Russia's unconscionable actions. Supporting refugees and the countries taking them in is one of the most powerful and immediate ways that we all can help, and it is so important to ensure that the United Nations plays a key role in that.

Let us therefore show the world what we have learned from decades of addressing refugee crises and humanitarian situations. Let us show the world

that when Russia provoked the worst refugee crisis in Europe since the Second World War, the rest of the Security Council and the United Nations stepped up and helped those most in need.

Mr. De Almeida Filho (Brazil): I would like to thank the briefers for their important contributions. Let me also take this opportunity to reiterate our solidarity with all the victims of this war, including those who have lost their homes and are now fleeing in fear.

Europe is facing its fastest-growing refugee crisis since the Second World War. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration, which were created precisely in the aftermath of that war, are now playing a crucial role in offering protection and relief to millions of refugees and internally displaced persons in Ukraine and other parts of the world. We are deeply concerned about the fact that nearly one fourth of Ukraine's population has been forcibly displaced in the past few weeks, a statistic that attests to the intensity of the conflict and the degree of disruption to normal life that it is inflicting on Ukrainians. Many more may follow if the hostilities continue to increase in eastern and southern Ukraine and in densely populated areas.

The high proportion of women and children fleeing Ukraine is also worrying, as they are more vulnerable to sexual violence, exploitation, and human trafficking, not to mention the psychological effects that the conflict may have on children and the prospects for their future development. All the parties have an obligation to protect civilians and critical civilian infrastructure and ensure safe timely and unimpeded humanitarian access, especially in eastern Ukraine. And while the opening of humanitarian corridors and the establishment of local humanitarian pauses are positive steps, only a nationwide ceasefire will enable effective protection for the civilian population. The conflict is now creating a looming food crisis with a potentially devastating impact on the most vulnerable all over the world.

The destruction of Ukraine's productive capacities, on one hand, and the unilateral economic sanctions, on the other, are both major factors in the surging global food insecurity. All of that comes at a time when developing countries are still struggling with the socioeconomic consequences of the coronavirus disease pandemic. The fact that the World Food Programme (WFP) recently announced a reduction in its assistance for refugees and other vulnerable populations across East Africa and the Middle East illustrates that problem. As

David Beasley, the WFP's Executive Director, recently reminded us (see S/PV.9008) in a different context, we should not be forced to take from the hungry to feed the starving. Let us not forget that developing countries host approximately 85 per cent of the world's refugees. Prices of food, energy and fertilizer have been increasing very steeply worldwide. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations has published data showing that food prices are now more than 30 per cent higher than this time last year. Since fertilizer prices have doubled, the medium- and long-term effects on agriculture are also concerning. In fact, on 13 April the Secretary-General made reference to this dangerous three-dimensional crisis, and the United Nations Global Crisis Response Group published its first brief, entitled "Global impact of war in Ukraine on food, energy and finance systems", on the same day.

Since 3 March, in line with our tradition of solidarity, Brazil's Embassies in Bratislava, Bucharest, Budapest, Prague and Warsaw have been granting special visas to displaced Ukrainians and stateless persons affected or displaced by the armed conflict in Ukraine. Once on Brazilian territory, they have full access to all public services and social benefits on an equal footing with Brazilian nationals. Brazilian civil society has been forthcoming in mobilizing to provide further specialized assistance to help local integration. Such measures are part of a long-standing Brazilian humanitarian visa policy that has already benefited people affected by crises in Afghanistan, Haiti, Syria and Venezuela. Through this we attest to our belief that we should never discriminate against any person or group fleeing an armed conflict. All deserve support, regardless of race, ethnicity, nationality, migration status, age, disability or other circumstances. We welcome the demonstration of international solidarity with Ukrainian refugees and host countries. That is the attitude that we need to foster globally if we are to tackle the immensely complicated humanitarian landscape of our time, marked by a rapid multiplication of crises and situations of forced displacement in many regions of the world.

Mr. Ragutthalli (India): Let me begin by thanking Mr. António Vitorino, the Director General of the International Organization for Migration, and Ms. Kelly Clements, the United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees, for their remarks on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine.

The humanitarian situation in Ukraine has deteriorated further since the Council previously discussed the issue (see S/PV.9013). According to reports coming out of Ukraine, women and children have been disproportionately affected, and they form a majority of the refugees and internally displaced. We support calls urging for guarantees of safe passage to deliver essential humanitarian and medical supplies, including through the establishment of permanent humanitarian corridors. We hope that the international community will continue to respond positively to the evolving humanitarian requirements. Keeping in view the dire humanitarian situation in Ukraine, India has been sending humanitarian supplies to Ukraine and its neighbours that include medicines and other essential relief material. We will provide more medical supplies to Ukraine in the coming days. India has also ensured the safe return of approximately 22,500 Indians from Ukraine. To that end, we initiated Operation Ganga, involving 90 flights. We have also assisted nationals from 18 other countries in that process. We are deeply appreciative of the facilitation rendered by the authorities of Ukraine and its neighbouring countries in ensuring their safe return.

The impact of the situation is being felt beyond the region through increasing food and energy costs, especially for many developing countries. It is in our collective interest to work constructively, both inside and outside the United Nations, to seek an early resolution of the issue. We have noted the findings of the Secretary-General's Global Crisis Response Group Task Team, which were issued last week. We welcome its recommendation for exempting food purchases by the World Food Programme for humanitarian assistance from food export restrictions, with immediate effect. The food security challenges resulting from the conflict in Ukraine require us to respond creatively. The growing shortages can be addressed only by going beyond the constraints that we are currently labouring under. Energy security is an equally serious concern and should be addressed through cooperative efforts. I would like to reiterate the importance of United Nations guiding principles for humanitarian assistance. Humanitarian action should always be guided by those principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence and should never be politicized.

India remains deeply concerned about the worsening situation and reiterates its call for an immediate cessation of violence and an end to hostilities. From the beginning of the conflict we have emphasized

the need to pursue a path of diplomacy and dialogue. When innocent human lives are at stake, diplomacy must prevail as the only viable option. We continue to emphasize to all States Members of the United Nations that the global order is anchored in international law, the Charter of the United Nations and respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of States.

