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Seventy-seventh year

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Provisional

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

Agenda

Maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine

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

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine

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

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine.

I now call on the representative of the Russian Federation, who has asked for the floor.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Once again, we would like to make clear our position regarding yet another attempt by our Western colleagues to push through the participation of the President of Ukraine, Mr. Zelenskyy, in today's meeting via video-teleconference. We have repeatedly underscored that, in and of itself, we are not against the participation of the President of Ukraine or his representatives. However, that participation must be in person. Furthermore, that has been required for more than 75 years by the rules that guide the work of the Security Council. It is therefore also a question of respect for the Council, which must not be turned into a forum for political shows or cinema. Connivance on these matters causes very serious harm to the Security Council's prestige.

It is precisely this type of show that the Ukrainian delegation put on in the General Assembly during high-level week, (see A/77/PV.7) when well-rehearsed extras were brought into the Hall to applaud a pre-recorded video of the statement made by the Ukrainian President. That was then sent out on social media in order, apparently, to show so-called "broad support" among the members of the General Assembly. One need not think that no one noticed, as many delegations expressed their astonishment when groups of supporters under the leadership of Western delegations came in and, once their roles were over, left in an equally organized manner.

It is unfortunate that these primitive public relations stunts devalue the role of the Security Council and the United Nations, which is supposed to be a forum for serious dialogue — and not for public relations shows.

This once again illustrates the true regard of Western delegations for the United Nations, who really do not care about maintaining its foundations, authority and prestige, or even how it is viewed in the eyes of the international community, and who are ready to sacrifice it all in their Russophobic frenzy.

I would like again to underscore that we stand for the sovereign equality of States and categorically against double standards when there is discrimination practiced at the United Nations. Many Member States find themselves in a difficult domestic political situation, yet their leadership are not subjected to the same thing. There is also the matter of the lion's share of humanitarian assistance being earmarked for Ukraine, while those in need in other parts of the world are seemingly forgotten by Western donors, even though billions of dollars are being spent on new arms supplies to Kyiv. There are also double standards in how migrants are treated, when refugees from Ukraine are welcomed with open arms in European countries while those from Africa, the Middle East and other places are rejected.

We would ask all Members of the United Nations to take a principled position on this.

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, to participate in this meeting.

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

I give the floor to Ms. DiCarlo.

Ms. DiCarlo: The exceptional level of attention to the war in Ukraine reflects the widespread global concern about its dangerous and far-reaching consequences. That concern can only deepen, as the most recent developments in the war are ominous, pointing to more death, destruction and suffering.

Indeed, since the previous Security Council meeting on Ukraine, on 22 September (see S/PV.9135), we have seen actions that threaten to further escalate the conflict. As we meet, so-called referendums were just conducted by de facto authorities in the Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhya regions. Ukrainians were asked whether they approved their regions joining the Russian Federation. Voting took place in polling centres. De-facto authorities accompanied by

soldiers also went door to door with ballot boxes. Those exercises, which began on 23 September, have been held during active armed conflict, in areas under Russian control and outside Ukraine's legal and constitutional framework. They cannot be called a genuine expression of the popular will.

Unilateral actions aiming to provide a veneer of legitimacy to the attempted acquisition by force by one State of another State's territory, while claiming to represent the will of the people, cannot be regarded as legal under international law. Let me reiterate here that the United Nations remains fully committed to the sovereignty, unity, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine, within its internationally recognized borders, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions. I would like to recall that, as the occupying Power, the Russian Federation is obliged under international humanitarian law to respect the laws of Ukraine in the administration of occupied territories.

The past few weeks have also seen heavy fighting in southern Ukraine, in the direction of Kherson and Zaporizhzhya, as well as escalating military operations in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. In mid-September, the Ukrainian military undertook a successful counter-offensive to restore Ukrainian control over most of the Russian-held areas in the Kharkiv region. We have continued to see not only daily attacks on many Ukrainian cities, including in Donetsk and Luhansk, but also the targeting of civilian energy and water infrastructure, reportedly by Russian forces. The recent reports of drone attacks in and around Odesa are also deeply disturbing.

