



Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

9135th meeting

Thursday, 22 September 2022, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Ms. Colonna (France)

Members:

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| Russian Federation | Mr. Lavrov |
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| United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . . | Mr. Cleverly |
| United States of America | Mr. Blinken |

Agenda

Maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine

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

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Belarus, Czechia, Germany, Lithuania, Poland, Türkiye and Ukraine to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Karim Khan, Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Josep Borrell Fontelles, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, to participate in this meeting.

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

I wish to warmly welcome the Secretary-General and the Prime Minister, Ministers and other high-level representatives. Their presence today underscores the importance of the subject matter under discussion.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Secretary-General António Guterres.

The Secretary-General (*spoke in French*): Russia's war in Ukraine shows no sign of letting up. The past seven months have seen unspeakable suffering and devastation. The latest developments are dangerous and disturbing. They are further steps away from any prospect of peace and towards an endless cycle of horror and bloodshed. As I have said from the start, this senseless war has unlimited potential to do terrible harm — in Ukraine and around the world.

The idea of nuclear conflict, once unthinkable, has become a subject of debate. That in itself is totally unacceptable. All nuclear-armed States should recommit to the non-use and total elimination of nuclear weapons.

I am also deeply concerned by reports of plans to organize so-called referendums in areas of Ukraine that are currently not under Government control.

Any annexation of a State's territory by another State resulting from the threat or use of force is a violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

Thousands of Ukrainian civilians, including hundreds of children, have been killed and injured, mostly by Russian bombardment of urban areas. Every day, an average of five children are killed or injured. Almost every child in Ukraine has been scarred by the nightmare of war, from violence to family separation. Some 14 million people, the majority of them women and children, have been forced to flee. The situation will only get worse with winter approaching and gas and electricity supplies dwindling.

At the global level, the conflict has brought about a triple crisis of food, energy and finance. That is driving millions more people into extreme poverty and hunger, reversing years of progress on development. It follows the crises surrounding the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the impact of climate change.

The collateral damage of this war is being felt in dozens of developing countries that were already struggling to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and deal with the climate crisis. The most vulnerable are suffering the most.

The United Nations is working tirelessly to maximize every opportunity to alleviate the suffering, particularly through my visits to Ukraine, the Russian Federation and the region and my direct engagement with President Zelenskyy and President Putin. Together with our humanitarian partners on the ground, we have provided aid to nearly 13 million people in need. It is essential that humanitarian workers have safe and unhindered access to all those requiring assistance, wherever they may be.

(spoke in English)

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has been documenting the war's unacceptable impact on human rights. The reports are a catalogue of cruelty: summary executions, sexual violence, torture and other inhumane and degrading treatment against civilians and prisoners of war. The latest accounts of burial sites in Izyum are extremely disturbing. All those allegations must be thoroughly investigated to ensure accountability. Perpetrators must be held to account in fair and independent judicial proceedings. Victims and their families have a right to justice, remedy and reparation. Ending impunity for

international crimes is fundamental. In all of that, the International Criminal Court plays an important role to ensure effective accountability. The Prosecutor of the Court has opened an investigation into the situation in Ukraine. Full cooperation with the Court by all parties is essential.

The fact-finding mission that I established following the tragic incident at the detention facility in Olenivka on 29 July is ready to deploy as soon as all the necessary assurances have been received. The mission must have safe, secure and unfettered access to all relevant places and people and to all relevant evidence, without any limitation, impediment or interference.

The situation at the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant, located in the middle of a war zone, remains a cause of grave concern. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is consulting with all parties involved on measures to ensure the safety of the plant and surrounding areas. I thank the IAEA for its work. Its continued presence at the plant is an important deterrent. All attacks on nuclear facilities must end, and the purely civilian nature of such plants must be re-established. Any damage to nuclear infrastructure, whether deliberate or not, could have terrible consequences for people around the plant and far beyond. The world cannot afford a nuclear catastrophe.

Yesterday's news that more than 250 prisoners of war were exchanged between Ukraine and the Russian Federation was a welcome development. I commend the efforts of both parties and hope that they will build on them with further exchanges aiming at an all-for-all formula. I thank the Governments of Türkiye and Saudi Arabia for their roles in securing that agreement.

In July, also with the support of the Government of Türkiye, a landmark deal was reached, which enabled the resumption of food and fertilizer exports from three of Ukraine's Black Sea ports. More than 4.3 million metric tons of food have since been moved, bound for 29 countries across three continents. That includes three vessels chartered by the World Food Programme to transport desperately needed food supplies for the people of Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa and Yemen. A fourth vessel left Istanbul today, and a fifth is on its way.

Since the signing of the Black Sea Grain Initiative, global food prices have dropped sharply, although they are still almost 8 per cent higher than a year ago. It is

vital that those food shipments continue and increase so that commodity markets further stabilize.

The United Nations also signed a memorandum of understanding with the Russian Federation on the full access of Russian food and fertilizer products, including ammonia, to global markets. We are doing everything possible to facilitate that and to ease the serious fertilizer market crunch that is already affecting farming in West Africa and elsewhere.

If the fertilizer market is not stabilized, next year could bring a food-supply crisis. Simply put, the world may run out of food. It is essential that all States immediately remove every remaining obstacle to the export of Russian fertilizers. We need to get them to farmers at a reasonable cost and onto fields as soon as possible. Another major concern is the impact of high gas prices on the production of nitrogen fertilizers. That must also be addressed without delay.

(spoke in French)

The only one way to end the suffering in Ukraine is by putting an end to the war. I will continue to spare no effort for peace — a peace based on international law and the Charter of the United Nations. I appeal to all Member States, particularly those represented here today, to redouble efforts to prevent further escalation and to do all that they can to end the war and ensure lasting peace.

The President *(spoke in French)*: I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing

I now give the floor to Mr. Khan.

Mr. Khan: It is a great privilege to have the opportunity to address a few words to the Security Council.

This is a moment where we must collectively demonstrate by action, not words, that the law has meaning. It is critical that the law be seen to be on the front line, protecting those most at need. As we speak, in Ukraine and in many other parts of the world the most vulnerable deserve our attention. Children, women and men suffer in agony and insecurity, and the law is looked to for real meaning and for accountability.

But that potential, which I am convinced is latent in the law, can be achieved only by collective action. It requires a determined focus, not only by my Office and the International Criminal Court (ICC), but also by all Council members. We must demonstrate in every

location where violations are alleged, and where the Court has jurisdiction, that in any conflict there are responsibilities. Anybody who picks up a gun or who fires a missile must realize that the law is alive, and not in slumber, and that accountability is absolutely essential. That requires determined action. It requires us to renew our pledge, made at Nuremberg, that there is no statute of limitation for war crimes and to march forward together.

I am convinced that, if we coalesce around such basic principles of humanity and those basic norms of conduct, the law can play an increasingly impactful role as an anchor towards peace and security in Ukraine, as well as in many other parts of the world.

Since the beginning of the recent developments in Ukraine in late February, I have sought to ensure that the response from my Office meets the imperatives of action and focus. In the five days between 25 February, when I made my initial statement, and 2 March, when I opened the investigation, we moved with some purpose. And the fact that 43 State parties to the Rome Statute, one third of the Assembly, referred the matter to the Court signifies not only the nature of the crisis and the concern expressed but also, I believe, an understanding that the law has an important role to play.

We are now at the stage of continuing forensic, objective and impartial — sometimes very painstaking — work to grapple with the facts, to separate truth from fiction and to build a picture of what actually happened. In May, we made the largest field deployment that the ICC has seen. And since May, we have had a permanent field presence in Ukraine. I can announce that next week additional members of my Office will also deploy to Ukraine in order to look into allegations emerging from the east of the country.

Building partnerships and embracing innovation takes many forms, including new engagements with States, international organizations and the private sector. Hopefully, this new model of a more coordinated and effective partnership, with a more coherent approach for action, will render that collective work more effective.

But the process of accountability, of collecting evidence, sifting it, weighing it and determining what it shown, is not simply an academic exercise. It is critical in order to pierce the fog of war so as to actually present the truth in a juridical forum. Luckily, we have independent judges, and when we have done

our job, we will in due course present our evidence to the independent judges of the ICC, and they will further scrutinize our work very properly and decide where the truth lies.

That exercise is essential if we are to have confidence in the rules-based system. This function, and this alone, is the focus of my Office. It is not a tool for politics, and it is not driven by any other agenda than our obligations, which are well articulated in the Rome Statute and are underpinned with great eloquence in the Charter of the United Nations, which created this organ that I have the privilege to sit in today.

Through that work, a picture will emerge. And the picture that I have seen thus far is troubling indeed. I have been to Ukraine three times, and I have seen a variety of destruction, suffering and harm, all of which strengthens my determination and my previous finding that there are reasonable grounds to believe that crimes within the jurisdiction of the Court have been committed.

If I may be quite direct, when I went to Bucha and went behind the Church of Saint Andrew, the bodies I saw were not fake. When I walked the streets of Borodyanka, the destruction I saw of buildings and schools was all too real. And when I left Kharkiv, the bombs I heard gave a very small and sombre glimpse into the awful reality that is faced by many of our brothers and sisters and children that are in a war zone.

I am deeply concerned about the allegations and information we are seeing regarding what appear to be reasonable grounds to believe that civilian objects were intentionally targeted and that populations from Ukraine, particularly children, were transferred out of the country.

Those are priorities that we are focusing on. But our task, collectively, is to ensure that those responsible for any crimes committed, for any decisions that judges of the ICC may make, realize today, in real time, that they are masters of their own destiny. They have the choice, and indeed the unambiguous responsibility, to act proportionately, to honour the principle of distinction and to take all the means necessary to make sure that civilians and civilian objects are not targeted.

Justice, as I have said, is not political. It is a vindication of the fundamental rights of all members of humankind, and it is a demonstration of promises that underpin the Charter and the Rome Statute. The

echoes of Nuremberg can be heard today. The failure to uphold the promises of Nuremberg, which we have seen over the past many decades, should be a reproach on all of us.

But leaders, do not despair or give way to despondency, but act as a catalyst for further action, to regalanize us as a Council, as international organizations and as humankind, to finally — for goodness sake — come of age and plant more firmly the flag of legality on the international landscape.

Today all I can do is renew my commitment to my obligations and my oath as Prosecutor of the ICC to do everything I can in order to engage with all international partner States, the United Nations and other international organizations to investigate cases within our jurisdiction in Ukraine and beyond. The responsibilities that I hold and the much more powerful, relevant and wider responsibilities that world leaders hold, demand no less than us meeting the challenges of today. We must demonstrate the resolve and the determination and the principle in order not to disappoint and fail those who, as we speak, are most in need of the rule of law.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Prosecutor Khan for his briefing.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Minister of Europe and Foreign Affairs of France.

It is with a great sense of gravity that I take the floor at this meeting dedicated to the situation in Ukraine and, more particularly, to the crimes committed there. The aggression that Russia decided to launch alone against a sovereign State, Ukraine, whose only fault was to want to live freely, constitutes a flagrant violation of the fundamental norms of our common charter, the Charter of the United Nations.

The non-use of force, the peaceful resolution of disputes and respect for the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of States are principles to which we around the Council table all subscribed. Each of those principles was blatantly violated. The war, which began on 24 February, has also been accompanied by abuse and the destruction of civilian infrastructure.

We have seen many violations of the laws of war and many actions for which there must be accountability. In Bucha, Chernihiv and in so many other places, unspeakable crimes were committed. The liberation

of Izyum also uncovered new atrocities committed by the torturers.

The message of France today is simple — justice must be our common imperative. There can be no peace without justice. Justice, of course, is an imperative for the victims, each of whom has the right to recognition and reparations for all their suffering. Justice is also an imperative of international security, and I say that to those who see this war as just another conflict. If everything is permissible here, then it will be even more permissible elsewhere, and the possibility of a war of aggression will only grow.

Justice, ultimately, is a political imperative. We will have to ensure that individuals be held accountable for the crimes for which they are responsible, regardless of whether they committed them, ordered them or planned them. But it is the very idea that such crimes, such attacks on our common humanity, are possible, that must be fought in word and in deed.

For that, a framework has been established, that of a professional and specialized justice system. At its peak, 43 States, including France, have referred a matter to the International Criminal Court. This is the first time that so many States have referred a situation to the Court, which is a sign of the importance that we collectively attach to what is at stake. As the Council knows, the Court itself will act in complementarity with the Ukrainian justice system, as well as with the other national jurisdictions concerned, including the French courts and those of several States present at this meeting.