Mr. Hoxha (Albania): Let me thank Director General Vitorino and the Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees, Ms. Clements, for their updated information on the situation in Ukraine.

There is unfortunately no good news from Ukraine, only more of a never-ending tragedy. Every briefer from the United Nations system who addresses the Council echoes the same concerns, sounds the same alarms and highlights the same issues. The situation in Ukraine is dire and worsening. We are running out of words to describe the continued terrible human suffering, the deliberate large-scale destruction and the increasing humanitarian needs. But we are not running out of rage or condemnation of what should never have happened in the first place. Russia has crossed all moral red lines, knowingly, willingly and on purpose. The war of aggression remains as brutal as on its first day. Russia continues to impose its inhuman behaviour and ruthless vision on its neighbour. It continues to slaughter civilians, destroy the country and persist in dashing hopes.

In a matter of weeks, the war has managed to defy the wildest of projections, since, as we heard from Ms. Clements, more than 5 million people have crossed the border since 24 February. Add to that the fact that more than 7.1 million people have been internally displaced and uprooted from their homes, and another 13 million affected by this special madness, and the picture is apocalyptic. The country is upside down. These people, the majority of them women and children, have left everything behind. They have lost their homes. They have been dispossessed of their lives and deprived of their dreams. They are left only with made-in-Russia nightmares.

A major assault has started in eastern Ukraine. It was anticipated, and we do not need to be told what Russia will do there. Mariupol, Bucha and Chernihiv are the calamitous templates that foretell more of the same ruthlessness. There will be more victims and destruction, more suffering and atrocities and more children hurt. That shows that the so-called negotiations were never sincere, merely a tactical bullet to force

Ukraine into concessions or a move to gain time and regroup to inflict more pain.

We welcome the work of the United Nations agencies and their international partners — including those at risk of losing their lives, like the worker from Caritas — while helping millions in need, wherever possible, inside and outside the country. As we heard from the briefers, the needs continue to grow exponentially, because no ceasefire is anywhere on the horizon, which we deeply regret. Safe passage must be ensured to allow for the safe evacuation of civilians. The Secretary-General has called for a humanitarian pause. We support his call, but will he be heard? Everything must be done to protect people vulnerable to trafficking inside Ukraine or those at risk while fleeing the country. We applaud the generosity and hospitality of Ukraine's neighbours and the measures that they and others have taken in welcoming Ukrainian refugees and providing them with access to labour markets, health care and social benefits.

Everything is under attack in Ukraine — freedom, property, rights and life itself. Where there are no ground troops, there will be deadly missiles falling from the sky. The alarming reports of the arbitrary detention of civilians, forced deportation and increased conflict-related sexual violence in territories under Russian control are appalling and must be fully investigated. Accountability is central to our collective efforts to suppress and, hopefully, prevent acts of aggression. We applaud the visit of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Karim Khan, to the crime scenes. Gathering evidence for the purpose of accountability for the atrocities committed in Ukraine remains key not only to delivering on our commitment but also to taking responsibility at all levels to establish truth and end impunity.

We may sometimes be sceptical of media reports here and there. To be properly informed, we always need critical thinking, but it would be hard to refute the credibility of *The New Yorker* magazine. The most recent investigative report on the siege of Chernihiv is petrifying.

“The siege had lasted 39 days and, according to the city's mayor, killed some 700 people — though countless more died as a result of freezing temperatures, lack of medical care and shortages of food and medicines.... Residential buildings were struck with terrifying regularity.”

Even the Yuri Gagarin stadium was flattened. It could hardly be otherwise. When hospitals and schools are attacked, the fight is not against an army; it is aimed at destroying a population. Nina Rogacheva, at 92 years old, is in a hospital bed, badly wounded. She was 11 years old when her family got the news that her father, who was fighting with the Red Army in the Second World War, had been killed at the front. Amid tears, she said, “My father died defending Russia and now that same Russia is bombing me”.

Let me end on this note. In order to enforce its long-held obsessive claim that Ukraine does not exist, the Kremlin has resorted to brute force, coupled with totalitarian censorship back home, in an attempt to force reality to meet the myth. What has happened over the past seven weeks shows the contrary. Reality is hard to deny, and misreading history may result in disaster. History serves not only to bear witness to what has happened in the past, but also as a way to draw lessons and not repeat mistakes in the future. I cannot help going back for a moment to November 1939. Stalin had decided to invade Finland. He wanted a part of it and was convinced that the invasion would be over in a matter of days. What happened was a different story altogether. The outnumbered Finnish resistance, some 3,600 people, inflicted a humiliating defeat on the 25,000-strong Soviet division of that time. For Stalin, it was a territorial grab. For the Finnish, it was an existential threat. No might can defeat the brave hearts of those in the right.

It is important to recall that the Soviet Union wanted to Sovietize Europe. It tried and it failed. The same attempt to impose one man’s rule, concept and foolish dream is failing again, resulting in humiliation for the aggressor but also, unfortunately, in dramatic consequences for Ukraine and serious disruptions for the world. That is why Russia’s war of choice concerns not only the fate of 44 million Ukrainians, but all of us. We must not allow one country to bully the world into submission. No country should be free to dominate others.

Mr. Agyeman (Ghana): Let me begin by thanking Mr. António Vitorino, the Director General of the International Organization for Migration, and Ms. Kelly Clements, the United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees, for their comprehensive briefings. I also commend the dedicated work of their teams in Ukraine, as well as in its neighbouring countries, through the implementation of the inter-agency Regional Refugee

Response Plan spearheaded by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Too many people have been needlessly thrust into the stark and painful reality of life as refugees and internally displaced persons since the Russian Federation invaded Ukraine. In just seven weeks, almost 5 million people in Ukraine have been forced to flee to neighbouring countries and some 7 million more have been internally displaced, with little or no hope of ever returning to their known places of abode and domicile. We commend the willingness of Ukraine’s neighbours — many of which are themselves still in fragile situations — for opening their borders to receive the exodus of people arriving daily from Ukraine. We also particularly thank the families and individuals who have generously offered to share their homes and continue to contribute food and other items to help us meet the needs of the refugees. We urge for sustained cooperation between United Nations agencies, host Governments and the relevant stakeholders to ensure that the refugee assistance and protection measures conform with the internationally accepted standards defined by the 1951 United Nations Convention on the Status of Refugees and its amending Protocol of 1967.