To date, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has recorded 14,844 civilian casualties, with 5,996 persons killed and 8,848 injured. That is 278 more civilians killed and 649 more injured since I previously briefed the Council, on 7 September (see S/PV.9126). Those are verified individual incidents; actual figures are likely considerably higher.

We have also heard alarming rhetoric regarding the use of nuclear weapons, which is unacceptable. Such rhetoric is inconsistent with the joint statement of the leaders of the five nuclear-weapon States on preventing nuclear war and avoiding arms races, made on 3 January. Let me reiterate the Secretary-General's appeal for all nuclear-armed States, including the Russian Federation,

to recommit to the non-use and progressive elimination of nuclear weapons.

Amid those grim developments, the United Nations continues to work to alleviate the suffering caused by the war, to support accountability for violations and abuses of human rights and of international humanitarian law and to prevent the deterioration of the already volatile situation around Ukraine's nuclear sites. The United Nations and partner organizations need safe and unimpeded access to deliver life-saving assistance to all in need. In the areas of the Kharkiv region back under Ukrainian control, they were able to organize several aid convoys. However, in areas outside Government control in the Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, Mykolaiv and Zaporizhzhya regions, access is the biggest challenge.

The United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine continues to report on violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. We are gravely concerned about allegations of violations committed in parts of north-eastern Ukraine, including after the recovery of more than 400 bodies from improvised graves in Izyum. OHCHR is working with local authorities to investigate that and other allegations of human rights violations and abuses in areas in the Kharkiv region that were until recently under Russian control.

There are other extremely disturbing reports. Following investigations in the areas of Kyiv, Chernihiv, Kharkiv and Sumy, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, mandated by the Human Rights Council, has concluded that war crimes were committed in Ukraine. Among other findings, the Commission was struck by the large number of executions and other violations carried out by Russian forces. In the four areas it covered, the Commission has processed two incidents of ill-treatment against Russian Federation soldiers by Ukrainian forces.

Rarely, if ever, has the international community collected so much evidence of human rights violations, potential war crimes and other atrocities as they were happening. It is tragic that we have not been able to stop them. But it would be shameful if we were not able to ensure justice for the victims and their loved ones. Those responsible for the outrages being committed in Ukraine — wherever they sit — must be brought to account.

We remain deeply troubled by the reports of continuing attacks, as recently as last week, in the vicinity of the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant. The United Nations continues to support the efforts of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). We urge all concerned to provide maximum cooperation with the IAEA. It is imperative that all attacks on nuclear facilities end and that the purely civilian nature of such plants be re-established.

By now, the global implications of this war on food and energy security, felt by millions of people, are well-known. During the general debate, many Member States decried that predicament. The Black Sea Grain Initiative continues to gather pace, with more than 4.5 million metric tons of foodstuffs shipped from Ukrainian ports, including to the Horn of Africa, Yemen and Afghanistan. Efforts to remove remaining obstacles to the export of Russian food products and fertilizers also continue. Those products are not under sanctions, and it is crucial to get them back to world markets. Averting a global food crisis makes it vital to renew the Black Sea grain deal when it expires at the end of November.

In his remarks to the General Assembly during the general debate (see A/77/PV.4), the Secretary-General warned that the Charter of the United Nations and its ideals are in jeopardy and that we have a duty to act. I repeat his appeal to all Member States to help prevent further escalation and to do all we can to end the war and ensure lasting peace, in accordance with the principles of the Charter and international law.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. DiCarlo for her briefing.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine

President Zelenskyy (*spoke in Ukrainian; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): The Security Council is an institution that works according to well-known and well-defined rules, and the representatives of Russia are still following them. So far, they have not been using weapons instead of words in the Chamber. They are not knocking out their neighbours' chairs in the Council, but surely no one would be surprised if the Chamber were turned into a zone of violence by the representatives of Russia. Russia already despises the Charter of the United Nations; Russia is already breaking the rules of the world order. It is therefore only a matter of time before it destroys the last international

institution that can still function, which is why I am now calling on the Council to take action.