In that context, justice must be done. France is therefore working with many other partners to strengthen, in all the jurisdictions, the collection of evidence and reliable information. That is why France has taken very concrete action. As soon as the information on the crimes committed in Bucha became known, in April, we sent two teams of investigators to Ukraine. For three months, they helped the Ukrainian justice system to meticulously and patiently establish the facts, and we donated a mobile laboratory for DNA analysis. Now that new atrocities in Izyum have been revealed to the world, we just decided to send another mission to support the investigators on site — because, while Russia is using disinformation and propaganda, justice must be based on facts.

Of course, we have also supported the International Criminal Court. We have provided both financial

and human support, by providing judges and investigators, while maintaining strict respect for the Court's independence.

Finally, our support extends to all jurisdictions, which must be able to easily cooperate with each other. Therefore, the regulation of the European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation was modified under the French presidency of the Council of the European Union to allow the International Criminal Court to participate in joint investigation teams that bring together several national jurisdictions, including the jurisdiction of Ukraine.

What we are doing makes sense. We are combating impunity, but we are also defending the integrity of our international order.

Russia's choice of war under false pretexts and its blatant manipulation of a concept as serious as genocide — which is the crime of all crimes, a crime that, following the Second World War, justified the development of the international criminal justice project — is deeply disturbing. The International Court of Justice itself noted the abusive nature of that false assertion.

The same manipulation is at work when we speak of referendums in territories that have been conquered by force and subjected to terror, as well as when some threaten us with the possibility of using all means possible, while we, together with others, refuse to participate in any escalation whatsoever.

Faced with those who deprive words of their meaning, our task, our duty, our work, what we do around the Council table, is also to restore meaning.

In conclusion, I would like to quote a Russian author.

“We have to condemn publicly the very idea that some people have the right to repress others. In keeping silent about evil, in burying it so deep within us that no sign of it appears on the surface, we are implanting it, and it will rise up a thousandfold in the future.” (*The Gulag Archipelago*, pp.177-178)

In writing those lines, Solzhenitsyn was referring to the decades of crimes committed by the Soviet Union on its own territory. Unfortunately, those words aptly describe the crimes committed today by Russia outside its borders.

The International Criminal Court is investigating facts that, according to its Prosecutor, could constitute

war crimes and crimes against humanity. We will see what its conclusions are. But as of today, we can and must say that those responsible will be identified, prosecuted and, ultimately, tried. The time may seem long for the victims and their families, but they must be certain that those crimes will not go unpunished. We owe it to them. It is not only our safety that is at stake, but also the universal principles that bind us.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I call on the Prime Minister of Norway.

Mr. Støre (Norway): I thank the Secretary-General and Prosecutor Karim Khan for their briefings.

This week at the United Nations we have seen how we, as a global community, face dire challenges from war, climate change, energy shortages, food insecurity and inequality. And we see how it is ordinary people who pay the heaviest price.

Against that background, it is our responsibility, as Members of the United Nations and in particular we, the 15 Member States represented at this table, to chart a different path — one of hope and belief in what we can achieve together for our citizens and for humankind.

The Secretary-General underlined that eloquently in his address on Tuesday (see A/77/PV.4), and yet again today. We have the values and principles necessary to chart that course, and they are all enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

The Charter of the United Nations sets out clear principles for a rules-based international order. Sadly, that order is under attack. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine constitutes a gross violation of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations — a violation of the core principle on which this Organization is built — the sovereign equality of all its people and Members.

I listened carefully to President Putin's speech yesterday announcing a major escalation of the war, explained by a long list of allegations that Russia is being threatened by the West. Speaking for Norway, an elected member of the Security Council, a European State, a NATO member and a neighbour to Russia, let me say it as clearly as I can: those allegations are simply not true. There is no military threat against Russia. There is no legitimate reason whatsoever to underpin a massive mobilization of Russian troops. That escalation

will lead only to increased suffering for Ukrainians and Russians alike.

Russia must abide by the order of the International Court of Justice and immediately suspend its military operations in the territory of Ukraine. Russia chose to start this war; it must now choose to stop it. None of the differences there may be between Russia and Ukraine can be solved by the ongoing military onslaught.

The General Assembly has reminded us of the global consequences of the war. Surging energy prices and increasing food insecurity are exacerbating the suffering of those who are most vulnerable, not to mention the potential effects of a nuclear accident in Ukraine, which could have far-reaching consequences. The presence of Russian forces at Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant severely compromises nuclear safety and security. We commend the International Atomic Energy Agency for its efforts in helping to stabilize the situation.

But Russia's behaviour is also hurting multilateral cooperation at a time when we need it more than ever. The Black Sea Grain Initiative is an important step to bring Ukrainian foodstuffs back to the world market. As the Secretary-General has said, it is multilateral diplomacy in action, and we commend his efforts to facilitate the Initiative. Norway also expresses its full support for the Secretary-General's good offices. When the time comes — and it must come — we will stand firmly with the United Nations in the efforts to build and sustain peace.

Thousands of civilians, including children, have been killed in Ukraine. Millions have fled their homes, often separated from their loved ones. Many thousands have been welcomed in my country. May the day come, sooner rather than later, when they can return home safely to rebuild their country.

The recent escalation of attacks on civilian targets is utterly unacceptable. Russia's indiscriminate use of heavy explosive weapons is destroying homes, schools and hospitals. Unspeakable horrors were revealed in Bucha in March, and now in Izyum, and other places previously under occupation. Civilians have been forcibly transferred to Russia and Russian-occupied territory. There are also disturbing reports of sexual violence being used as a tactic of war, and that must be condemned in the strongest possible terms.

We also condemn the planned so-called referendums in the occupied regions of Ukraine. They would be contrary to international law and a clear breach of the Charter, and they would have no legal standing or legitimacy. They would in no way affect Ukraine's sovereignty within its internationally recognized borders. Let that be clear.

International law is not optional, and as the Prosecutor said, justice is not political. All reports of atrocities and human rights violations must be properly investigated and those responsible brought to justice. Norway has supported that effort and will continue to do so. As you so accurately said, Madam President, there can be no impunity. Accountability is key, both for ensuring justice for the victims and deterring future violations. Perpetrators must be held to account through national or international criminal justice mechanisms. That is why we welcome the Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine established by the Human Rights Council. Norway also continues to fully support the International Criminal Court (ICC). The ICC's mission is crucial, both in the context of Ukraine and globally.

Let me end on the following note. This war is a catastrophe for Ukraine and its people. Its ramifications have serious consequences for vulnerable people and communities all around the world. But let me say that it is also detrimental to Russia itself — our neighbour. Thousands of Russian soldiers have been sent to their deaths in an unnecessary and illegal war. Russian citizens are increasingly being denied human rights and fundamental freedoms in a society ruled with an ever-stronger authoritarian fist. If the Russian people — and we know them — could freely express their views, would they have chosen war? I doubt it.

Democracy, the rule of law and human rights are essential. They are our best tools for promoting peace between States and accountability at all levels. They are also what we have to build on when we turn our back on war and destruction. We must defend those norms and standards and the values that underpin them — again, the core principles are enshrined in the Charter. Preventing and ending acts of aggression are the Security Council's direct responsibility, and Norway will continue to use the remaining part of its elected term here to promote dialogue, as well as a peaceful settlement and fair resolution of this meaningless war.

However, we will also stand up for Ukraine's right to defend itself against onslaught and aggression, just

as we will defend our right to support Ukraine in its self-defence. We will speak up for international law and the values of the United Nations and take action for all people in need who are affected by this war, no matter where they are. Because this war of aggression is an attack not just on Ukraine but on the principles and values of the Charter. The Ukrainian people are giving their lives to defend those universal values and their own independence, and Ukraine can count on Norway's continued support in that struggle.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on the Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Mexico.

Mr. Casaubón (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank Secretary-General António Guterres and Mr. Karim Khan, Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, for their valuable briefings. I acknowledge the presence of the Prime Minister of Norway, as well as our other colleagues, including Ministers and high-level representatives, at today's meeting. I also thank France and you, Madam President, for convening this debate on a flagrant breach of the Charter of the United Nations that has violated international peace and security.

The war in Ukraine that broke out seven months ago has had multiple clear social, economic and political consequences. As in any armed conflict, civil society has paid the highest price. The war has led to the mass displacement of people, especially women and children, both within Ukraine and to neighbouring countries. It has also caused severe and costly material damage. Since the beginning of the hostilities, Mexico has insisted on the importance of seeking a diplomatic solution and addressing the humanitarian aspects of the conflict without subjecting it to political considerations, in strict adherence to international humanitarian law.

In the Security Council, together with France, we promoted a draft resolution along those lines, which was submitted to the General Assembly and gave rise to resolution ES-11/2, adopted on 24 March (see A/ES-11/PV.9). We reiterate that providing humanitarian assistance continues to be a crucial and urgent matter. We have also worked to the best of our abilities to support the mediation efforts of the Secretary-General, and together with Norway, we formulated a presidential statement to that effect (S/PRST/2022/3) issued on 6 May (see S/PV.9026). And while it is clearly insufficient, it is the only public statement that the Council has been able to issue since the beginning of the conflict.

As the war continues, with its heavy human and material costs, we are seeing an increase in the humanitarian needs arising from the conflict, resulting from problems such as insufficient humanitarian aid and the high cost of fuel in the face of winter, which urgently require a solution through diplomatic channels, as well as a ceasefire. That demands the political will of the parties and the commitment of the international community. It is therefore important to urge respect for international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Accountability is another fundamental pillar of the multilateral system, the rule of law and peace. Those responsible for the crimes committed in Ukraine must therefore be brought to justice without excuses or conditions. In that regard, the work of the International Criminal Court in investigating the allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity is essential. We will follow the progress of the investigations with our full attention.

We are particularly concerned about the scale of nuclear risk arising from the fighting around the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant. Ensuring its integrity and proper functioning will be critical to preventing the worst possible catastrophe. We endorse the recommendations made by the International Atomic Energy Agency following its technical inspection, which must be complied with immediately, and support the calls for creating a security perimeter around the plant.

Finally, we recognize the value of the signing of the Black Sea Grain Initiative. Data from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations shows that grain prices have begun to decline over the past two months. That demonstrates the value of diplomacy. Even in the midst of war, dialogue and agreements are possible. Diplomacy will also be essential in guaranteeing access to global fertilizer markets, and we are encouraged to know that concrete steps have already been taken in that direction. We fully recognize the leadership of the Secretary-General and the President of Türkiye in facilitating the agreements that have been signed.

My country's position since the beginning of the conflict has been based on the constitutional principles of our foreign policy, that is, non-intervention, the peaceful settlement of disputes and a ban on the use or threat of use of force, all of which are in line with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. There is no room for ambiguity. The

peaceful coexistence of States depends precisely on respect for all of those principles. There can be no exceptions. In the past few months we have been clear in reiterating the importance of Article 2 of the Charter, which prohibits the use of force against the territorial integrity and political independence of any State. From its own experience, Mexico knows and understands the importance of the basic guarantee of being able to live without the threat of being invaded by another country. Any action that violates that principle is illegal and illegitimate.

The purpose of our Organization and the mandate of the Council is to prevent people from suffering from the scourge of war. But that can be achieved only through dialogue and diplomacy, as well as by building effective political channels. Indifference is unacceptable, just as it is unacceptable to simply lament the fact that the Security Council has so far been unable to shoulder its responsibility in this case. The reasons that the Council can become dysfunctional are well known. It is up to us to correct them. The time is right to seriously propose the structural reforms required to achieve that.

Based on its commitment to peace, Mexico believes that the international community must now channel its best efforts to achieve peace. In that regard, I would like to share with the Council the proposal by President Andrés Manuel López Obrador of Mexico to strengthen the mediation efforts by Secretary-General António Guterres through the establishment of a commission for dialogue and peace in Ukraine, with the participation of other Heads of State and Government, including, if possible, His Excellency Mr. Narendra Modi of India and His Holiness Pope Francis. Its goal would be very clear — to create new mechanisms for dialogue and create complementary spaces for mediation that would build trust, reduce tensions and pave the way towards lasting peace.

The delegation of Mexico will continue with the necessary consultations with the sole purpose of contributing as an impartial and good-faith actor in order to generate broad support for the mediation efforts of the Secretary-General and the commission that I just mentioned, the establishment of which, we hope, will proceed with the support of Member States. As the Secretary-General said earlier, the time has come to act and commit to peace and resign ourselves to the fact that war always means standing on the edge of the abyss.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on the Secretary of State of the United States of America.

Mr. Blinken (United States of America) (*spoke in French*): I thank you very much, Madam President, for bringing the members of the Security Council together at this extremely grave time to discuss the crisis in Ukraine caused by Russia.

(*spoke in English*)

I also thank the Secretary-General for his determination and the moral clarity that he has brought to ending this brutal war and defending the United Nations core principles, as well as his personal engagement in securing the vital Black Sea route for grain to flow once again from Ukraine. I would say to Mr. Khan that we are grateful for the efforts of the Office of the Prosecutor to investigate objectively and professionally the atrocities being committed in Ukraine by Russian forces and for its support for, and coordination with, Ukrainian investigators and prosecutors.