Ghana is particularly concerned about the reports of the discriminatory treatment of third-country nationals in their efforts to board trains and buses transporting people out of Ukraine and to cross its borders into the safer territories of neighbouring countries. We believe that even in the most challenging circumstances the best of our common humanity will come through if we are committed. We therefore condemn any differential treatment based on race, colour, nationality or any other distinguishing criteria and call for the equal treatment and protection of all refugees and internally displaced persons. In particular, we urge for easing border controls to facilitate the entry and passage of third-country nationals. We further urge host countries to refrain from forced deportations and instead to provide third-country nationals with assistance and legal options so that they can remain or return voluntarily to their countries of nationality.

We remain alert to the risks posed by such mass movements of people, especially where human trafficking is concerned, and urge for strengthened oversight and accountability measures, including in transit and host countries. We call for prioritizing the particular needs of women, children, the sick, the elderly and persons living with disabilities, while underscoring

that all reported cases of crimes and violations of human rights, including human trafficking and gender-based and sexual violence against women and girls, must be urgently and independently investigated to establish the culpability of those responsible and hold them accountable.

The continuing bombardment in several parts of Ukraine has intensified the need for a negotiated humanitarian pause and for demilitarizing humanitarian corridors to ensure the safe passage of people leaving the war-torn areas, enabling the unobstructed delivery of life-saving aid and assistance to those who are unable to leave. We further reiterate our call to the parties to respect and uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law and to refrain from direct attacks on civilian populations and civilian infrastructure. Humanitarian workers and medical personnel must also be protected from harm.

Our desire to see an end not only to the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine but to the fast-growing food, energy and financial crisis that is developing globally as a result of the war should drive our efforts to facilitate a peaceful settlement of the conflict through dialogue and diplomacy. We therefore have an urgent and collective responsibility to invest in peace in Ukraine and avoid actions that reinforce the security apprehensions of the parties and serve only to perpetuate a needless war.

Mr. Kimani (Kenya): I thank Deputy High Commissioner Kelly Clements and Director General António Vitorino for their briefings. I also welcome the participation of the Permanent Representatives of Ukraine, Sweden, Italy, Poland, Estonia and Slovakia in this meeting.

The scale of the Ukrainian exodus to escape the war is unprecedented in recent history. With the continuation of the aggression causing that humanitarian catastrophe, the number of refugees will only increase. We commend the rapid mobilization by humanitarian actors, including the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Organization for Migration and the International Committee of the Red Cross. We urge them to redouble their efforts to ensure that the refugees from Ukraine are protected from forms of modern slavery such as forced labour and forced marriage. The security services of receiving countries should also make every effort to ensure that those victims of war are protected from the predation that so often comes to those who have fled their

countries. We further recognize and praise Ukraine's neighbours for so generously opening their borders to the millions of Ukrainians and other nationals fleeing in fear of violence and atrocity. We continue to urge them to ensure that all refugees, whatever their race, national origin or religion, deserve equal protection in line with international humanitarian law.

We call on the Russian Federation to end the war and to return to its important responsibility for protecting international peace and security. Ending the war is the only way to put an end to the humanitarian crisis under way. Continuing it will lead to more suffering and a steady erosion of the legitimacy and status of the United Nations, regardless of its efforts to provide humanitarian relief. We further urge all actors to ensure that there are safe humanitarian corridors provided in Mariupol, Kherson and other besieged cities. The Africans trapped in those cities should be protected by all actors, not only from bombs and bullets but from racist treatment.

The war is leading to hunger and poverty all over the world. Ukraine's inability, due to the war, to safely harvest, transport and export its commodities and goods is adding to global food insecurity. The sanctions, whose scope is unprecedented, are also impacting global food and energy prices. We urge the largest shareholders in the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to mobilize those funds to offer far-reaching efforts to cushion the world's most vulnerable countries. It is particularly important that fertilizers should be made available to countries that suffer from chronic food insecurity. But we must go further than offering alms to the poor and victimized. The extent of the crisis should impel us to support bold leadership in providing a viable development path to the poorest countries, particularly in the context of climate-change mitigation and adaptation.

Every crisis has important lessons that can help us heal in a way that gives birth to a kinder and fairer world. One of those lessons is to recognize and act on the profound danger to all of us from ethnocentrism and racism in all their manifestations. A few weeks ago, we shared our delegation's interaction with an African student who had been studying medicine in Ukraine. She told us of the many thousands of Africans who, like her, had to make a terrifying journey to flee the war and find refuge in Europe. She spoke of the indignities and dangers they experienced from the racist treatment they received along the way. A similar story can be told

by the thousands who seek to cross the Mediterranean from Africa or travel overland from Asia and the Middle East into Europe. These are not merely refugee policies. They point to a fundamental flaw in the global order.

It is our contention that racism and ethnocentrism, especially when they are supported and trumpeted by official policies, are the clearest early-warning signals of catastrophic war and atrocity. Since we are speaking of a war in Europe, Europe knows from its tragic history and understands all too well the horrors that emerge when the full, violent logic of racism and ethnocentrism can mobilize armies. This very United Nations was established after the policies of race and the pseudoscientific racism of the Nazis — which built on the legacies that had generated the transatlantic slavery and other forms of violent racism in the Americas and Europe — killed tens of millions of Europeans, Asians and Africans. To prevent a new age of destructive wars and their associated humanitarian crises, we must build anti-racism into the very foundations of the multilateral order. In every area, from how the United Nations agencies are led and do their work, to policies on refugees and climate change and even Security Council reform, we must embrace anti-racism as the greatest possible preventive action for humanitarian emergencies.