Anyone in the world could now give hundreds of examples of how Russia has violated and continues to violate the international legal order, destroying the main body of international law. It constantly provokes escalation by responding to any proposals for talks with renewed brutality on the battlefield, causing even greater crises and posing even greater threats to Ukraine and to the world.

Of all the threats, I will name but five that are already occurring as we speak.

First, Russia has ignored the International Atomic Energy Agency's call for the immediate deoccupation of the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant and the termination of any hostile actions against nuclear facilities in Ukraine. That serves as additional proof that Russia is deliberately keeping the world on the brink of radiation disaster.

The second threat is Russia's use of nuclear blackmail. The threat of use of nuclear weapons has become a consistent narrative by Russian officials and in Russian propaganda. That proves that Russia has no right to possess nuclear weapons, as it is unable to guarantee the safety of the world — not even from the threat of use of nuclear weapons.

Thirdly, last week I addressed the General Assembly and presented Ukraine's formula for peace (see A/77/PV.7). Russia's response to that real path to peace was to announce mobilization. Moreover, Russia is deliberately focusing its mobilization policy on the indigenous peoples in the territories it controls. Not only does that concern the Caucasus or Siberia, where Russia is sparing no effort to mobilize as many men as possible from indigenous populations, but it also concerns the Ukrainian territory of Crimea, which Russia seized back in 2014. Of all ethnic groups in Crimea, Crimean Tatar men received the most Russian draft notices in proportion to the total number. Frankly speaking, that is a genocidal policy.

Fourthly, before the eyes of the entire world, Russia is conducting sham referendums in the occupied territory of Ukraine. People are being forced to fill out papers while under threat from submachine guns, all for the purpose of coverage on television. The alleged results of the sham referendums have been prepared well

in advance, just like the issue of compulsory passports for the populations of the occupied territories.

But what was the reason behind that? The answer lies in the fifth and final threat I want to mention, namely, the annexation of the captured territories. That is the most brutal violation of the Charter of the United Nations. It is an attempt to steal the territory of another State and erase the norms of international law. It is also a highly cynical attempt to force the male population of the occupied territory of Ukraine to mobilize into the Russian army in order to send them to fight against their own homeland.

There is only one way to stop all of that.

First, Russia must be met with complete isolation in response to everything it does. A State cannot remain a permanent member of the Security Council with the right to the veto if that same State is waging a genocidal policy, threatening nuclear strikes and keeping the world teetering just one step away from a radiation disaster. Russia should be excluded from all international organizations and, if such an exclusion is procedurally complicated, its participation should be suspended.

Secondly, there is a need for new and tougher global sanctions against Russia. Any annexation in the modern world is a crime against all States that consider the inviolability of borders to be vital for themselves.

Thirdly, Russia's criminal actions do not change anything for us. We will not succumb to the blackmail of terrorists. Not only are we defending our independence and the right to life of our people in Ukraine and in this war, but we are also defending international law. As such, Ukraine must receive all the necessary defence and financial support to ensure the aggressor's defeat.

Fourthly, Ukraine should receive clear and legally binding guarantees of collective security, since the independence of our country is of such fundamental importance for many elements of global security. The world also needs a respective security architecture.

Fifthly — and I want everyone to understand how important this is — Russia's recognition of the sham referendums, its implementation of the so-called Crimea scenario and its attempts to annex Ukrainian territory will mean that there is nothing to talk about with the President of Russia. Annexation is the kind of move that will pit him, alone, against the whole of humankind.

A clear signal is now needed from every country in the world. I believe in their ability to act.

I thank the French presidency for the opportunity to participate in this meeting and thank members for their attention.

Glory to Ukraine.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): I thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo for her briefing today and thank President Zelenskyy for his statement.