We hear a lot about the divisions among countries at the United Nations. Recently, what has been striking is the remarkable unity among Member States when it comes to Russia's war in Ukraine. Leaders from developing and developed countries — big and small, North and South — have spoken at the General Assembly about the consequences of the war and the need to end it. And they have called on all of us to reaffirm our commitment to the Charter of the United Nations and its core principles, including sovereignty, territorial integrity and human rights. Even a number of nations that maintain close ties with Moscow have said publicly that they have serious questions and concerns about President Putin's ongoing invasion.

Rather than change course, however, President Putin has doubled down, choosing not to end the war, but to expand it; not to pull troops back, but to call 300,000 additional troops up; not to ease tensions, but to escalate them through the threat of nuclear weapons; and not to work towards achieving a diplomatic solution, but to render such a solution impossible by seeking to annex more Ukrainian territory through sham referendums. That President Putin picked this week, as most of the world gathers at the United Nations, to add fuel to the fire that he started shows his utter contempt for the Charter, the General Assembly and the Council.

The very international order that we have gathered here to uphold is being shredded before our eyes. We

cannot and we will not allow President Putin to get away with it. Defending Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity is about much more than standing up for one nation's right to choose its own path, as fundamental as that right is. It is also about protecting an international order where no nation can redraw the borders of another by force. If we fail to defend this principle, when the Kremlin is so flagrantly violating it, we will send a message to aggressors everywhere that they can ignore it too; we will put every country at risk; and we will open the door to a less secure and less peaceful world.

We see what that world looks like in the parts of Ukraine controlled by Russian forces. Wherever the Russian tide recedes, we discover the horror that is left in its wake. I had a window into that horror myself when I travelled to Irpin just a few weeks ago to meet with Ukrainian investigators who were compiling evidence of war crimes committed there. I saw up close the gaping holes left in residential buildings by Russian shelling — indiscriminate at best, intentional at worst.

As we assemble here, Ukrainian and international investigators continued to exhume bodies outside Izyum, a city Russian forces controlled for six months before they were driven out by the Ukrainian counter-offensive. One site contains 440 unmarked graves. A number of the bodies unearthed there so far reportedly shows signs of torture, including one victim with broken arms and a rope around his neck. Survivors' accounts are also emerging, including a man who described being tortured by Russian forces for a dozen days, during which time his interrogators repeatedly shocked him with electric charges, and in his words, "Beat me to the point where I didn't feel anything".

Those are not the acts of rogue units. They cut a clear pattern across the territory controlled by Russian forces. That is one of the many reasons that we support a range of national and international efforts to collect and examine the mounting evidence of war crimes in Ukraine. We must hold the perpetrators accountable for those crimes. It is also one of the reasons that more than 40 nations have come together to help the Ukrainian people defend themselves, which is a right enshrined in Article 51 of the Charter.

The more setbacks Russian forces endure on the battlefield, the greater the pain they are inflicting on Ukrainian civilians. Russian attacks on dams, bridges, power stations, hospitals and other civilian

infrastructure are increasing, constituting a brazen violation of international humanitarian law. This week, President Putin said that Russia would not hesitate to use "all weapons systems available" in response to a threat to its territorial integrity — a threat that is all the more menacing given Russia's intention to annex large swaths of Ukraine in the days ahead. When that is complete, we can expect that President Putin will claim any Ukrainian effort to liberate that land as an attack on so-called Russian territory. That is coming from a country that, in January, in this place, joined the other permanent members of the Security Council in signing a joint statement affirming that "Nuclear war can never be won, and must never be fought".

That is yet another example of how Russia violates the commitments that it has made before this organ, and yet another reason why nobody should take Russia at its word today. Every Council member should send a clear message that such reckless nuclear threats must stop immediately.

Russia's effort to annex more Ukrainian territory is another dangerous escalation, as well as a repudiation of diplomacy. It is even more alarming when coupled with the filtration operation that Russian forces have been carrying out across parts of Ukraine that they control. That is a diabolical strategy to violently uproot thousands of Ukrainians, bus in Russians to replace them, call for a vote and manipulate the results to show near-unanimous support for joining the Russian Federation.

That is right out of the Crimea playbook. As with Crimea, it is imperative that every member of the Council and, for that matter, every Member of the United Nations, reject the sham referendums and unequivocally declare that all Ukrainian territory is and will remain part of Ukraine and that no Russian claim to annex territory can take away Ukraine's right to defend its own land.

Putin's invasion is also distracting the Council and, in fact, the entire United Nations system from working on the serious issues that we all want to focus on, such as preventing a climate catastrophe, aiding tens of millions of people on the brink of famine, fulfilling the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and shoring up our interconnected health security. Those are all issues that make a tangible difference in the lives of the citizens whom we are here to represent and that they are looking to us to deliver on. An overwhelming

majority of the States Members of the United Nations are committed to working together on those issues, and our actions show that. Yet although more than 100 countries have signed a road map to provide food aid to those who need it, with partners across Africa, Asia, the Americas and Europe working together to increase the resilience of global food systems, Russia blocked the export of Ukrainian grain to the world for months, until the United Nations and Türkiye secured a deal to let the grain go. Russia continues to bomb and seize Ukraine's farms and silos and line its wheat fields with landmines, raising the cost of food for people everywhere.

While Governments around the world are teaming up with international organizations, the private sector and philanthropies, in order to end the pandemic and make sure that we are better prepared for the next one, Russia is spreading misinformation and disinformation about vaccines approved by the World Health Organization, which fuels vaccine hesitancy that puts people in all our countries at greater risk.

Here is the reality. None of us chose this war — not the Ukrainians, who knew the crushing toll it would take; not the United States, which warned that it was coming and worked to prevent it; not the vast majority of countries at the United Nations; and neither did our people or the peoples of virtually every Member State, who are feeling the war's consequences in greater food insecurity and higher energy prices. The Russian mothers and fathers whose children are being sent off to fight and die in this war did not choose it, and neither did the Russian citizens who continue to risk their freedom to protest against it, including those who came out onto the streets of Moscow after President Putin announced his mobilization to chant "Let our children live". Indeed, it must be asked, how has the aggression against Ukraine by President Putin improved the lives or prospects of a single Russian citizen? One man chose this war, and one man can end it. If Russia stops fighting, the war ends. If Ukraine stops fighting, Ukraine ends. That is why we will continue to support Ukraine as it defends itself and to strengthen its hand to achieve a diplomatic solution, on just terms, at the negotiating table.

As President Zelenskyy has said repeatedly, diplomacy is the only way to end the war. However, diplomacy cannot and must not be used as a cudgel to impose a settlement on Ukraine that goes against the Charter of the United Nations or rewards Russia for violating it. President Putin is making his choice. It is

now up to all of our countries to make ours. We must tell President Putin to stop the horror that he started. We must tell him to stop putting his interests above the interests of the rest of the world, including his own people. We must tell him to stop debasing the Council and everything that it stands for. "We, the peoples of the United Nations, determined" — that is how the Preamble to the Charter starts. Let us not forget that we, the peoples, still get to choose the fate of this institution and of our world. The stakes are clear. The choice is ours. Let us make the right choice for the world that we want and that our people so desperately deserve.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on the State Councillor and Minister for Foreign Affairs of China.

Mr. Wang Yi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Foreign Minister Colonna for convening today's ministerial meeting. I also thank Secretary-General Guterres for his briefing.

China's position on Ukraine is consistent and clear. President Xi Jinping has pointed out that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries should be respected, and the purposes and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations should be observed. The reasonable security concerns of all countries should be taken seriously and every effort that could help resolve the crisis should be supported. China has been paying close attention to the humanitarian situation in Ukraine and has assisted the country with an accumulated ¥35 million worth of humanitarian supplies. This year we provided other developing countries in need with 15,000 tons of emergency humanitarian food assistance and made a positive contribution to easing the global food crisis. In response to the current situation, China would like to make the following four proposals.

First, we must focus on dialogue and negotiations. It will be a top priority for the parties to resume dialogue as soon as possible, commit to dialogue without assuming a particular outcome, include reasonable concerns in negotiations and put feasible options on the table so that the talks can produce results and bring about peace.

Secondly, we must work together for de-escalation. The parties concerned should exercise restraint and refrain from fuelling tensions. The international community should play a constructive role in helping to de-escalate and create the conditions and space needed to reach a political settlement. When it comes to the safety and security of nuclear facilities, there is

no room for trial and error. Accidents and risks must be prevented. We support the International Atomic Energy Agency in maintaining a fair and objective position and continuing to play a positive role.

Thirdly, we must earnestly seek to ease the humanitarian situation. It will be vital to abide by international humanitarian law, prevent attacks on civilians or civilian facilities and minimize civilian casualties. Investigations into violations of international humanitarian law should be objective and fair, based on facts and not on an assumption of guilt, and should not be politicized. The international community should support the United Nations humanitarian agencies in upholding neutrality and equity and continue to provide assistance to those affected in Ukraine and its neighbours.

Fourthly, we must contain spillover in any form. Energy suppliers and consumers should work together to maintain stability in the global energy market. We support the Secretary-General in helping to facilitate the exports of Russian and Ukrainian grain. For its part, China has proposed a cooperation initiative on global food security, and we welcome a positive response from all countries. No country should resort to arbitrary unilateral sanctions, let alone asking developing countries that pay the price.

As the core of our collective security mechanism, the Security Council should uphold the basic principles of objectivity and impartiality on the issue of Ukraine, stick to the right direction, which is that of a ceasefire and peace talks, and prioritize mediation tools in the quest for a settlement. We must unite our efforts to bring positive energy for peace and reconciliation and take constructive and responsible action aimed at achieving a political settlement.

The crisis in Ukraine is closely linked to the international situation. The more challenging the situation, the more important it is to remain united and seek cooperation. We must coordinate our efforts to uphold the United Nations-centred international system, abide by the basic norms of international relations, based on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, accommodate the legitimate concerns of all parties, reject hegemonism and power politics and prevent any form of hot war or the so-called new cold war. Let us commit to common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security, seek common ground despite our differences,

accommodate and understand each other and work tirelessly to restore security in Europe and peace in the world.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania.

Ms. Xhaçka (Albania): I join other colleagues in thanking France for convening today's briefing, and I thank you, Minister Colonna, for presiding over it. The issue at hand has been on the Security Council's agenda without interruption, but today's meeting could not be timelier, given the latest escalatory declarations by the Kremlin.

I welcome the decision of the French presidency of the Council to continue keeping the focus on accountability — an issue of the utmost importance that we initiated together back in April with an Arria Formula meeting jointly organized by Albania and friends. I also thank Prosecutor Khan of the International Criminal Court for his information and his tireless efforts to establish accountability in Ukraine.

The Russian Federation, a permanent member of the Security Council, has waged an illegal war of aggression against Ukraine. In our judgment and in the eyes of the entire world, as clearly expressed more than once here at the United Nations, Russia's actions are a blatant violation of the Charter of the United Nations. Let us not forget that the highest organ for international justice, the International Court of Justice, has ordered Russia to suspend its military operation in Ukraine. International law is the same and mandatory for all, but unfortunately Russia has chosen to openly and continuously ignore it.

The very principle and belief upon which the United Nations was founded was that the only way to prevent war was through universal norms and laws accepted by all in the new post-Second World War world order. In the decades since, despite the challenges and difficulties, we have all managed to strengthen and expand the reach of international law and multilateral cooperation. We have agreed that no one can stand above the law. We had hoped that the world would never again return to that distant past, but the war in Ukraine and Russia's flagrant attempt to conquer and annex parts of Ukraine's territory are actions reminiscent of the dark days of fascism and Stalinism.

Much more of what is happening in Ukraine today is also reminiscent of those dark days. Reports, fact-finding missions and footage from on the ground that the whole world has seen reveal a basic truth about Russia's actions: an appalling criminal brutality against the civilian population. Innocent men, women and children in Ukraine, as well as tens of thousands of Russian soldiers, have paid with their lives for Vladimir Putin's war of choice. Millions around the world are going hungry because of Vladimir Putin's war of choice.

We condemn Russia's new path of confrontation by announcing a partial mobilization in Russia; by supporting the organization of illegal referendums in four currently occupied Ukrainian territories; and by once again threatening the use of weapons of mass destruction. Those sham referendums are another blatant violation of the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine and a serious violation of the Charter of the United Nations.