In conclusion, with regard to the specific humanitarian crisis in Ukraine today, the most humane action that can be undertaken is a cessation of hostilities. We call for that cessation — one that has clearly defined contact lines and humanitarian corridors and that lays a foundation for a lasting peace settlement that respects the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Ukraine.

Mr. Abushahab (United Arab Emirates): I would like to thank Director-General António Vitorino and Deputy High Commissioner Kelly T. Clements for their valuable briefings. As we have heard from today's briefers and indeed in all our meetings on Ukraine since the conflict began, almost two months ago, the human costs of the war are staggering. In a clear example of the toll it has taken, more than a quarter of Ukrainians, 90 per cent of whom are women and children, have fled their homes in this short period of time. We call on all the parties to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law. We also reiterate that an immediate cessation of hostilities throughout Ukraine is imperative if we are to move towards a peaceful solution to the war. In that regard, we welcome the Secretary-General's call for a four-day humanitarian

pause to enable the opening of a series of humanitarian corridors, which would help preserve lives, prevent and alleviate suffering and protect civilians. More broadly, in the context of the current situation, I would like to focus on four points.

First, dialogue remains the only way to sustainably end this conflict. The United Arab Emirates supports the ongoing negotiations between the parties and all good-faith efforts aimed at reaching a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Women's full, equal and meaningful participation in all peace efforts must be guaranteed, considering their critical role in building a more sustainable and durable peace.

Secondly, the human suffering created by the conflict requires significant resources for rendering aid to those in need. In particular, we commend the generosity in hosting large numbers of refugees shown by neighbouring countries and others, particularly Poland and Romania, which together have taken in more than 3.4 million Ukrainians, as well as Moldova, which has taken in more than 400,000 refugees, a number equivalent to 15 per cent of its own total population. We also commend the European Union for its ongoing support to States bearing the brunt of the refugee crisis. Additionally, the United Arab Emirates recognizes with appreciation the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration in supporting refugees in host countries, which is essential to providing ongoing care and reassurance after so many have lost so much in the war. We also reiterate our call to allow civilians to safely and voluntarily evacuate from conflict-affected areas and to enable humanitarian aid to reach those in need, in accordance with international law.

Thirdly, we reiterate the need for a gender-responsive approach to be implemented in all humanitarian efforts in Ukraine and host countries. We are particularly concerned about the increasing reports of human trafficking. Ensuring that structured systems are put in place at border crossings to vet assistance providers and detect, prevent and suppress the criminal activity of traffickers is essential to keeping women and children safe. In that context, the humanitarian response must include the voices of women, who can inform the provision and delivery of humanitarian assistance, services and programming efforts with their needs at the centre.

Fourthly, we need to also address the global effects of the conflict in Ukraine urgently and effectively. That

is especially critical as we are seeing sharp rises in food and commodity prices, including in many countries on the Security Council's agenda.

In conclusion, we should spare no effort to end the conflict and the ongoing humanitarian tragedy through diplomacy, and the United Arab Emirates will support every initiative to that end.

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

I would like to start by thanking Ms. Clements and Mr. Vitorino for their briefings. As we have heard today, the people of Ukraine continue to bear the terrible costs of Russia's invasion. And as Russia begins a new offensive in the Donbas, millions of Ukrainians face further suffering. Our consideration of the humanitarian situation in Ukraine must be guided by two overarching principles, the protection of civilians and the prosecution of war crimes.

After 55 days of war, 7.1 million people are displaced within Ukraine, and 4.7 million people have fled to neighbouring countries. Like others, I pay tribute to the compassion and solidarity of the neighbours that are hosting refugees and the work of the United Nations, in particular the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration, for their initiatives, and especially the Blue Dot initiative to protect unaccompanied women and children, who may face sexual exploitation, abuse and suffering. Many Ukrainians, including children, have been forcibly deported to Russia against their will. They should be allowed to leave in safety and with dignity.

For the thousands of civilians remaining in Mariupol, Kherson, Donetsk, Luhansk and other cities, struggling to survive without food, water, warmth or medical supplies, the United Kingdom joins others in supporting the Secretary-General's call for an urgent humanitarian pause to allow assistance to reach civilians in the hardest-hit areas. To that end, the United Kingdom has pledged almost £400 million in aid to Ukraine and is a leading humanitarian donor, providing £220 million in humanitarian assistance to deliver life-saving aid and to support countries receiving and hosting refugees. We have also guaranteed \$1 billion in World Bank lending to Ukraine.

Secondly, with regard to the prosecution of war crimes, those who suffered from the occupation

and atrocities by Russian forces in Bucha, Irpin, Borodyanka, Chernihiv and many other towns should be in no doubt that justice will be sought for those crimes against humanity. We welcome the International Criminal Court investigations led by Prosecutor Karim Khan, which are under way. As the Prosecutor said, Ukraine is now a crime scene. The investigations of the appalling sexual violence in Ukraine will be informed by the Murad Code, which we launched at the United Nations last week and which is a vital step towards supporting survivors and bringing perpetrators to justice.

For the sake of those we could not protect from violence, there must be the prosecution of those who committed it.

Finally, we should not ignore the looming humanitarian needs caused by secondary displacements as the economic consequences of this war translate into rising food, energy and finance costs, exposing more than 1.2 billion people in 69 countries to perfect-storm conditions. The urgent and simple solution to this humanitarian crisis is for President Putin to stop the war.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

Mr. Kyslytsya (Ukraine): I recognize the representative of Putin's regime in the permanent seat of the Soviet Union.

First of all, I would like to thank Minister Coveney for his statement. I also thank Mr. António Vitorino, Director General of the International Organization for Migration, and Ms. Kelly Clements, United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees, for their briefings.