A little more than seven months ago — just seven months — we met at night in this Chamber (see S/PV.8970) to discuss how we could preserve peace in Ukraine. At that moment, Putin chose war instead. The timing could not be clearer: Putin was showing exactly what he thought of the Security Council.

Last week, leaders from more than 100 countries from around the world gathered in New York to reaffirm their commitment to the Charter of the United Nations and many of the key principles it stands for, namely, sovereignty, territorial integrity and peace and security. Instead of attending high-level week, Putin announced a renewed conscription effort in Russia and instructed areas under Russia's military control to prepare for illegitimate snap referendums. He sent an emissary who threatened the use of nuclear weapons on a non-nuclear country to secure Russia's illegitimate military gains.

The purpose of all of that is clear: Russia intends to try to annex those territories, and Russia does not respect this organ. The pattern, too, is clear: Putin intentionally chose this moment to insult the Charter that outlines the principles we all collectively stand for, namely, sovereignty, territorial integrity and peace and security. He did so during the most important week for the United Nations — high-level week.

Putin intends to commit an act that the Charter of the United Nations was expressly designed to prevent: an attempt by one Member State to take the territory of another by force. We know that will happen because it follows a well-worn Kremlin playbook. Russia runs sham referendums in areas controlled by Russia's military and its proxies, coercing people to vote at

gunpoint. It then uses those referendums to try to lend a semblance of legitimacy to its attempted annexations of another sovereign State's territory.

The rush for Russia to institute and complete those attempted annexations destroys even the facade of legitimacy. As Ukraine successfully regains control over more of its territory that was wrongfully seized by Russia and more of Russia's atrocities are uncovered, Russia is rushing to draw a veil over its military losses and the war crimes it has committed.

We know that the outcomes of those sham referendums were predetermined in Moscow. In no way do they represent a legitimate expression of the will of the Ukrainian people. The will of the Ukrainian people is made clear every day as they fight valiantly for their country, as they protect their territorial integrity and as they defend their sovereignty. The Ukrainian people have already demonstrated they will never accept being subjugated to Russian rule. The Security Council and the international community must do the same.

Let me therefore be clear: the United States will never recognize any territory that Russia attempts to seize or allegedly annex as anything other than part of Ukraine. We reject Russia's actions unequivocally, and we will continue to work with our allies, partners and the like-minded to impose costs on Russia and to provide historic amounts of support for Ukraine. Justice demands nothing less. Protecting the Charter demands nothing less.

In our many meetings here in the Security Council, we have heard repeated calls for the Charter to be respected. But it is not enough to call for respect for the Charter; we must have the courage to defend it. That means standing up for Ukraine and the victims of Russian atrocities. It means having the courage to call out aggression and attempts at naked territorial expansion when we see it. It means showing we care about peace by demanding that Russia honour the Charter. Not doing so only enables Russia to commit further abuses.

Russia started this war, and I hope that every member of the Council will do the right thing by standing up for international law and the Charter by calling on Russia to end it now. Ukraine's fight is not only a fight for survival, but a fight for democracy and the very principles that we all hold dear. That is why we will be submitting a draft resolution condemning the sham referendums, calling on Member States

not to recognize any altered status of Ukraine and obligating Russia to withdraw its troops from Ukraine. Russia's sham referendums, if accepted, will open a Pandora's box that we will not be able to close. We ask other Council members to join us in reaffirming our commitment to the Charter and meeting the challenge head-on.

If Russia chooses to shield itself from accountability here in the Council, we will then look to the General Assembly to send an unmistakable message to Moscow. The world must stand together and defend the Charter of the United Nations, have courage and support Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. This is about defending the Charter. This is about defending our collective rights. And this is about peace and security for us all.

Mr. Hoxha (Albania) (*spoke in French*): I thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo for her briefing, which was, as always, insightful and useful.

(*spoke in English*)

I would like to begin with the following quotation:

"Don't believe those who try to frighten you with Russia and who scream that other regions will follow after Crimea. We do not want a partition of Ukraine; we do not need this."