We reaffirm our unwavering support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity and reiterate our call on Russia to completely and unconditionally withdraw all of its troops and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. We must galvanize our forces and continue to help Ukraine defend itself while also working to guarantee full accountability for what Russia is doing in Ukraine — not only to provide justice, but also to prevent future atrocities. We all tried to prevent this conflict and could not, but we must not fail to hold Russia accountable.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Defence of the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Coveney (Ireland): One week ago, I stood on a deck of a cargo ship in the port of Odesa, watching 46,000 tons of grain being loaded, bound for Bangladesh. That same day, the total amount of grain exported from Ukrainian ports through the Black Sea Grain Initiative had reached 3 million tons. Ukrainian and United Nations staff in Odesa spoke to me of their plans to reach 4 million tonnes of grain per month.

As the Secretary-General said so eloquently, those ships carry not just grain, but the rare commodity of hope. They represent something else, too: the power of multilateralism. In the midst of conflict, the United Nations and the Government of Türkiye negotiated a deal to get desperately needed grain out of Ukraine

and onto the world market. That happened through dialogue and through use of the systems, structures, norms and institutions that we have painstakingly built over decades to resolve differences, find solutions and deliver for our citizens. Those are the principles and institutions that all of us around this table have a solemn commitment to uphold.

Let me recall another moment of hope. In January, the leaders of the five nuclear-weapon States, including Russia, declared that a nuclear war cannot be won and can never be fought. Those five leaders, including President Putin, committed to avoid military confrontations, strengthen stability and predictability, increase mutual understanding and confidence and pursue constructive dialogue with mutual respect.

Just six weeks later, Russia launched an unwarranted and illegal further invasion of Ukraine — another sovereign United Nations Member State and a neighbour. Just this week, President Putin again issued threats to use nuclear weapons.

Let us be absolutely clear: Russia's invasion of Ukraine is the antithesis of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. It is a grave violation of international law. It is an attempt to change internationally recognized borders by the use of force. No sham referendums can change that basic fact. It cannot be allowed to stand.

If we fail to hold Russia accountable, we send a signal to large, powerful countries that they can prey on their neighbours with impunity. That is something that every nation on Earth should take note of. It is why, yesterday, Ireland filed a declaration of intervention at the International Court of Justice in Ukraine's case against Russia. It is why we are intervening in Ukraine's case against Russia at the European Court of Human Rights. It is why we have supported action at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Council of Europe, the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council to hold Russia accountable for what it is doing.

It is why, along with 40 other States parties to the Rome Statue of the International Criminal Court (ICC), we referred the situation in Ukraine to the ICC Prosecutor, who is with us here today. It is why we support Ukraine's efforts to establish a compensation and reparations mechanism. And it is why we will work with Ukraine and other partners to examine how we can hold Russia accountable for the crime of aggression.

But it is also why the Council must collectively consider how it acts to protect the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations itself. No one country, no matter how big or powerful, should have the ability to veto the application of international law for its own aims.

I said at the Council in April (see S/PV.9018) that, without accountability, there is no hope for sustainable peace, neither in Ukraine nor elsewhere. I repeat that today. In April, I also recalled the shocking evidence I saw in Bucha of Russian forces' disregard for international humanitarian law. That was no fabrication. The bodies that I saw tell a story.

Five months later, more mass graves are being discovered in Izyum and in other areas that until recently were under Russian occupation. Attacks by Russian forces on civilians and civilian infrastructure have further intensified since then. The devastating impact of explosive weapons in populated areas is evermore evident, with hundreds of thousands of homes, hospitals and schools destroyed. That is why Ireland is seeking the wide endorsement by States of the Political Declaration on Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas at a high-level adoption conference in Dublin in November.

Millions of civilians in Ukraine and beyond are being potentially put at risk by Russia's occupation of the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant. I want to repeat the demand of last week's meeting of the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency — Russia must immediately cease all actions against the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant; the Ukrainian authorities must regain full control. The last thing that the world needs now is a nuclear accident.

This conflict can, and will, end. Our collective responsibility to the Charter of the United Nations, the peaceful settlement of disputes and the maintenance of international peace and security demands that it end sooner rather than later.

The path to peace is clear. The country that made a deliberate decision to start this conflict must now make the decision to bring it to an end. Russia must withdraw its forces from the sovereign territory of a fellow State Member of the United Nations. It must be held accountable for its actions through the international bodies and structures that we, together, created for that purpose.

It is not solely about Ukraine. This is about the entirety of the United Nations membership — all of us and all our countries. If we do not reject Russia's actions in the clearest and starkest terms, we allow the world to be governed by force, not through dialogue and the application of international law. The Security Council must take the lead.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on the Minister for External Affairs of India.

Mr. Jaishankar (India): Let me begin by congratulating the French presidency on its able stewardship of the Security Council this month. I also thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his briefing, and I take note of the remarks made by Mr. Karim Khan, Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court.

Allow me to preface my remarks by reminding the Security Council that India is not a signatory to the Rome Statute or a member of the International Criminal Court.

The trajectory of the Ukraine conflict is a matter of profound concern for the entire international community. The future outlook appears even more disturbing. The nuclear issue is a particular anxiety.

In a globalized world, the impact of the conflict is being felt even in distant regions. We have all experienced its consequences in terms of surging costs and actual shortages of food grains, fertilizers and fuel. On that score, there are also good grounds to be worried about what awaits us. The global South, in particular, is feeling the pain very acutely. We must therefore not initiate measures that further complicate the struggling global economy. That is why India strongly reiterates the need for an immediate cessation of all hostilities and a return to dialogue and diplomacy. Clearly, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasized, this cannot be an era of war. For our part, we are also providing both humanitarian assistance to Ukraine and economic support to some of our neighbours that are under economic stress.

Turning to the specific topic before the Security Council today, let me emphasize that, even in conflict situations, there can be no justification for the violation of human rights or international law. Where any such acts occur, it is imperative that they be investigated in an objective and independent manner. That was the position that we took with regard to the killings in Bucha,

and that is the position that we take even today. The Council will also recall that we then supported calls for an independent investigation into the Bucha incident.

The fight against impunity is critical to the larger pursuit of securing peace and justice. The Security Council must send an unambiguous and unequivocal message in that regard. Politics should never provide cover to evade accountability or facilitate impunity. Regrettably, we have seen that of late in this very Chamber when it comes to sanctioning some of the world's most dreaded terrorists. If egregious attacks, committed in broad daylight, are left unpunished, the Council must reflect on the signals that we are sending with regard to impunity. There must be consistency if we are to ensure credibility.

Once again, let me emphasize that the need of the hour is to end the conflict in Ukraine and return to the negotiating table. The Security Council is the most powerful contemporary symbol of diplomacy. It must continue to live up to its purpose. The global order to which we all subscribe is based on international law, the Charter of the United Nations and respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all States. Those principles must also be upheld without exception.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Gabon.

Mr. Adamo (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Madam President, for the initiative of this meeting on the situation in Ukraine, which takes place in conjunction with the high-level week of the General Assembly, marked by the need for bold solutions at a time when the world is at a critical juncture. I thank the Secretary-General for his update on the situation in Ukraine and the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Mr. Karim Khan, for his briefing.

Humankind loses its bearings every time it becomes mired in belligerence and fails to protect civilians from atrocities and horror.

The war in Ukraine challenges us in many ways. It confronts us regarding the thousands of victims, the ruins of the devastation and the anguish of the dead. It speaks to us about the propaganda, disinformation and the tendency to rewrite reality. It challenges us over the nuclear threat and its potentially irreparable consequences. It also summons us due to its shock impact on global food security.

Given that onslaught of challenges, the peoples of the world are looking to the Security Council for a response to the multidimensional challenges that stand in the way of their aspirations for international peace and security.

To the women, men and children who fear a nuclear catastrophe and wonder when the war in Ukraine will end, we owe an answer. Our response cannot be a showdown of abuse. We must live up to the mandate conferred on us by the Charter of the United Nations and the trust that the peoples of the world have placed in this Organization.

My country, Gabon, advocates constructive dialogue to silence the weapons. We are against war, hate speech and the outrageous rhetoric, which fuels the fighting and undermines the prospects for peace.

My country notes with interest the opening by the International Criminal Court of investigations into the crimes committed by all parties in the war in Ukraine in order to collect evidence and establish the facts and responsibilities regarding the allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Justice for allegations of mass killings, disappearances, forced displacement and deportations must be conducted in a transparent, impartial and independent manner. All relevant international mechanisms must be used to ensure that the perpetrators of atrocities are held accountable before international justice.

My country's message is clear — war is not a state of lawlessness. Parties to conflicts must respect international conventions protecting civilians and civilian infrastructure in times of war, including the Geneva Conventions.

The standards applied to the war in Ukraine, at all levels, must also be applied to all armed conflicts. And the outpouring of compassion, assistance and solidarity that is rightly reserved for the war in Ukraine must be the same for all victims of armed conflicts.

We will not forget, when we take stock, the fate of many Africans, including young students, for whom the road to exile has all too often been strewn with shame and humiliation because of their skin colour or origin. Many were denied the assistance they so urgently needed, alongside others whose suffering, fear and distress they shared. With the hearts of the many who beat for the victims of war in Ukraine, ours beats

in concert. And when discrimination compounds the horror of war, humankind must stand up together to denounce it forcefully so that double standards are no longer the rule, and the sound of tanks and artillery fire is unacceptable wherever it is heard.

It is urgent to bring the humanitarian crisis resulting from the war in Ukraine to an end and to quickly mitigate its effects. To gamble on time is to risk seeing more innocent people shot, more civilian infrastructure destroyed, more families disrupted and thousands of children orphaned by war.

In conclusion, my country calls on the parties to negotiate, to respect humanitarian law and to respect the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. We support all initiatives that revive hope for a negotiated solution to end the war.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): As I understand it, today's meeting was motivated by the intention of several delegations to discuss the topic of impunity in Ukraine. I think that is very timely because it is precisely impunity that reflects what has been going on in that country since 2014. National radical forces, outspoken Russophobes and neo-Nazis came to power then as a result of an armed coup, with the direct support of Western countries. And right after that, they embarked on a path of lawlessness and total disregard for basic human rights and freedoms — the right to life, the freedom of speech, access to information, the freedom of the media and expression, the freedom of conscience and the right to use one's mother tongue.

To date, the crimes on the Maidan in February 2014 remain unpunished. The perpetrators of the monstrous tragedy in Odesa on 2 May 2014, when dozens of people were burned alive and killed in the local Trade Unions Building, have not been found or punished. The political murders of Oles Buzina, Pavel Sheremet and other public figures and journalists are also on the same list.

Nevertheless, there is an attempt today to impose on us a completely different narrative about Russian aggression as the root cause of all our troubles. That ignores the fact that for over eight years the Ukrainian army and nationalist fighters have been killing residents of Donbas with impunity simply because they refused

to recognize the result of the coup in Kyiv. They decided to uphold their rights, which were guaranteed by the Constitution of Ukraine, including the right to freely use Russian, their mother tongue.

We recall how, in 2015, the then Prime Minister, Mr. Yatsenyuk, declared that non-humans lived in Donbas. And the current President, Mr. Zelenskyy, has made similar statements. In an interview last September, when he was asked what he thought of the people who live in Donbas, he said: "they are a people and, sometimes, they are a species, they are beings".

That seems to be a common refrain of the Ukrainian authorities. Having declared all dissenters to be terrorists, the Kyiv regime eight years ago launched, and now continues to conduct, a military operation against the peaceful civilian population. Incidentally, for many years now, in Ukraine there has been a full mobilization of all adults, including women, in order to recruit them into the ranks of nationalist battalions and the armed forces.

While hypocritically claiming to be committed to the Minsk agreements, the Kyiv authorities have openly and with impunity sabotaged their implementation. A financial, transport and energy blockade was imposed on the Donbas. Its residents were cut off from social benefits, pensions, salaries, banking services, communications, education and health care. They were deprived of their basic civil rights, including those guaranteed by the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as well as their civil and political rights.

Finally, tired of pretending, Mr. Zelenskyy stated the Minsk agreements were only needed to maintain sanctions imposed against Russia. In fact, a couple of months ago, his predecessor, Mr. Poroshenko, was even more direct: he proudly stated in public, with regard to the Minsk agreements, which he co-authored and signed, that neither he nor anyone else in Ukraine had any intention of implementing them. He stated that the agreements were simply needed to win time in order to obtain weapons from the West for the war against Russia. The Secretary of the National Security and Defense Council, Mr. Danilov, recently said something very similar.

Of course, the Kyiv regime owes its impunity to its Western sponsors, first and foremost Germany and France, but also the United States. Instead of demanding that the Kyiv authorities implement the

Minsk agreements, Berlin, Paris and Washington cynically ignored the growing threats of Kyiv to resolve the Donbas problem by force — the so-called “plan B”.