Yesterday morning, surgeons in Lviv carried out an operation on a three-year-old boy by the name of Myron, an internally displaced person (IDP) from Kharkiv. His family left eastern Ukraine in an attempt to save their child from Russian shelling. Unfortunately, Russian rocket attacks against Ukrainians know no bounds, and Myron's family came under attack from a Russian air strike on the other side of Ukraine while in the vicinity of a car service centre hit by a Russian cruise missile. Fortunately, Myron survived, unlike seven other people killed by the air strike on Lviv, unlike three people killed by Russian shells in his native town of Kharkiv

just today and unlike many other Ukrainians whom Russia is killing right now.

One may like to ask Putin's representative how the attempted murder of a three-year-old boy near a car service centre in Lviv could protect Donbas from neo-Nazis. But I will not do that, as it would simply be a waste of time to listen to another lie that the Russian representative feeds to us to justify what cannot be justified. Let their deeds speak for themselves, and they are sinister.

It was also yesterday that Putin granted the 64th motorized infantry brigade of the Russian army the honorary title of Guards Brigade. As an argument, Putin referred to the so-called "mass heroism and valour, tenacity and courage" of the soldiers of the aforementioned brigade. Let it be remembered that the 64th brigade was supposed to seize Kyiv, according to the initial Russian plans. It failed and was deployed to the town of Bucha for almost the whole of March — a month that was turned into a period of terror against the civilian population of the occupied town. The soldiers of that brigade, many of whom have already been identified, are responsible for the mass atrocities in Bucha.

That is the Russian interpretation of heroism and courage — to kill hundreds of unarmed civilians, to rape dozens of women and girls and, finally, to flee from the advancing Ukrainian forces. One could only agree that the Russian soldiers demonstrated tenacity. Retreating under the fire of the Ukrainian forces, they tenaciously kept all that they had looted from the private houses and apartments of the residents of Bucha. Russians left behind their munitions in order to pack their vehicles with stolen computers, television sets, mobile phones, clothes, carpets, washing machines and even toilets. One may find such an inclination for stealing toilets too much even for Russians. However, it should be remembered that about a quarter of Russian households still do not have access to indoor plumbing. In rural Russia, the record of sanitation facilities is even worse and extends to almost two thirds of households.

As we meet now, the battle for the Ukrainian Donbas is unfolding. Russian forces are attacking Ukrainian cities and villages in the east of the country, trying to raze them to the ground and making no differentiation between the military and civilians. It means that, while the Ukrainian forces courageously protect every parcel of Ukrainian soil, civilians in the conflict area remain under deadly threat from Russian forces.

The situation in Mariupol remains the most critical. Thousands of civilians are still in the city. Hundreds of them, including children, have taken shelter in the Azovstal plant. They need immediate safe evacuation, and the Russian forces are well aware of that. Instead, the Russians are denying all requests from the Ukrainian side, world leaders and United Nations senior officials for evacuation corridors for civilians. The Russians continue to shell Azovstal and the entire city with aerial bombs, rockets and heavy artillery. The Russians have also blocked humanitarian convoys with food and medicine from Ukraine and international organizations to the city.

Every time it seems that we have already become accustomed to the ignoble methods of Russian warfare, every new piece of news from Mariupol and dozens of other hotspots proves that Russians are still able to hit new lows.

I call on the Security Council to urgently exercise its authority, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, to save the innocent civilians of Mariupol and other eastern cities and towns that remain hostages of the bloody war fantasies of Putin. I would also like to acknowledge the importance of today's call by the Secretary-General for a humanitarian pause to allow for the opening of a series of humanitarian corridors. We demand that Russia heed that call. However, what we just heard from a Putinite instead was that "calls for a ceasefire sound false and insincere", followed by a torrent of tommyrot and drivel from the comrade in the Soviet seat.

We commend the continuous efforts of the United Nations humanitarian teams to support Ukrainian citizens on the ground. In that regard, we welcome the return to Kyiv by the United Nations mission. It will ensure better interaction with the Government. We welcome the joint actions of the World Food Programme and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to provide special cash assistance to low-income IDPs and retirees. We believe that such an approach will contribute to more targeted, balanced humanitarian aid to those in need.

We also encourage United Nations agencies to assist in the implementation of the Government programmes to relocate Ukrainian production facilities and support the employment of IDPs. More than 250 State-supported production facilities have already been relocated to other areas, with hundreds of others waiting their turn. We believe that Ukraine is a good

place for the active implementation of the humanitarian development nexus.

Let me once again express our special gratitude to all States that have accepted Ukrainian refugees, primarily women and children, as well as those that have provided children education, health protection and psychological and social support. However, given the enormous magnitude of the crisis, we ask that the humanitarian response in and around Ukraine be scaled up and that the volume of humanitarian aid be increased and promptly delivered to those in need.

In the Russia-controlled territories, including the Kherson and Zaporizhzhya regions, the invaders are building filtration camps and torture chambers. They continue to abduct representatives of local authorities and activists. We all remember the assurances of Putin's representative in this Chamber that Russia did not intend to occupy Ukrainian lands — another lie, like everything that comes out of his mouth.

Now Russians are trying to tear off the Kherson and Zaporizhzhya regions, following the model of the so-called Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic. The Russian occupiers continue to forcibly transfer Ukrainians from the occupied territories of Donbas to Russia, as Nazi Germany once did. Filtration camps are an integral element of their transfer.

At least 20,000 Ukrainians are being kept in filtration camps on the Mangush-Nikolske-Yalta line — about 5,000 to 7,000 people in the filtration camp in the village of Bezimenne, Donetsk region. According to available information, citizens of Ukraine are sent to the economically depressed regions of the Russian Federation, in particular the northern regions and the island of Sakhalin. Ukrainians receive documents banning them from leaving Russian regions for two years.

To date, more than 500,000 Ukrainians, including 121,000 children, have been forcibly transferred to Russia's territory. Such actions of the Russian invaders can be qualified as kidnapping and require a resolute response by the international community, primarily from the relevant United Nations agencies. As of today, more than 12 million persons have left their homes due to the armed aggression of the Russian Federation, and many of them have no place to come back to. Almost 5 million Ukrainians — including 2 million children — have left Ukraine, while 7 million are internally displaced, including 2.5 million children.