That is what the President of Russia said in 2014. Everyone can judge for themselves. I doubt, however, that that comes as a surprise to anyone since, for more than nine months, what we have heard from the Russian delegation here has little or nothing to do with what happens there on the ground — two parallel realities.

Let us now have a closer look of what will be known as the sham referendums being conducted these days by an extensive use of the Kremlin's tricks. With the latest escalatory decisions and the partial mobilization, the war has finally entered Russian homes, and we have seen the reactions. Russians are resisting, are protesting openly and are leaving their country en masse to escape being drafted because they do not know why they should die in a war that they do not want and do not understand.

In the city of Kherson, election officials went door to door with riot police. It is a well-known fact that, when you vote at gunpoint, the process is more expeditious. The so-called voting has been recorded on park benches, shops and even the makeshift booths

in police stations, better known locally as torture chambers, which were put to such good use. Elsewhere, doors have been broken down to facilitate the voting process — so much for the solemn moment of voting; so much for the rules and norms of the States of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Yet the result is not in doubt. The vote count, engineered in Moscow with an already-scripted result, will reveal that residents would love to be ruled by the invading Power, Russia. The haste with which the sham referendums are being held makes it unlikely that the spectacle will convince anyone, including Russians themselves, of their legitimacy. No one in the world will take seriously the results of people voting in a referendum at gunpoint in the ruins.

Let us make it clear: the sham referendums in Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhya and Kherson have nothing to do with democracy, nothing to do with the free will of Ukrainians and nothing to do with any international election standard. They are just a replay of the same old script applied to Georgia and Crimea. Now they are translating into reality a desperate effort to hide failure and a worthless attempt to legitimize conquest in the eyes of an incredulous and deeply troubled world. Russia is projecting panic instead of power and instilling fear instead of force.

Why is there such haste? It is because the army of Ukraine is astonishingly pushing Russia out. Russians were told that everything is going to plan. It never has. Russia knows that it is losing big. Therefore, what I have qualified before here as the Russian referendum “assembly line” (*S/PV.9104, p.5*) has been quickly put into action.

“We don’t want more of Ukraine”, said President Putin in 2014. Suddenly, the appetite of the Kremlin has grown. Four fresh territories are on the menu, comprising no less than 18 per cent of Ukraine’s territory. International law prohibits the occupier from changing borders. Russia may claim that it has nothing to do with such plans, since they have been organized by the residents of the regions. But reality now and in the recent past has clearly shown that that is not true. By mid-March, the Russian occupation authorities in Kherson and Zaporizhzhya appointed administrative leaders. According to Ukrainian law, heads of local state administrations are proposed by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine and appointed by the President of Ukraine, not by Russian proxies.

The sham referendums are in contravention of the Constitution of Ukraine. A referendum can be called by the President or Parliament, or by a public initiative involving the valid signatures of at least 3 million registered voters, with at least 100,000 such signatures from each oblast. Furthermore, the martial law currently in force in Ukraine prohibits the holding of any kind of elections or referendums. Finally, we have our own documents. According to Article 3, paragraph a, of the annex to General Assembly resolution 3314 (XXIX), “annexation by the use of force of the territory of another State” is itself an act of aggression. The sham referendums run contrary to the Charter of the United Nations, United Nations resolutions and international law and are making a mockery of the principles that Russia has pledged to uphold as a permanent member of the Security Council, including when it threatens the use of weapons of mass destruction.

As stated last week by Prime Minister Edi Rama at the General Assembly (see *A/77/PV.12*), we strongly condemn Russia’s ongoing war and the premeditated mock elections in Ukraine. They have zero-legality, zero-legitimacy and zero-credibility, and Albania will not recognize them. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the election monitoring authority par excellence, condemned what it qualified as “illegal referenda”.

In addition, attempts to compare the referendums with other cases out of every historical and political context are simply worthless cynicism. We call on all United Nations Members — everyone for whom the principles of territorial integrity, sovereignty and the inviolability of borders have meaning — to oppose Russia’s actions, condemn the referendums and their anticipated results and never recognize any attempt to steal Ukrainian land through violence and terror.