In recent years, the Kyiv regime has launched a wide-scale frontal attack on the Russian language. It brazenly trampled on the rights of the Russian and Russian-speaking population of Ukraine. Scandalous language laws were enacted — the “On Education” law in 2017, the “On Ensuring the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as the State Language” law in 2019, the “On the Comprehensive General Secondary Education” law in 2020, and the “On the Indigenous Peoples of Ukraine” law in 2021. All of those laws are aimed at displacing the Russian language and, essentially, banning it altogether. At the same time, laws were adopted that promoted the theory and practice of Nazism.

Kyiv has ignored the timid recommendations of the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the High Commissioner on National Minorities of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe with regard to amending the legislation. In turn, those multilateral bodies did not find the courage, or maybe were not allowed to, to convince the Ukrainian authorities to fulfil their international human rights obligations.

Ukraine’s Ministry of Education has excluded the Russian language and Russian literature from the school curriculum. Books in Russian are being destroyed, just like in Nazi Germany, and monuments to Russian writers and poets are being dismantled. The ideology of intolerance towards ethnic Russians is being imposed with the support of the authorities. Today officials from Ukraine no longer try to hide their Nazi sentiments; they openly and with full impunity call for the killing of Russians.

To give just a few examples, Mr. Vrublevsky, the Ukrainian Ambassador to Kazakhstan, who is now in Kyiv, just one month ago declared in an interview:

“We are trying to kill as many Russians as possible. The more we kill today, the fewer our children will need to kill. That’s it.”

Did anyone notice that statement? In April, the mayor of Dnipro, Mr. Filatov, said something similar:

“The time of cold rage has come. Now we have a full moral right to calmly and with a clear mind to

kill these non-humans around the world — as long as possible and as many as possible.”

On 13 September of this year Mr. Danilov stated:

“In towns where the Ukrainian armed forces enter, residents will undergo Ukrainization without consideration of their views. This will apply to representatives of other nationalities as well as Russian. If you want to study in any other languages, such as Romanian, Polish or Hebrew, do so by all means, but not at the expense of our State. You can improve your education at your own expense.”

Needless to say, all those Russophobic assertions have gone entirely unpunished. And we are not talking about just Russophobia, as he was referring to representatives of other ethnic groups living in Ukraine. Of course, the ultimate was an interview on 5 August of last year with Mr. Zelenskyy, in which he advised all who feel that they are Russian to get out and go to Russia for the sake of their children and grandchildren. Go to Russia, he said, and I think the decisions that the residents of a number of Ukrainian regions have taken to hold referendums are a response to his wishes.

Under the guise of combating so-called Russian aggression and separatism, Ukraine is stepping up its persecution of dissidents. In March, 11 political parties were banned on a pretext of their so-called ties to Russia. The leading Russian-language opposition television channels were shut down long ago, and websites that the Government objects to are blocked. Journalists are being persecuted for attempting to present alternatives to the official view. Ms. Elena Berezhnaya, a prominent Ukrainian activist who has often spoken at the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe on the growth of neo-Nazism in Ukraine, is languishing in the dungeons of the Ukrainian security services. Ukraine has unquestionably become a completely totalitarian State in the Nazi mode, where the norms of international humanitarian law are flouted with impunity. It is not surprising that the Ukrainian armed forces and nationalist battalions are employing terrorist tactics and using civilians as human shields.

Against that backdrop, the position of the States that are pumping weapons and military equipment into Ukraine and training its armed forces is particularly cynical. The goal is obvious, and they make no secret of it — to prolong the hostilities as long as possible, despite the victims and destruction, in order to exhaust and weaken Russia. Through that approach the Western

countries are directly involving themselves in the Ukrainian conflict and becoming party to it. The collective West's deliberate fomenting of the conflict has also gone unpunished. And of course the West will not punish itself. We have no illusions about the fact that Russia's armed forces and the militias of the Donetsk and Luhansk people's republics are opposed not only by the neo-Nazi formations of the Kyiv regime but also the war machine of the collective West, as I said. In real time and using modern systems, planes, ships, satellites and strategic drones, NATO is supplying the Armed Forces of Ukraine with intelligence, goading them to believe that Russia should be crushed on the battlefield — official representatives of the European Union have openly and publicly stated that — and stripped of sovereignty as punishment. That is no longer latent racism — it is overt racism.

Against a backdrop of the massive shelling of settlements in the Donbas, Mr. Zelenskyy rejoices in the effectiveness of Western weapons. The cynicism of the leader of that State entity is apparent in a recent remark.

“At last we are feeling the power of Western artillery, the weapons we have received from our partners. Their accuracy is exactly what we need.”

And yet no military or strategic targets were hit in the towns that were shelled. It is the civilians of Donbas who are suffering.

The Ukrainian forces have been remotely mining the centre of Donetsk and its environs with banned “petal” anti-personnel mines since the end of July. Their use is a gross violation of the 1997 Anti-Personnel Landmines Convention, which Ukraine ratified, as well as Protocol II to the Geneva Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, which bans non-self-destructing mines. Such outrages have become possible and continue to go unpunished because for the past eight years the United States and its allies, with the connivance of international human rights institutions, have been systematically covering up the crimes of the Kyiv regime, based on the well-known American principle that “while of course Mr. Zelenskyy may be a son of a bitch, he is our son of a bitch”.

The inconvenient truth tarnishing Ukraine's shiny image as the victim of so-called aggression is assiduously suppressed and sometimes openly erased. Even the Western human rights organization Amnesty International, which can hardly be suspected of being sympathetic to Russia, has been severely criticized and

branded an agent of the Kremlin merely because in its report it confirmed the well-known fact that Kyiv is establishing combat points and deploying heavy weapons at civilian sites.

The criminal shelling by the Kyiv regime's militants of the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant also continues to go unpunished, creating the risk of a nuclear disaster, despite the fact that representatives of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have been continually present at the plant since 1 September and that it is not hard to identify the party responsible for the shelling. I should point out that the IAEA mission's visit to the plant was artificially delayed even though by 3 June all the details of the visit had already been agreed on and the mission could easily have set off. Then a very unseemly situation developed when the United Nations Department of Safety and Security refused to okay the itinerary that Russia and the Agency had agreed on. It subsequently announced that the IAEA would define all the parameters of its mission independently. That somewhat underhand ploy delayed the Agency's visit to the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant for almost three months.

We are also very concerned about the fate of Russian soldiers who have fallen into the hands of Ukrainian nationalists. There is ample evidence of their ill-treatment, including extrajudicial killings, in violation of international humanitarian law. I am sure that anyone interested in the reality of what is going on in Ukraine has seen the video of the Ukrainian Nazis' extrajudicial killing of Russian prisoners of war being thrown to the ground with their hands tied behind their backs and shot in the head. Has anyone from the countries represented here commented in any way on that crime?

We have a great amount of evidence of those and other criminal acts of the Kyiv regime, which have been happening since 2014. Russia's law-enforcement bodies, in concert with their colleagues from the Donetsk and Luhansk republics, are thoroughly establishing and investigating the facts of those crimes. More than 220 people, including representatives of the high command of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and military unit commanders, have been found to be complicit in shooting innocent civilians. We are conducting criminal investigations into citizens from Great Britain, Canada, the United States and the Netherlands for working as mercenaries and committing crimes in Ukraine. I

can promise that regardless of their nationality, all perpetrators will be brought to justice.

Once again, I want to draw Council members' attention to the fact that at the end of March, a few days after Russian and Ukrainian negotiators in Istanbul had practically reached an agreement on Kyiv's proposed parameters for a settlement, the tragedy in Bucha occurred. There is no doubt in anyone's mind that it was staged. I want to draw the Council's attention to the fact that immediately after that staged event, our Western colleagues had went hysterical and introduced a new package of sanctions against the Russian Federation and falsely accused us of killing innocent civilians. Once this had produced its propagandistic effect, the only people who have mentioned Bucha since then are us. In the presence of the Secretary-General and Foreign Ministers of the world, I ask everyone to request that the Ukrainian authorities take the simple step of publishing the names of the people whose bodies were shown in Bucha. I have been asking for that for several months now. No one is listening, and no one wants to respond. I would like to ask the Secretary-General to please use his authority for that purpose. I believe it would help everyone to get to the bottom of that episode.

Of course, we have also noticed the increased activity of international justice with regard to Ukraine. Various so-called efforts are being touted to investigate crimes committed in Ukraine and ascribed to the Russian military. We can see very well that that is all being done to order.

I want to point out once again that neither the bloody coup d'état of 2014, nor the tragedy in Odesa on 2 May of the same year, nor the shelling of peaceful towns in Donbas, nor the bombing of Luhansk by the Ukrainian air force on 2 June 2014, or many other crimes — none of them have led to any kind of discernible reaction from the International Criminal Court. Incidentally, more than 3,000 reports of crimes against residents of Donbas have been sent to the Court, and there has been no reaction. The leadership of this so-called judicial body has now clearly received the order from above to turn up the heat. We no longer have any confidence in it. We have been waiting in vain for eight long years to see the fight against impunity begin in Ukraine, and we no longer count on seeing justice from the Court or a number of other international institutions. The time for expectations is over.

Everything I have said today confirms once again that the decision to launch the special military operation was inevitable, as we have discussed more than once. We have presented a massive body of facts that show how Ukraine was preparing to play the anti-Russia role and act as a staging ground for creating and executing threats against Russian security. I can assure everyone that we will never allow that to happen.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Mr. Cleverly (United Kingdom): Seventy-seven years ago, the members of the United Nations agreed on the solemn principles of the Charter of the United Nations as vital to international peace and security. They undertook to refrain from the use or threat of use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State. Yet seven months ago, President Putin invaded Ukraine illegally and without justification. He ignored the resounding pleas for peace that I heard here in the Security Council on 17 February (see S/PV.8968).

Since then, Ukrainians' spirit of defiance and defence in protecting their country has continued to inspire all free peoples and nations. Every day, the devastating consequences of Russia's invasion become clearer. United Nations agencies have confirmed more than 14,000 civilian casualties so far, and the actual total is likely to be much higher. More than 17 million Ukrainians are in humanitarian need, 7 million people are displaced inside Ukraine and there are more than 7 million Ukrainian refugees in Europe. We see the mounting evidence of Russian atrocities against civilians, including indiscriminate shelling and targeted attacks on more than 200 medical facilities and 40 educational institutions, as well as horrific acts of sexual violence. We see from the reports of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights that in parts of Ukraine currently under Russian control civilians are subjected to torture, arbitrary detention and forced deportation to Russia. And we have seen more grisly discoveries in Izyum.

It is not just Ukrainians who are the victims. President Putin's war has spread hardship and food insecurity across the globe, plunging millions of the world's most vulnerable into hunger and famine. And once again, as we have seen here today, Russia has sought

to deny responsibility. It has tried to lay the blame on those who have rightly imposed sanctions on President Putin's regime in response to his illegal actions. Let us be clear. We are not sanctioning food. It is Russia's actions that are preventing food and fertilizer from getting to developing countries. It is Russia's tactics and bombs that are to blame for destroying Ukraine's farms and infrastructure and delaying its exports.

I sat here in February listening to the Russian representative assuring the Council that Russia had no intention of invading its neighbour. We now know that was a lie. Today I have listened to further instalments of Russia's catalogue of distortions, dishonesty and disinformation. Mr. Lavrov has left the Chamber, and I am not surprised. I do not think that he wants to hear the collective condemnation coming from the Council. But we saw through him then and we saw through him again today.

We have information — which means that we know — that Russia is about to hold sham referendums on sovereign Ukrainian territory, with no basis in law, under the threat of violence and in the wake of mass displacements of people in areas that voted overwhelmingly for Ukrainian independence. We know what Vladimir Putin is doing. He is planning to fabricate the outcome of the referendums and use that to annex sovereign Ukrainian territory. And he is planning to use it as a further pretext to escalate his aggression. That is what he plans to do.

We call on all countries to reject that charade and to refuse to recognize any results. We are used to hearing Russia's lies and distortions. But let us listen to the testimony of Ukrainians telling us the truth — the reality — of President Putin's war. Together with her husband Oleh and their 22-year-old son Dmytro, Olena Yuzvak, who is a doctor, was abducted by Russian forces from their home in Hostomel, near Bucha, in March. Russian soldiers shot Oleh twice in the legs before blindfolding the family and bundling them into an armoured personnel carrier. I want the Council to hear Olena's story in her own words.

“First they took us to a bombed-out house. The Russian soldiers kept saying they were going to kill us. My husband was left for hours lying on the floor in a pool of his blood. I do not know why. We had done nothing wrong. Then they took my son away from us — I do not know where. I do not know if we will ever see him again. I just want my boy back.”