We call on the United Nations to provide its assistance to monitor the situation and ensure the safe return of the Ukrainian displaced persons, particularly children, to secure places in Ukraine or in other countries. The rights of displaced Ukrainian children must be protected.

We also expect more active involvement in establishing humanitarian corridors, which are currently being blocked by the Russian troops, ensuring the safe evacuation of civilians and delivering humanitarian aid to those who remain in the area of conflict.

Since 5 March, the Government of Ukraine, through the mediation of the International Committee of the Red Cross, offered 348 humanitarian routes, 303 of which have been agreed upon. Nevertheless, only 176 took place. As of 18 April, more than 290,000 people have been evacuated. None of the 38 attempts of the Ukrainian authorities to arrange humanitarian corridors for civilians from Mariupol and Volnovakha were successful, due to Russia's unwillingness.

Since January, we have held more than a dozen meetings on the Russian aggression against Ukraine. We all value our time, so let me ask the Council — how do our meetings influence those that occupy a seat that the Charter of the United Nations still allocates to another already defunct entity? How many meetings of the Security Council will be held with the same result and without changing Russia's role in the Council?

It appears that these meetings do not affect much —not the security situation on the front line or the humanitarian situation in Ukraine. I do not underestimate the commitment of our partners to help Ukraine at the bilateral level. However, what is the role of the Security Council — the organ that failed to prevent the war and continues to fail to stop it now due to Russian actions.

Unfortunately, in this Chamber, we continue to listen to the subjects of a future war trial and make statements before them. For what reason? Is the international community ready to relegate the role of the Security Council in addressing the worst security crisis in the European continent since the Second World War to discussions only? I strongly urge the Security Council to seriously address the issue of how to solve the problem of Russian's dubious presence in this Chamber, as it impedes the Council's effectiveness in exercising its primary responsibility — to maintain international peace and security.

Why does this organ have no influence on Russia's war against Ukraine? The answer is obvious — because the Security Council continues to pretend that Russia is a full and legitimate permanent member. I see no meaningful change in the role of the Security Council if an answer is not found soon. Russia must be stopped for the sake of peace, for the sake of Ukrainians and for the sake of people throughout the world.

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

Ms. Eneström (Sweden): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and my own country, Sweden.

Let me start by thanking the briefers for their clear and concise remarks. I also want to pay tribute to the staff of their respective organizations and all other humanitarian workers on the ground in Ukraine and in neighbouring countries. We are immensely grateful for their efforts, which, sadly, are essential for the safety and dignity of so many Ukrainians. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration are doing impressive work to assist refugees and internally displaced persons and we encourage them to continue to scale up their work.

As we heard today and as evidenced by so many testimonies from those who have fled, the efforts of humanitarian actors are being dwarfed by the unspeakable horrors caused by the unprovoked, unjustified and illegal Russian aggression against Ukraine. The decision to launch this war places a heavy responsibility on those who made it.

We welcome the efforts of humanitarian actors to assist and protect as many people in need as possible, as well as the hospitality and generosity of those countries who are hosting refugees from Ukraine. Ukraine's immediate neighbours — Poland, Moldova, Romania, Hungary and Slovakia — deserve particular recognition in that regard.

The Nordic countries are proud to be part of a donor community that has mustered an impressive response to the initial humanitarian appeal of \$1.1 billion.

Going forward, let me highlight a few elements that we see as particularly important to further improve the efficiency of humanitarian work:

First, safe, rapid and unhindered humanitarian access must be ensured — not least to the areas hardest hit by the conflict and places that risk being encircled,

in particular. Access to places such as Mariupol and Kharkiv is still being granted on a case-by-case basis and requires complicated negotiations, while humanitarian needs are on a scale that requires sustained access. The main cause of the lack of access are the attacks by the Russian Federation on areas where civilians are located, which compromises the safety and security of humanitarian actors on the ground. We call on the parties to the conflict to abide by their obligations to allow and facilitate access to the east and to other hard-to-reach areas, recalling again the particular responsibility that rests on the shoulders of the invading forces. We welcome in that regard the efforts of the Emergency Relief Coordinator to negotiate a humanitarian ceasefire during his recent visit to Moscow and Ukraine, and we strongly support the Secretary-General's call for a humanitarian pause.

Secondly, in line with humanitarian principles, protection and assistance must take into account the needs of everyone living in a situation of vulnerability. We see how women who have chosen to stay are at heightened risk of sexual and gender-based violence. We also see how the elderly and people with disabilities are unable to leave. Those aspects must be fully integrated into the humanitarian response.

Thirdly, international humanitarian law must be respected. Civilians must never be a target, and civilian infrastructure must be protected. Sexual violence can never be tolerated. That brings me back to the issue of responsibility. No amount of denial and disinformation will prevent accountability for serious international crimes, including war crimes.

We are now almost eight weeks into Russia's full-scale aggression against Ukraine. During that time, we have witnessed horrific atrocities that have ended, ruined or disrupted the lives of millions. But we have also seen the international community coming together in solidarity with Ukraine. And, most importantly, we have been deeply impressed by the incredible resilience of the Ukrainian people.

In conclusion, we recall the two resolutions adopted by the emergency special session of the General Assembly (resolutions ES-11/1 and ES-11/2), as well as the order by the International Court of Justice issued on 16 March this year. All of them include a clear call on Russia to stop this war. But let us be candid: no United Nations resolutions or court orders are necessary in that regard. It is obvious to everyone what the right course of action is. This aggression should never have been

launched in the first place, and it must end now. It is never too late to make the right choice.

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

Mr. Massari (Italy): We are thankful to the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom for having organized this meeting and to all the briefers for their insightful remarks.

First and foremost, let me take this opportunity to reiterate Italy's firm condemnation of the unjustified and unprovoked aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine and our full support for Ukraine and its people.

We are deeply concerned by the repeated attacks on civilians, including women and children, and by the testimonies and reports of the war crimes, grave breaches of international humanitarian law and serious violations of international human rights law perpetrated by the Russian armed forces.