While the war goes on and Russia is hastily trying to change Ukraine’s map, the Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine established by the Human Rights Council has concluded, based on evidence, that war crimes have been committed by the Russian Federation in Ukraine. Last week, in this Chamber, the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (see *S/PV.9135*) said that the bodies lying on the streets he saw in Bucha were real, not staged. The crimes committed in Ukraine are being meticulously documented. They will not be erased and will follow perpetrators until their last days on Earth.

Furthermore, we in the Security Council cannot stay idle. As we heard from the delegation of the United States, together we have prepared a draft resolution to condemn the sham referendums, which has been shared with Council members. Borders cannot change to satisfy Russia's appetite, and Ukraine is not — and cannot be — Russia. We must remain united and continue helping Ukraine defend itself and regain its territory.

Mr. Mythen (Ireland): I too would like to thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo for her briefing and President Zelenskyy for his statement.

The President of Ukraine used the phrase “sham referendums”. Ireland fully agrees. We condemn the sham referendums being conducted in occupied Ukrainian territory by Russia or its proxies. No one who believes in, and is fully committed to, the principles of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, could do otherwise.

Why is that? It is because those referendums — the sham referendums — are both illegal and illegitimate. They are illegal because they violate the United Nations Charter and Russia's obligations under international law, including the law of occupation. They also ignore Ukraine's Constitution, which provides a legal basis for any referendums that would affect the territorial boundaries of Ukraine. They are illegitimate because they do not reflect the popular or freely expressed will of the Ukrainian people.

As we have previously heard in the Chamber, more than 1 million people from those occupied territories have been moved to Russia. That is as a result of Russia's military invasion, including by forced deportation. Indeed, more than 7 million people are internally displaced within Ukraine because of the war.

Such referendums will never deter us from supporting the people of Ukraine. Might does not make right. Furthermore, the referendums will not have any legal or political effect on the status of the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant or other Ukrainian nuclear facilities. Those referendums are a cynical ploy not only to further undermine Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, but also to try and reset an unjustified war. It is a blatant land grab to redefine areas of Ukraine as part of Russia — I repeat, a blatant land grab.

Ukraine has had a hard-won independence. It has had a hard-won path to establishing itself as a sovereign democracy, free from foreign interference. It sticks bravely to that choice, no matter what is thrown at it. In particular, Ireland condemns Russia's nuclear threats, and all nuclear threats, whether explicit or implicit, regardless of circumstance.

Ireland once again calls on Russia to end its aggression immediately, comply with its obligations under international law and withdraw all forces unconditionally from the sovereign territory of Ukraine. As much as people elsewhere in the world, the people of Ukraine, who are suffering the devastating impact of this war, deserve no less.

Mrs. Kamboj (India): I will very briefly intervene. I thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo for her briefing.

As stated by my Minister for External Affairs in the Security Council at the previous meeting on this subject (see S/PV.9135), the trajectory of the Ukraine conflict is a matter of profound concern for the international community. India has repeatedly called for an immediate cessation of hostilities and has underscored the need to resolve the ongoing conflict through dialogue and diplomacy. That was also stated unequivocally by Prime Minister Modi during his meeting with President Putin on the sidelines of the recent Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit in Tashkent. We firmly believe that the global order should be anchored in international law, the Charter of the United Nations and respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States.

India's approach to the Ukraine conflict will continue to be human-centric. For our part, we provide both humanitarian assistance to Ukraine and economic support to some of our neighbours in the global South that are under economic distress, even as they stare at the escalating costs of food, fuel and fertilizer, which has been a consequential fallout of the ongoing conflict.

The need of the hour is to end the conflict in Ukraine and return to the negotiating table. The war has already resulted in the loss of countless lives and misery for people, particularly for women, children and the elderly, with millions becoming homeless and forced to take shelter in neighbouring countries. Let us all work together to ensure that it comes to an early end.

Mr. Agyeman (Ghana): I would like to begin my statement by thanking Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo her briefing.