Olena's story and those of many others tell us the real truth. This is a war of annexation and conquest to which President Putin now wants to send even more of Russia's young men and women, making peace even less likely. Mr. Putin needs to understand that the world is watching and that we will not give up. As members of the Security Council, we must unequivocally reject Russia's attempts to annex Ukrainian territory. We must make it clear to President Putin that his attack on the Ukrainian people must stop, that there can be no impunity for those committing atrocities and that he must withdraw from Ukraine and restore regional and global stability. If he chose to, he could stop this war, which has done untold damage to the Ukrainian and Russian peoples. His war is an assault on Ukraine, the Charter of the United Nations and the international norms that protect us all.

We will therefore stand with our Ukrainian friends for as long as it takes, because Ukraine's fight for freedom is the world's fight for freedom. It is our fight for freedom, and if Ukraine's sovereignty and territory are not respected, no country is truly secure. Those are the reasons why Ukraine can and must win.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration of the Republic of Ghana.

Ms. Botchwey (Ghana): Let me thank France for organizing this high-level meeting. I would also like to thank Secretary-General António Guterres for setting the tone for this meeting with his very clear statement. And we welcome the briefing by Mr. Karim Khan, Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Since the Security Council's referral concerning Darfur in resolution 1593 (2005) nearly two decades ago, the world has been united in its belief that impunity anywhere poses serious threats to international peace and security, the international legal order and our multilateral system. We have systematically reinforced our institutions and defined conduct and sanctions to expose, prevent or punish acts or behaviour that defy the norms we are committed to living by. No State, however powerful, should get a pass. Allowing that unravels a central tenet of our global civilization. It puts at stake the lives and liberties of the less powerful, wherever they may live. That is why the members of the Council must act in an urgent and united manner to end the near-paralysis of the Council and the war in Ukraine. The toll of that war is intolerable, and the lack of united

resolve risks making our universal Organization an enabling factor for impunity in Ukraine. The damage to the standing of the Charter of the United Nations may be incalculable.

Ghana is especially concerned about the intensification of the war in Ukraine across several lines, with civilian-populated areas and civilian infrastructure being the targets of bombardments. We deplore the fact that the basic laws that govern the conduct of modern warfare and protect ordinary people caught in the crossfire of war have not been respected. We are distressed by the diverse, horrifying and painful humanitarian threats that have come with the war. Some 14 million people, mostly women and children, have been displaced from their homes and face heightened risks of conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence. Human trafficking, filtration processes, enforced disappearances, torture and other violations of the people's rights and freedoms are widespread.

We remain gravely concerned about the manifest threats of a nuclear incident, whether by accident or deliberate action, posed by the constant military engagements around the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant. The disregard for the requisite standards for nuclear safety and security, including the delineation of a safe zone, is deplorable, and we support the efforts by the International Atomic Energy Agency to avert a nuclear catastrophe.

With the rising death toll, civilian casualties and growing reports of war crimes and other human rights violations, we must uphold our responsibility as a Council and send a clear message that the perpetrators of atrocities will be held to account. The suffering in Ukraine is abhorrent and should not be dismissed as a mere consequence of war. If we did that, we would be endorsing the atrocities and permitting impunity. In that regard, we underscore the importance of ensuring accountability for all war crimes committed in Ukraine. Accountability is fundamental to preventing impunity. We must affirm our determination to ensure that the litany of atrocious acts that have taken place in Ukraine will be submitted to thorough, transparent and independent investigation to establish the facts and ensure the attribution of international crimes to their perpetrators.

Ghana remains supportive of international accountability measures, including the various investigative processes being undertaken by the ICC

and the Human Rights Council. In seeking criminal accountability and justice for the victims of the war in Ukraine, we believe that important questions about international remedy and reparation measures, especially for victims of conflict-related sexual abuses, must be addressed. We also express our support for the United Nations early-recovery and resilience programmes already being undertaken.

We have expressed our principled position several times against the aggression on Ukraine, which we consider to be in disregard of the norms of international law and the principles of the Charter. We believe that as a sovereign State and member of the Organization, Ukraine has every right and indeed responsibility to defend its territorial integrity and political independence. We acknowledge the tremendous courage and resilience of the Ukrainian people. Ghana does not, and will not, recognize any territory that is unilaterally and forcefully acquired or dismembered from a sovereign entity. We reiterate the call on the Russian Federation to immediately and unconditionally cease its operations, withdraw its troops from the internationally recognized borders of Ukraine and respect its neighbour's sovereignty and political independence.

The need for a credible pathway to a genuine diplomatic process is urgent. The barrel of the gun does not provide such a pathway. It leads only to needless loss of lives and destruction on both sides. Indeed, the costs of the war have been high, not only for the parties, but also for the rest of the world. As the President of Ghana said yesterday in his address to the General Assembly, "Every bullet, every bomb and every shell that hits a target in Ukraine hits our pockets and our economies in Africa" (see A/77/PV.7).

In that regard, let me place on record Ghana's appreciation for the good offices of the Secretary-General and other international actors in leveraging life-saving humanitarian interventions at critical times during the war. We have already noted some positive impacts from the Black Sea Grain Initiative and urge for the continued and unrestricted shipment of grains to countries facing food insecurity. We encourage all stakeholders to reach an agreement as soon as possible on the export of Russian fertilizers and crop products, which are especially needed by agriculture-dependent economies.

Let me conclude with an appeal. In a week when the eyes of the world are on us and millions around the world look to their United Nations for leadership and hope, we must send a strong message that impunity will not be tolerated and that we should act through concerted diplomacy to end the war in Ukraine.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on the Minister for External Relations of Brazil.

Mr. França (Brazil) (*spoke in French*): I thank France for convening this meeting.

(*spoke in English*)

The conflict in Ukraine affects all of us, even in regions far from where the hostilities are taking place. The Security Council is the appropriate forum for seeking a solution that ensures lasting peace. This week marks seven months since the start of the conflict. Tens of thousands of people, many of them innocent civilians, have lost their lives. There are millions of refugees and internally displaced persons whose return to their homes remains uncertain and who, with the approach of winter, are faced with the prospect of a worsening humanitarian crisis.

Over the course of those seven months, the Council has received numerous reports of serious human rights violations in the conflict zone, including against vulnerable groups, women and children. Brazil condemns the abuses and defends an impartial investigation of the facts so that those responsible can be held accountable for their actions. We also reiterate our call for full respect for international humanitarian law on the part of all the parties.

We have an urgent task before us — to engage the parties in dialogue in order to secure an immediate ceasefire and the opening of negotiations for a peace agreement. The continued hostilities endanger the lives of innocent civilians and jeopardize the food and energy security of millions of families in other regions, especially in developing countries. The risks of escalation arising from the current dynamics of the conflict are simply too great, and its consequences for the world order are unpredictable. Diplomacy alone brings the prospect of viable solutions to conflicts between States. It is not the time to accentuate divisions or isolate parties. The priority of the Council must be to create conditions enabling the parties to engage in negotiations for a peaceful solution to the conflict.

Ms. Al Hashimy (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to sincerely thank you, Madam President, for convening today's important meeting. I would also like to thank Secretary-General António Guterres and Mr. Karim Khan, Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, for their valuable briefings.

The outbreak of the war in Ukraine has clearly produced a variety of reactions across the international community. For some it was a warning of a paralysed multilateral system. For others it raised concerns about the re-emergence of past existential threats. Lastly, there are those for whom the war implies the return of historical polarization, with all its international repercussions. As the Council and this Organization have repeatedly demonstrated during their deliberations, that diversity of vision was further reflected in the disparities between States' positions on how to address the crisis. Notwithstanding those clear disparities, however, States were almost unanimous in seeing international law and the need to respect it as the appropriate guide, in recognition of the decisive role it plays in ensuring the difference between potentially successful and unsuccessful civilizations in the international order.

As the Charter of the United Nations stipulates, international law regulates the conduct of States in line with the principles of sovereignty, independence, good neighbourliness, unity and territorial integrity, thereby reinforcing States' security and development, regardless of their might or size. The United Arab Emirates will not deviate from its unequivocal and unwavering call on all the parties to this war to abide by international law, in particular international humanitarian law, and to respect it and implement its provisions. In that regard, reports of daily violations of the law are seriously concerning, particularly with regard to the war's repercussions for civilians. We note here the plight of women and children, especially those who are forced into displacement and consistently reported as victims of sexual violence and exploitation by organized crime gangs, including human trafficking networks. We are all aware that women and girls suffer more from brutality and violence in armed conflict, and we therefore welcome all ongoing efforts, including by United Nations institutions, to address the humanitarian situation while taking into account the unique impact of the war on women and girls.

While the immediate imperative is a cessation of hostilities, peace remains our ultimate goal, and its sustainability demands comprehensive reconciliation supported by accountability and justice for the war's victims. We also reiterate that women's full, effective and equal participation in conflict resolution is crucial not only in highlighting their unique experience of war but also to their centrality to building peace.

The United Arab Emirates will continue to call for encouraging dialogue, de-escalation and cooperation while reaching a consensus that ensures intra- and inter-State stability. In that regard, we want to remind the Council that international law is not different from domestic law and that violating either without consequences creates only a race to the bottom.

In conclusion, I reiterate the call of the United Arab Emirates on both parties and on all relevant stakeholders to seek a peaceful solution to the war through constructive and inclusive dialogue, which requires open lines of communication for a diplomatic solution.

It is obvious that the world in all its components is concerned about the consequences of this war, including for the international system and food and energy security, as well as the risks of escalating the confrontation. We must therefore shoulder the responsibility entrusted to us and cooperate to overcome the world's great challenges, instead of witnessing more setbacks due to wars and conflicts. We base our call for that approach on the conclusions we have drawn from our own experience in the Middle East, where people have been battered by a relentless insistence on hegemony, the exclusion of others and the pursuit of narrow self-interest. That has resulted only in destruction.

Mr. Orina (Kenya): Kenya's delegation commends you, Madam President, and France for your country's able stewardship of the Security Council during the month of September. I also want to thank Secretary-General António Guterres and Mr. Karim Khan for their updates on the situation in Ukraine.

The war in Ukraine is a serious breach of the Charter of the United Nations. The obligation to respect the territorial integrity of all Member States will be further undermined should any action be taken to change the legal character of areas in eastern Ukraine. We are in a moment of grave danger to international peace and security. The escalation of the war that the international community feared is under way. There are now clear

threats being made about the potential deployment of weapons of mass destruction in the conflict. On the battlefield, civilians are being subjected to serious harm, in contravention of fundamental international law and human rights obligations.

It is a vital priority to ensure that national authorities subject their soldiers to severe disciplinary action for any abuses, especially of civilians or captured combatants. Military commanders should surrender those suspected of such atrocities to the relevant authorities for prosecution. All parties, including those making allegations of human rights abuses or against whom allegations are made, should agree to prompt, independent and impartial investigations.

Even as we justly condemn and call for accountability for war-related violations, we know that the truest protection of civilians comes from stopping the war. In that regard, Kenya calls for an immediate cessation of hostilities. Active hostilities should be replaced by a mediated agreement that secures the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, while addressing the security concerns of all parties and regional stakeholders.

The situation in Ukraine is highlighting the need for serious reforms of the Security Council. His Excellency Mr. William Ruto, President of the Republic of Kenya, in his speech yesterday to the General Assembly (see A/77/PV.6), called for the democratization of the Security Council if its damaged legitimacy is not to be totally destroyed. Our President made the clarion call that it was time that the Council more powerfully heed the voice and place of Africa through the reform of its membership. He also welcomed President Joe Biden's announcement calling for the permanent and non-permanent membership of the Council to be expanded.

If there is a major result the world needs from Ukraine, beyond peace and security for the people of Ukraine, it is for such an announcement to lead to real change. The farmers, villagers, pastoralists, fisherfolk, traders and workers of Africa need their livelihoods protected from the climate crisis. They need the many serious conflicts on the Security Council's agenda solved and not relegated to the margins because of the situation in Ukraine. Who will protect their interests in the Security Council with the means from an amended Charter of the United Nations? Only permanent membership for African States will do.

In that regard, we call on the entire permanent membership to commit to fully embracing reforms. It is the only way in which the people of the world will consider this institution legitimate enough to earn their regard and cooperation.

I conclude by saluting those individuals, institutions and Governments, as well as United Nations bodies and agencies, that continue to help alleviate the suffering of those affected by the war in Ukraine. I reaffirm Kenya's respect for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine.

Mr. Kuleba (Ukraine): I thank the French presidency for keeping the focus of the Security Council on the most pressing threat to international peace and security in this century, namely, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

As we speak, the bodies of innocent victims are still being exhumed from at least 445 graves in the recently liberated city of Izyum. Some are not entire bodies, but parts of them, like a few pairs of children's legs in one of the graves. The grief of their loved ones is yet another drop in the ocean of suffering that Russia has inflicted upon the people of Ukraine in the seven months and eight years of its barbaric aggression.