As the horrifying images that we have been seeing in the past month have confirmed, human displacement is the inevitable reaction to the scourge of war in the quest for the safety of civilians. As has been mentioned, 7.1 million people are internally displaced, and there are more than 4.5 million refugees. Even though those numbers are already shocking, they are continuing to grow as we speak.

Refugees are a priority that requires a coordinated international approach. Hence we welcome the efforts of the International Organization for Migration, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the other United Nations agencies on the ground in order to try to alleviate that unbearable human suffering. We have provided a contribution of €20 million to the United Nations flash appeal and €6 million to the Red Cross.

Italy has been following migration flows from Ukraine since 2014, also in the light of the presence of a large Ukrainian community in our country. Almost 250,000 Ukrainians live in Italy, accounting for one of the largest Ukrainian diasporas in the world before the war. In addition to them, we have already welcomed almost 100,000 refugees and are ready to do our part in assisting all Ukrainians arriving in Italy.

Nonetheless, we must point out that the Ukrainian refugee crisis is a protection crisis for women and children, who account for 90 per cent of all those

fleeing from Ukraine across the borders. We know that the risks of gender-based violence, trafficking, abuse and psychological trauma and family separation increase in times of conflict and displacement, but, given the gender profile of that refugee outflow and the fact that many children have fled alone, those risks are incredibly high. The testimony of rapes and sexual violence by Russian troops that are now emerging are utterly disturbing.

The protection and promotion of women's and girls' rights and the fight against all forms of sexual and gender-based violence, in times of both peace and armed conflict, is a long-standing commitment on the part of Italy. We believe that full accountability must be ensured for the individual perpetrators of such violations so as to avert any form of impunity.

While affirming our condemnation of the Russian aggression, Italy reiterates its call for an immediate cessation of hostilities, the withdrawal of the Russian military forces from the internationally recognized borders of Ukraine and the return to a negotiating path. We also affirm our heartfelt solidarity with Ukraine and its people and mourn all the victims of that senseless war.

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

Mr. Szczerki (Poland): I would like to thank the United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees and the Director General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) for their interventions today. It is important that both the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the IOM maintain their presence across Ukraine and support refugees and internally displaced persons in their everyday needs.

As a consequence of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, we are witnessing one of the gravest displacement and humanitarian crises on record. On 6 March, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, rightly described it as the fastest-growing refugee crisis in Europe since the Second World War. The rate at which people are fleeing Ukraine is unprecedented, even when compared with the displacement crises in Venezuela, Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq.

Since day one of the war, Poland has remained open to those fleeing the atrocities of the Russian aggression, and we have registered people of 170 nationalities. All

of them are treated equally and accordingly with their legal status. We are now welcoming in our homes most of the 3 million people in question. Estimates show that 75 per cent of them voluntarily decided to stay in Poland, and we welcome their choice.

We need to ask ourselves one very simple question. Since we all agree that this crisis is on an unprecedented scale and the fastest-growing one since the Second World War, have we all, as the international community, responded to it on an unprecedented scale, too? Let me be 100 per cent frank: the answer is both yes and no. Yes, we have seen an exceptional outpouring of solidarity and political support from many corners of the world. Our societies have opened their hearts and homes to the distressed, and our Governments have strongly condemned the aggressor and followed up with sanctions regimes. The General Assembly has adopted important resolutions.

In Poland, we have almost 15 million households. Taking into account that we have welcomed almost 3 million people from Ukraine, that means, statistically, that one in five Polish families lives now with guests from abroad. The reception of such a large number of refugees requires the Polish Government and local authorities to undertake enormous efforts in order to provide shelter, access to health care and education. We are trying to be as flexible as possible as we adjust Polish regulations to the current reality. For example, by today, almost 1 million Ukrainian refugees have received a Polish personal identification number, and around 180,000 refugee children have enrolled in Polish schools. This has solved one of the most challenging problems of any refugee crisis, namely, personal registration.

At the same time, it is obvious that Poland and other neighbouring countries of Ukraine will not be able to shoulder the burden of this crisis on their own, even though, in Poland, we operate according to a simple principle: we first help with our own means, and only when our resources are exhausted do we ask for international assistance — not the other way around. The unprecedented scale of the crisis requires increased involvement of United Nations agencies and the support of the international community as a whole. Only a concerted effort will bring relief to those who are suffering, and this help must come not in words, but in deeds.

For the sake of time, I would simply like to draw Council members' attention to the following three

aspects. First, with regard to the need for coordination of our efforts, since the beginning of the war, the Polish Government, non-governmental organizations and individual society members have been delivering humanitarian assistance to Ukraine and facilitating deliveries of aid from third countries. In fact, between 1,500 to 2,000 tons of such aid are being shipped from Poland every day. We would like to encourage the United Nations institutions involved in the relief efforts to use Poland's infrastructure, as our resources allow us to reach even the most distant regions of eastern Ukraine, as we did a few days ago with the largest shipment of aid yet — 120 container railway cars with 1,500 tons of aid for Zaporizhia and Kharkiv. Poland and Ukraine have well-functioning systems of national and local government institutions and logistics, including transportation and storage facilities, which are ready to be used.

Today the Polish Prime Minister opened the first "container town" for internally displaced persons in Lviv, which was fully funded by Poland. He also announced similar projects to be launched in towns around Kyiv, including Bucha. Shelter of this type, which covers 1,000 people, costs around \$8 million. We therefore encourage the United Nations to take this opportunity to work more closely with our Governments to increase the efficiency of the humanitarian assistance provided to Ukraine.

Secondly, there is an urgent need to adequately respond to and prevent such displacement-related risks as human trafficking and abuse. Poland has undertaken actions to address challenges related to the risks of trafficking in human beings. In this context, the Polish Border Guard, police and other authorities have increased their actions to prevent and counter human trafficking. Relevant authorities have undertaken appropriate information campaigns. For example, special alerts containing comprehensive information about potential threats, possible assistance and dedicated hotline numbers are disseminated to all refugees entering Poland. Furthermore, to ensure the safety of minor Ukrainian citizens, we developed a special legal procedure for the safekeeping of the records of unaccompanied minors and their actual caregivers.