We join other speakers in expressing our deep concern about the ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine, in violation of the fundamental principles of international law, especially relating to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence and the recognition of States. In our view, the invasion of Ukraine undermines the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and stands in contrast to the norms that have guided recent inter-State relations and given endurance to the international system.

As confirmed by several Heads of State and Government during the just ended general debate of the General Assembly, the impact of the war has had palpable effects on the lives of millions of people across the world. It is their desire that this war and many such others be ended as soon as possible for peace to prevail. We therefore caution against heightened rhetoric and giving expression to contemplations that threaten the use of nuclear weapons, as that can lead only to the dark abyss of a nuclear catastrophe, with no winners. We urge maximum restraint by all sides in what has so far been an effort at conventional warfare.

Ghana is particularly concerned about the ongoing referendum in the regions of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhya. We regret the attempts that are being made to disintegrate the legitimate authority of the Government of Ukraine over its State territory. As we have heard, the process of the referendum can least be described as free, fair, democratic or reflective of the will of the people of Ukraine.

We reiterate our principled position against the acquisition of territory through the threat or use of force. We cannot continue to live in parallel universes and, accordingly, urge the international community to use the full weight of its will to serve as a bulwark against such practices, which have a propensity to unravel the tenuous global stability that we presently have.

We note with concern the unfortunate rise in humanitarian casualties as fighting continues in the eastern and southern parts of Ukraine. Unless an immediate ceasefire is reached, the escalation of military combat would result in further dire consequences for all. We therefore reiterate our call for an immediate cessation of hostilities. We also call on the parties to refrain from targeting civilians and

destroying civilian infrastructure, in accordance with their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law. We urge the Russian Federation, which has often attempted to situate its special operations within the ambit of international law, to respect the sovereignty of Ukraine and withdraw its troops from the internationally recognized borders of its neighbour.

To safeguard international peace and security, we must urgently deepen diplomacy and widen international efforts to defuse the rising global tensions so as to facilitate a peaceful settlement of the conflict. The situation in Ukraine reinforces the imperative for a reformed and responsive Council that is able to address all threats to international peace and security, including by all actors. Pending the much-needed reforms, we must continue to work together to find pragmatic ways to address the challenges that confront our collective security.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): Let me thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo for her briefing. I welcome the participation of President Zelenskyy in today's meeting.

Russia's holding of sham referendums in the Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhya and Kherson regions of Ukraine is an egregious violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. As the United Nations has told us today, that process is both illegal and illegitimate. It is a shameless propaganda effort aimed at justifying Russia's illegal presence on sovereign Ukrainian territory. We have seen Russia's referendum playbook before, in Crimea. We see it playing out again now: disinformation, intimidation and fabrication.

As my Foreign Secretary told the Council last week (see S/PV.9135), we know that President Putin is planning to rig the outcome. Those are regions that voted overwhelmingly to join an independent Ukraine in 1991 and to back President Zelenskyy in 2019. When given a free vote, their choice has been clear: to be part of a free, independent, democratic Ukraine.

Since invading, Russia's control in those regions has been through violence, torture, filtration and forced deportation. We have all seen images of soldiers with automatic rifles accompanying the ballots as they move from door to door, forcing Ukrainians to take part. Any referendums held under those conditions, at the barrel

of a gun, can never be remotely close to free or fair. And the very idea that a referendum on a fundamental question could be held at three days' notice in the middle of a war zone is frankly farcical.

We must all unequivocally reject those illegitimate actions and Russian attempts to illegally annex Ukrainian territory and support the draft resolution the United States and Albania have brought forward today.

This is a critical moment. There is no middle ground. No Member of the United Nations should turn a blind eye to Russia tearing up the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. If we allow Russia to believe it can change sovereign borders by force, then the entire system on which we base our shared safety and security is under threat.

Those Potemkin referendums, as well as Putin's decision to mobilize Russian men to fight in his illegal war, are admissions that his invasion is failing. Instead of sending thousands more of his own citizens to their deaths and inflicting further destruction on Ukraine, he should end this senseless war today.