Many of those here today will have seen the image of a dead hand belonging to a 36-year-old Ukrainian soldier — his name was Sergiy Sova — with a yellow and blue bracelet still on it. I wear one, too, and I want to show it to the Council. Many of us do. Russia should know one thing: it will never be able to kill all of us. The following is why.

On 24 February, when Russia attacked Ukraine from all directions, within the first 24 hours, tens of thousands of Ukrainians returned from abroad to defend their country. What happened within the first 24 hours after President Putin announced mobilization? The opposite: tens of thousands of Russians booked international flights to leave Russia. Many flights were sold out within hours.

Yesterday Putin announced mobilization, but what he really announced before the whole world was his defeat. He can draft 300,000 or 500,000 people, but he will never win the war. Today every Ukrainian is a weapon ready to defend Ukraine and the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

Russia will fail and will bear full responsibility for the crime of aggression and consequent war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. Yesterday President Zelenskyy made it clear in his address (see A/77/PV.7) that Russian responsibility is a key element of international peace and security.

Ukrainian law enforcement, together with its partners, the International Criminal Court (ICC) and those countries that support both Ukraine and the ICC, are working actively to collect evidence of Russian crimes and hold perpetrators to account. We trust in the International Criminal Court. Justice will be served. We owe it not only to the thousands of victims, but to future generations in Ukraine and beyond. There will be no peace without justice.

I emphasize that none of the Russian crimes in Ukraine would have been possible without the crime of aggression against Ukraine committed by the Russian leadership, which cannot go unpunished. The only feasible way to put President Putin and his entourage on trial is to establish a special tribunal for the crime of aggression against Ukraine. I reiterate my call on all States to back that undertaking for the sake of the basic principles of humanity and the Charter of the United Nations.

Many of those in this Chamber will be listening to me now with one question in mind: is there a chance for peace? Will Ukraine negotiate with Russia in order to end the war? I want to make it crystal clear that no other nation in the world craves peace more than Ukraine. President Zelenskyy was very outspoken about that yesterday. We have never wanted anything but peace and stable development. We never wanted the war and never chose it — we simply want to live a normal life. But it is not enough for Ukraine to want peace. Russia must prioritize diplomacy over war in order to give peace a chance. What we see instead is the Russian leadership seeking a military solution only.

This Chamber has seen many heated debates and many crises since 1945, but the amount of lies coming from Russian diplomats is quite extraordinary. Today we are mostly focusing on crimes committed by Russian soldiers in Ukraine. But if anyone thinks they are the only ones ready to kill, torture, rape or cut off genitals, they are wrong. Russian diplomats are directly complicit because their lies incite those crimes and cover them up. Apparently, the only thing in Russia's statement today — a torrent of lies — that warrants a reaction

is the inappropriate slang used when mentioning a President of a foreign country, namely, the President of Ukraine. I also noted today that Russian diplomats flee almost as aptly as Russian soldiers.

Before 24 February, Russian diplomats here at the United Nations had repeatedly denied plans of a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The Russian President himself lied in the faces of European leaders, saying that he was not planning to attack. That was just days before the invasion.

Russia is shameless. It sits in the chair it occupied in 1991 on dubious legal grounds, armed with the right to veto and a sense of total impunity. Russians are confident that they can get away with anything and are entitled to do anything they want. They think that seat allows them to violate borders in a nineteenth-century style imperialist conquest. They think it allows them to shell nuclear power plants and seize them. They think that it allows them to unleash missile terror on civilians and critical infrastructure. They think that it allows them to threaten the world with the use of nuclear weapons. They must be held accountable for all of that.

The issue of responsibility is central to the debate. We need to ensure that such behaviour is punishable. Otherwise, every evil force in the world will be tempted to follow in Russia's footsteps. I do not need to remind anyone at this table how many forces on the planet would like to question the borders of their neighbours. If Russia can do that, why cannot they?

Today we are talking not only about Ukraine and Russia. The global security crisis that we all face is much larger. All Council members must realize that on 24 February Russia not only attacked Ukraine; it also dealt a deadly blow to the very foundations of the Charter of the United Nations. No nation can feel safe until Russia is held to account for violating the common principles agreed by all after the Second World War. Russia does not care for them, but there are 192 other States Members of the United Nations. Nations of Asia, the Pacific, Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and Europe are all interested in upholding the United Nations Charter today, and Ukraine is fighting to defend the principles of that Charter, especially that of territorial integrity.

Russia's war of aggression has plunged the world into a multifaceted crisis. The consequences of that crime are felt far beyond Ukraine. Once Russian warships had blocked Ukrainian seaports, it became

clear that Ukrainian agricultural exports were vital to global food security. Russia has demonstrated that it is ready to put millions of people across Asia, Africa and the Middle East at risk of hunger simply to achieve its imperialist goals.

I take this opportunity to thank Secretary-General António Guterres and Türkiye for facilitating the Black Sea Grain Initiative, which allowed Ukraine to resume maritime grain exports this summer. Putin recently lied when he said that most of the grain had been sent to European countries. In fact, two thirds of the grain that we shipped went to consumers in Africa, the Middle East and Asia. The resumption of Ukrainian exports has tamed food prices and allowed the acute food insecurity to be eased, especially for the most vulnerable.

Today the Black Sea Grain Initiative is under threat. Russian officials are questioning the effectiveness of the corridor and may prepare to block the extension of the Grain Initiative once the agreed 120 days come to an end in November. We must not allow Russia to resume its hunger games with the world. I therefore urge all nations, especially those that depend on Ukrainian food exports, to put maximum public and diplomatic pressure on Moscow, demanding to keep the Black Sea grain corridor functioning in November and beyond. We need to protect the vital Grain Initiative together.

Ukraine remains a global food security guarantor. Despite our own dire situation, we decided to provide humanitarian aid to Ethiopia and Somalia, sending them an additional amount of our grain. Ukraine is interested in increasing maritime export volumes, both under the World Food Programme and in line with market conditions.

While striking peaceful Ukrainian cities with missiles, Russia uses food and energy as weapons against the rest of the world. Putin sends tanks into Ukraine to kill Ukrainians, while stealing the well-being and stability of every European household with energy blackmail and playing hunger games with Asian, African and Middle Eastern families by threatening the functioning of the grain corridor.

We are in the same boat. As Europeans, Asians, Africans, Arab nations, Latin American States, we are all in the same boat, and we must confront such threats together. There is no place for neutrality. In February, here at the United Nations, I said that no nation would be able to sit out this crisis created by Russia (see A/76/PV.58). That still stands. The best reaction to the

crisis is to stand with Ukraine to protect the United Nations Charter.

Russia likes to talk about the developed world and the developing world. It tries to drive a wedge between one and the other. We in Ukraine do not differentiate. All people deserve a normal life, safety, stability and confidence. But we must stay united to stop Russia's blackmail and the war that it launched on humankind.

The most important pillar of international peace and security is the territorial integrity of States. No country is allowed to change internationally recognized borders by force. Russia has badly damaged that principle, and the threat of war is now hanging over everyone's head. To restore international peace and security, we need urgent and decisive action.

Yesterday President Zelenskyy proposed a peace formula (see A/77/PV.7), which includes not only accountability but also a mechanism of security guarantees based on Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. Ukraine developed the Kyiv Security Compact, which proposes a modern multilayered mechanism of guarantees to ensure Ukraine's security until the moment that it becomes part of NATO.

However, that document is much broader than a tool to only guarantee the security of Ukraine. We see it as a universal mechanism that can be considered by, and applied to, other countries and contexts in order to strengthen regional and global security architectures. Ukraine continues to work with partners to realize the vision of the Kyiv Security Compact. That is our added value to international peace and security for all States Members of the United Nations.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic.

Mr. Lipavský (Czech Republic): Let me thank the French presidency for the opportunity to participate in this important meeting.

The Czech Republic now holds the rotating European Union (EU) presidency. The EU is a core promoter of the values and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Czechia hosts the highest number of Ukrainian refugees per capita — more than 400,000 in a country of 10 million people. Russia's colonial, unprovoked

and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine sent that massive wave of the most vulnerable population abroad.

The Russian aggression is perhaps the most dangerous challenge to global peace in recent decades. Today it is about Ukraine; tomorrow it may be another country. In August 1968, it was Czechoslovakia, invaded by Moscow-led troops — a crackdown on the so-called Prague Spring, a violent interference in another country's peaceful life, turning my country into an occupied colony.

We are hearing about the hastily organized sham referendums in parts of Ukraine. Russia cannot trick the international community and again steal another State's territory. Russia's aggressive, colonial policy and imperial desires must be rejected for good. Ukraine refused that slavery and bravely fights for a multilateral world where rules protect peace

We are horrified by the atrocities committed by Russian troops in Mariupol, Bucha, Irpin, Izyum and elsewhere. We are extremely concerned by the reports regarding the so-called filtration camps, run by Russia in Ukraine.

Hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian citizens have been deported to Russia, including children. There are testimonies of sexual and gender-based crimes, used as a method of warfare. They all must be investigated, and the perpetrators must be held accountable. We applaud the Secretary-General for launching the United Nations fact-finding mission regarding events in Olenivka.

More than 40 States, including the Czech Republic, referred the situation in Ukraine to the International Criminal Court (ICC), which opened its investigation into the situation in Ukraine already in March. We strongly support the ICC, including by seconding a public prosecutor and through voluntary contributions.

We call for the establishment of a special international tribunal to prosecute the crime of aggression committed by Russia. Czech law enforcement agencies have launched criminal investigations of certain crimes based on the principle of universal jurisdiction.

The members of the Security bear global responsibility for peace and respect for international law. That is what we expect of them when we elect them. Please act. We need peace in Ukraine. We need to restore respect for the United Nations Charter and

international law. We need to ensure justice for victims and to stop impunity for the perpetrators.

The President (*spoke in French*) I now give the floor to the Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany.

Ms. Baerbock (Germany): Bucha. Mariupol. Izyum. When we talk about the horrors unfolding in Ukraine, we are not talking about abstract reports. We are talking about children, mothers, brothers, fathers, grandparents, women and men whose pain is raw.

I therefore impress upon Russia that this is a war it will not win, so end the war. Stop the suffering in Ukraine. Stop sending more of its own citizens to their deaths. Stop its sham referendums, which are as unlawful as the war they are supposed to legitimize. Stop the grain war that is driving hunger across the globe. And stop paralysing this very organ, the Security Council.

For many of those here, and for some in the General Assembly, this war might have seemed like a regional war far away on 24 February, for in many parts of the world there is too much suffering, itself driven by conflict, climate catastrophe, the pandemic and hunger. We noted that perception, and we in Germany can understand that feeling. But I think that we all now feel — together here in the Security Council but also in the General Assembly — that what has been happening over the past 200 days can leave no one around the globe untouched.

After 200 days of Russia's brutal war in Ukraine, President Putin's most recent announcements makes it clear beyond any doubt. Russia is not conducting a so-called special operation. Russia is leading a full-fledged war of aggression, with war crimes, torture and rape, even of children. For 200 hundred days, Russia's war has been increasing the hunger, poverty and insecurity around the world.

I think this is a clear sign of why the Russian Foreign Minister only came in to the Chamber for his own speech, speaking for quite a while but not even mentioning the hunger, poverty and results all around the world.

In the streets of Moscow today there are no queues of volunteers wanting to join the war in Ukraine. What we see instead are courageous men and women, and even children, taking to the streets because they do not want to be part of this war against Ukraine and do not want to be part of the hunger war in the world. Those men

and women feel what we all feel, regardless of where we hail from — North, South, East or West — that all this war brings is pain, death and destruction.

Here in the Chamber today we must therefore ask ourselves: if we let a permanent member of the Council launch such a war of aggression against its neighbour, what would that mean for the United Nations? For an institution whose Charter clearly states that

“[a]ll members shall refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state”.

If the Charter means anything to us, we must not stand idly by. Instead, we must live up to the spirit our Charter — not for its own sake, but in particular because one of its member misuses its special veto rights in the Security Council. We must live up to the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations as it has been lived up to by the United Nations and our Turkish partners, who brokered the grain deal, as well by the World Food Programme, which Germany supports and which is shipping grain to Yemen and to the Horn of Africa. We must live up to the spirit of united nations as the United Nations and the International Criminal Court are doing, which are collecting evidence to ensure that the perpetrators in this war are held accountable. We must live up to the spirit of the United Nations as the International Atomic Energy Agency is doing, which is working to prevent a catastrophe at the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant and whose efforts are lending support in talks with all sides. We must live up to the spirit of the United Nations in contrast to the Russian President — because we are the United Nations, from North to South and from East to West, no matter how small or big.

The President (*spoke in French*) I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Poland.