Thirdly, we are deeply concerned at the fate of people who were forcibly taken far into Russia's territory. According to some reports, there are 500,000 people who share this plight, including over 120,000 children. We see the urgent need for reflection about

what can be done by relevant United Nations agencies, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration, to stop and prevent this process. We should make a distinction between those fleeing from aggression and those being forcibly deported. This distinction is currently not being made in United Nations statistics.

In the light of this enormous humanitarian crisis, much more can be done by the international community to respond to rapidly raising challenges. This is why Poland and Sweden have taken the initiative to convene on 5 May a high-level international donor conference for Ukraine to mobilize substantial pledges in support of the United Nations humanitarian response in Ukraine and to discuss how to respond to the challenges created by the Russian war against Ukraine. The event will be an opportunity to show solidarity with Ukraine and the Ukrainian people through practical means, which is so greatly needed today. Please show up.

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

Mr. Jürgenson (Estonia): I am speaking today on behalf of the Baltic countries — Latvia, Lithuania and my own country, Estonia. We give great importance to this opportunity to take part in the Council discussion today.

I thank the briefers for their updates, which reflect the alarming humanitarian situation caused by the brutal Russian military aggression, with the complicity of Belarus, against Ukraine. This aggression is illegal and unprovoked. We strongly condemn this violation of international law, including the United Nations Charter. We repeat the demand of the International Court of Justice and that of the General Assembly for Russia to immediately stop its aggression and unconditionally withdraw all forces and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine.

The Russian aggression was launched and is being conducted with a cynical indifference to its humanitarian consequences for Ukraine and the world. Cities reduced to ruins, homes and farms destroyed, families torn apart; thousands, including hundreds of children, killed and wounded; civilians tortured, subjected to sexual violence, summarily executed and burned in Bucha and elsewhere; rising hunger and poverty in the most vulnerable regions of the world — these are the devastating results of the choice

that Russia has made. They bring echoes of the worst crimes of the past century, which the United Nations is designed to prevent.

Five million people have been forced to flee Ukraine, most of them women and children. We commend the solidarity of Ukraine's immediate neighbours in helping those fleeing. We continue to assist the nearly 110,000 refugees who have reached Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

Millions are displaced as a direct result of the war. Our countries are sending medical and shelter supplies, food aid and other support to help the people in Ukraine. Our combined humanitarian assistance — from the State but also countless individuals, companies and civil society organizations — amounts to €66 million. As just one example: one in every three Estonians has made a charitable donation to help the people in Ukraine. We are contributing to the United Nations humanitarian flash appeal and the regional refugee response plan and the International Committee of the Red Cross. We also continue to provide humanitarian assistance and development cooperation globally.

The humanitarian situation of those trapped in the cities under siege has been described as “hell”. The Russian Federation must immediately grant full, safe and unhindered access for humanitarian assistance to Mariupol and other besieged cities, as well as safe passage to allow civilians to safely and voluntarily leave for the destination of their choice.

As we discuss the humanitarian consequences of the Russian aggression, we also reiterate our call for accountability for the systematic violations of international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law, committed by the Russian armed forces in Ukraine. We support the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine as well as the work being done under the auspices of the Moscow Mechanism of the Organization for Security and Cooperation, and we continue our support for the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court. But we cannot forget that, while these investigations are under way, countless civilians continue to be targeted by Russia in Ukraine every day.

The Russian attack against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally agreed borders needs to stop now. I repeat: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania stand with the people of

Ukraine — women, men and children — who have shown immeasurable courage. We stand with humanity against brutality.

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

Mr. Chatrnúch (Slovakia): Since 24 February, the Security Council has been actively engaged on the issue of the situation in Ukraine and held multiple meetings, for one simple reason — the Russian decision to start the senseless war. The consequences of the unjustified and unprovoked Russian aggression against Ukraine, in blatant violation of international law and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, are unprecedented and outrageous.

We would like to thank today's briefers for the information provided, which, unfortunately, confirms our ongoing grave concerns about the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Ukraine. The conflict has already resulted in significant human costs, including the growing number of civilian casualties and damage to critical civilian infrastructure. The numbers of killed and wounded civilians are shocking. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, as of yesterday 2,072 civilians had been killed and 2,819 wounded. Needless to say, the reality is actually much worse.

Slovakia, as a neighbouring country and thus directly affected, is particularly alarmed by the refugee crisis resulting from the Russian aggression. Almost 5 million refugees have fled the country, while far more than 7 million are internally displaced. Since the beginning of the aggression, about 345,000 people have entered Slovakia.

Slovakia has adopted numerous legislative measures facilitating the provision of temporary refuge and basic services for people crossing the border. In this regard, I would like to particularly mention that around 7,000 children from Ukraine have been provided with adequate education in Slovak schools. Our Government, humanitarian organizations, municipalities, businesses and individual citizens are determined to continue providing strong humanitarian support to relieve the suffering of the Ukrainian people. We stand in solidarity with them as a close friend and good neighbour in these most challenging times. Causing all this suffering is cynical and barbaric.

Let me reiterate that the aggressor accountable for this situation is obvious. Slovakia calls on the Russian Federation to immediately cease its hostilities against Ukraine, in particular all attacks against civilians and civilian objects. In this regard, we likewise urge the Russian Federation to listen to the voice of the international community and implement the humanitarian resolution ES-11/2 adopted by the General Assembly on 24 March, taking into account the situation of vulnerable groups, including women, children and older persons who are stuck in Mariupol.

Slovakia supports the direct dialogue that has started between Ukraine and the Russian Federation and calls for the peaceful settlement of the conflict, in compliance with the United Nations Charter. In the light of the upcoming Orthodox Easter, we also support the Secretary-General's call for a four-day truce in order to open humanitarian corridors.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.