Mr. Rau (Poland): The main reason behind today's meeting is Russia's decision to attack its neighbour, a fellow State Member of the United Nations. Despite being a permanent member of the Security Council, whose responsibility for international peace and security should be even greater, Russia decided to breach the most fundamental principles of our world order.

The invasion has shown total disrespect and disregard for the international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Russian forces have committed horrific atrocities: extrajudicial executions

of civilians, enforced disappearances, torture and sexual violence, including against children.

Unable to crack Ukraine's military resistance, Russia turned to terror against civilians as a basic tactic of its war. Each day brings new evidence and testimonies of Russian crimes committed in the occupied territories. We are shocked by the discovery of torture chambers and mass graves containing bodies showing signs of torture and brutality in newly liberated Izyum. With new reports coming in, Izyum may become another symbol of Russia's barbaric methods.

Against that dire backdrop, Poland continues to advocate for full accountability for all the violations and for compensation for the damage inflicted. We support the investigations by Ukrainian prosecutors, as well as investigations initiated by other States. We have been cooperating closely with the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court. We were among the broad group of the participating States from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) who twice invoked the OSCE Moscow Mechanism. We support the work of the Human Rights Council's Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine. We have also opened an internal criminal investigation into Russia's war of aggression, which is a punishable crime under Polish law.

Finally, Poland has helped to establish a joint investigation team, operating within the framework of the European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation, to collect and preserve evidence of the committed crimes. We should give due consideration to a number of initiatives put forward by Kyiv, such as a special tribunal for crimes of aggression committed against Ukraine and an international mechanism to provide compensation for damage caused by Russia.

Let me reaffirm Poland's solidarity with the people of Ukraine, who have shown remarkable courage, resolve and resilience. They have stood up for their country and their independence with bravery and determination. It is now our turn to stand up for the principles that protect us all. We must hold Russia accountable for the invasion and all the crimes committed in the course of that aggression.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Lithuania.

Mr. Landsbergis (Lithuania): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Baltic States — Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

The major reason we are meeting today is because a permanent member of the Security Council, Russia, is openly threatening security and the rules-based global order, the very cause that the Security Council was created for. Just a year ago, Russia was sowing lies and distrust. Now it is sowing chaos and death. Day after day Russia defies the principles of the United Nations and has already become a synonym for brutality, State-run terrorism and genocide. At this very moment, the international community cannot and should not turn away. Yesterday we all woke up to one more attempt by Putin to escalate aggression. By announcing mobilization, he is now waging a war on his own people — the people who are meant to be the future of the country but who are now being turned into weapons of the colonial past. Fear, blackmail and manipulation are the very few weapons he is left with. Sowing fear is his only tactic, but we shall not fear. We will meet Putin's desperate sabre-rattling with calm and resolve.

Condemnation alone will not end these crimes. It is imperative that international organizations use all their resources to bring Russia's atrocities to light and to ensure that they are entered on the charge sheets of international justice. It is our duty to bring Putin to justice. We must establish a special tribunal to address the crime of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, and if international organizations can stand up for justice half as firmly as Ukraine stands for universal values, peace will prevail and justice will prevail.

Russia's war on Ukraine is having consequences that reach far beyond Europe. Ukraine is one of the major exporters of wheat, corn and sunflower oil. We should make it very clear that the current food shortages around the world are due to Russia's aggression against Ukraine and blockade of Ukrainian ports, not the internationally imposed sanctions. And as if the charge sheet were not full enough, the Moscow regime has now pressed the button of nuclear threats, knowing that we all know that the consequences of a disaster in Zaporizhzhya could potentially be worse than Chernobyl or Fukushima. But we shall not fear. We will use all the power of the international community to demand Russia's unconditional withdrawal of its military from Zaporizhzhya.

When we say “Ukraine”, that signifies true courage and unbeatable resilience. Ukraine is fighting for every principle the United Nations stands for and for every one of us. I therefore say to Council members that they must not fear taking action, but rather fear doubt and indifference. I say to every State that we still have a chance to preserve peace and security by taking the right decisions to defend the rules-based international order. I say to the entire international community that accountability matters and justice cannot be evaded. This is the moment when we have the chance to decide on the world we want to wake up in tomorrow.

And before I go, I would like to remind the Council that it is not only Russia that will be held accountable. The regime of Belarus will be on the charge sheet too. Glory to Ukraine.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belarus.

Mr. Makei (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The events on the territory of Ukraine are a great tragedy both for the country and for all who have faced the grief and hardship that any fighting brings.

Belarus, thanks to its historic past, knows firsthand the cost of war for its people, who experienced genocide and lost one third of their numbers during the Great Patriotic War. Today the conflict is unfolding near our borders and our neighbours. We firmly believe that only through diplomacy, with the assistance of negotiations based on respect and mutual understanding, is it possible to resolve any conflict, including this one.

The events in Ukraine did not arise suddenly, but were the consequence of a systematic disregard for security risks in the region on the part of Western countries and a refusal to consider the interests and concerns of the countries involved. The preconditions for the situation developed over many years. Furthermore, the intense pressure of sanctions by the West has had indirect consequences that have had inevitable repercussions on the security front in our region. I can say reasonably claim that the sanctions have significantly reduced room to manoeuvre on regional security, including for Belarus.

Belarus has consistently and persistently warned about the dangerous escalation of the military and political situation in our region, the decades-long degradation of the international security system and the depreciation of international treaties and agreements.

Unfortunately, no one listened to us, and today we are seeing the tragic result of that arrogant position today in Ukraine. We have always said that one State’s security cannot be guaranteed at the expense of another’s. No one took that seriously, and today we are reaping the results. Belarus has done and will continue to do everything possible to facilitate the implementation of steps to end the conflict and strengthen regional and international security. I will offer just a few facts.

Between 2014 and 2015, Belarus served as a platform for negotiating and reaching an agreement on the two Minsk agreements on resolving the conflict in Ukraine. And no matter how much one tries to sneer at it or deny it, at the time the agreements significantly eased the level of military confrontation. Between 2014 and 2019, we hosted in Minsk approximately 120 meetings of the Trilateral Contact Group on resolving the situation in eastern Ukraine. We engaged in dialogue with all the countries involved, including our European partners, and proposed concrete steps to support peace and security. Perhaps most of the people in this Chamber are unaware of this, but in 2014, when the Maidan events took place in Ukraine, the then Prime Minister of Poland called President Lukashenko, who had fallen into Europe’s disfavour, and asked for his advice on what could be done to ease tensions in Ukraine. Mr. Lukashenko then sent me, as Foreign Minister, to Warsaw with concrete proposals that were received with interest and the words “We will consult with Chancellor Merkel and President Hollande and we will be in touch with you.” Unfortunately, we heard nothing more after that. Evidently, they did not have the decency to work with Belarus, which at the time was under sanctions. This year, three rounds of Russian-Ukrainian peace talks were held on Belarusian territory, after which all the participants, both Ukrainian and Russian, stated unequivocally that there had been concrete positive progress in settling the conflict. Unfortunately, some time after that, the positive progress ended.

When the conflict first started, we suggested to our Ukrainian colleagues that they should establish direct contact with the Russian side, and we were prepared to provide the necessary assistance. But our proposals were ignored. I do not know why, but in December 2021, well before Russia’s special military operation began, Ukrainian officials declared Belarus a hostile country, even though we were neighbours with good trade relations and had never had any problems with Ukraine.

At the end of March this year, Belarus introduced a visa-free regime for Ukrainians and all foreign citizens fleeing the hostilities in Ukraine. We provide them with the necessary assistance, including humanitarian aid, as soon as they reach Belarus. Since February, our country has taken in more than 50,000 citizens of Ukraine. Overall, since 2014, our country has taken in more than 200,000 Ukrainians. And I should make it clear that they are not being forced to come to Belarus, as some here have suggested. They are coming voluntarily. Moreover, they are crossing through Lithuania and Poland, through the Baltic States. Moreover, in order to provide assistance to the Ukrainian citizens who have come to Belarus, on 14 September the President of Belarus signed a new version of the decree on Ukrainian citizens' stay in Belarus granting them the same rights as Belarusian citizens.

Unfortunately, the conflict has not slowed. The military operations continue, along with Western countries' unchecked pumping of weapons into Ukraine. The activities of Ukrainian extremist groups preaching violent methods and neo-Nazi ideals are encouraged and inter-ethnic hatred and discord are fomented in every possible way. NATO is concentrating its troops near the borders of neighbouring countries, including on the western borders of Belarus in Poland and in the Baltic States. An aggressive anti-Belarus campaign is ongoing, aimed at smearing Minsk in the context of this crisis. Belarus is considered an accomplice to the aggressor or a party to the conflict. We will continue to emphasize that Belarus has never supported war. But we are not traitors either. We have obligations to our allies, and we will continue to firmly respect the spirit and the letter of the international agreements to which we are a party.

At the same time, Belarus would also like to clearly state that not a single Belarusian soldier or piece of equipment has been sent to Ukraine to take part in hostilities. Independent experts of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe have confirmed that Belarus is not a party to the international armed conflict, in accordance with the norms and principles of international law, which many here have referred to. All the accusations that have been made here by the West against Belarus are completely groundless and unfounded. As a direct neighbour, Minsk is interested in being a party to talks between Russia and Ukraine on a strategic peace agreement and is ready to create all the necessary conditions for such talks to continue on

Belarusian soil. The final agreements should also take into account the interests of Belarus.

We should not be strengthening national, regional and global security through a military build-up by NATO but rather through universal, bilateral and multilateral confidence-building mechanisms that are acceptable to all. Only equitable and respectful dialogue aimed at bridging differences can prevent confrontation in our region.

Lastly, sooner or later all wars end at the negotiating table. That is an immutable diplomatic truth. And the sooner those negotiations begin the better. It was therefore surprising to hear some around this table today saying that we have to keep fighting. Such statements are completely contrary to common sense.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

Mr. Borrell Fontelles (*spoke in French*): I would like to warmly thank the French presidency of the Security Council for organizing today's crucial meeting.

(*spoke in English*)

We are now more than six months into this illegal, senseless and brutal war. As many here have said today, the war is a frontal attack on the Charter of the United Nations and the international rules-based order. It is a chemically pure attack on the Charter. We join our voices to that of the International Court of Justice, which has ruled that Russia must halt its invasion immediately. The General Assembly has adopted resolutions by large majorities calling on Russia to stop its aggression. Morally and politically, Russia has already lost the war. And increasingly, it is losing on the battlefield as well. Ukraine will prevail.

The whole world has heard President Putin's latest announcements about his plans to go ahead with sham referendums as a prelude to illegal annexation — which will never be recognized — as well as his mobilization of 300,000 reservists and his open nuclear threats. All of that has put global security in danger. The global leaders who are meeting at the United Nations in New York this week must send a clear and united signal that the use of weapons of mass destruction is unacceptable in any circumstances. I am encouraged by the many statements I have heard here today about this issue. Regrettably, President Putin is continuing along a dangerous path of escalation. He is trying to intimidate

Ukraine and all the countries that support Ukraine. But that will fail. It has failed in the past and it will fail again, as all wars of invasion eventually do. But how many more men, women and children will have to die before the Russian President decides to silence his guns?

This war is more than a war in Europe. At stake is the issue of protecting weaker States from more powerful ones. Do we want the global rule of law or the law of the jungle? Do we believe in spheres of influence or the free choice of sovereign States? This war is a tragedy in so many ways. In addition to the terrible casualties and destruction caused in Ukraine, Russia is dragging the world into an economic recession and a global food crisis. The European Union is doing what it can to counter that fallout. Our support for global food security will amount to more than €7.7 billion through 2024. We support the Black Sea Grain Initiative facilitated by the Secretary-General and Türkiye. Together with our European Union solidarity lanes, that has helped lower global food prices, but sadly has not corrected them. Still, two thirds of the Ukrainian grain exported through that corridor goes to the countries that need it most, not to Europeans.

The core issue today is accountability. The Russian armed forces have been terrorizing civilian populations and are committing countless unspeakable crimes, including mass murder, destruction, rape and forced migration. Every victim of Russia's aggression deserves justice and reparation. We have seen the recent images from the massacres in Izyum follow the pattern we saw in Bucha and elsewhere. As Russian troops are expelled, we discover the true horrors of their occupation. As President Zelenskyy said in the General Assembly yesterday (see A/77/PV.7), where there have been crimes, there must be justice. Otherwise, peace will not be possible. We will do whatever it takes to ensure accountability. We rely on the International Criminal Court (ICC) and on the Ukrainian authorities. We are supporting the ICC financially and technically and assisting the Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine by providing training, expertise and equipment, including for collected evidence.

Ensuring accountability is the responsibility of all of us. We owe that not only to the victims, but also to the next generation — the future of Ukraine — because fighting impunity today will contribute to a more secure and just future for all.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.