Mr. De Almeida Filho (Brazil): I thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo for her briefing.

Brazil shares the concerns about the referendums in regions of Ukraine. In the current conditions, that is yet another step that leads to an escalation of the conflict. Far from expressing the will of the people of the Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhya regions, the referendums tend to make the prospect of peace negotiations even more distant.

The Charter of the United Nations and the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights recognize the inalienable right of all peoples to self-determination and to freely decide their political status. That is a fundamental principle of international law, which is the very basis of the legitimacy of States.

Many times before, especially in the context of decolonization, the holding of referendums was the means chosen for peoples to express their free will. Council resolutions established the use of that instrument as a legitimate practice to decide on issues of sovereignty and territorial integrity. Its validity, however, depends on certain conditions. It is unreasonable to assume that populations in areas in conflict are able to freely express their will. International practice recommends that referendums on questions of sovereignty be

conducted in a transparent manner, without restrictions on the freedom of expression and with the possibility of monitoring by independent observers. That does not seem to be the case for the regions of Ukraine I mentioned. Brazil stands by the principles of respecting the territorial integrity and political unity of sovereign and independent States.

We reiterate our call for an immediate ceasefire and the opening of peace negotiations. The Istanbul agreements in July and last week's prisoner exchanges were positive signs that demonstrate the value of diplomacy in reducing the human suffering resulting from the conflict. Those advances, while extremely relevant, are insufficient. It is essential that the parties refrain from adopting measures that result in an escalation of hostilities, including in rhetorical terms. The moment calls for restraint and pragmatism.

We believe that the Security Council is primarily a forum for negotiation and for dialogue. So far, we have collectively failed to find creative solutions to the conflict. Negotiation and dialogue, advocated by most members in their interventions over the past seven months, presupposes a willingness to listen. Perhaps we should ask ourselves how sensitive we are to the concerns of others, especially to the lives of those on the ground, which should come before any political considerations.

Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo for her briefing and President Zelenskyy for his comments to this meeting.

We are monitoring reports of the convening of referendums in the Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhya regions. General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) is explicit in stating that any attempt aimed at the partial or total disruption of the national unity and the territorial integrity of a country is incompatible with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. We therefore call upon all States to refrain from actions aimed at the partial or total disruption of national unity, infringing upon the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine or any other country. We reiterate that, in accordance with Article 2, paragraph 4, of the Charter of the United Nations, any attempt to alter borders by the threat or use of force or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes and principles of the United Nations is in violation of international law.

We support the right to self-determination of peoples as stated in General Assembly resolution 2625 (XXV), which also states, in its annex, that the enjoyment and exercise of that right shall not be construed

“as authorizing or encouraging any action which would dismember or impair, totally or in part, the territorial integrity ... of sovereign and independent States”.

In short, Mexico’s position remains in line with General Assembly resolution 68/262 and, given the gravity of the context in which those so-called referendums have taken place, we reiterate our call for urgent dialogue between the parties, as well as the strengthening of diplomatic channels to promote confidence-building measures and, as my country’s Foreign Minister noted today, open up new areas for mediation that could lead to a cessation of hostilities.

Mr. Zhang Jun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China has noted the latest developments in the situation in Ukraine, and we listened carefully to the views expressed by the parties in that regard. Our position and proposal on how to view and handle the Ukraine issue is consistent and clear, namely, that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries should be respected, the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations should be observed, the legitimate security concerns of all countries should be taken seriously and all efforts towards the peaceful resolution of the crisis should be supported. China has always stood on the side of peace, with a commitment to promoting peace and dialogue, and we will continue to play a constructive role.

In the just-concluded General Assembly general debate, many leaders expressed their concerns about the prolongation and expansion of the crisis in Ukraine and its spillover effects and called for dialogue and negotiation to end the hostilities and manage the negative impacts caused by the spillover of the crisis.

The recent developments once again remind us that peace is the quest of all. Bloc confrontation, political isolation, sanctions and putting pressure will lead only to a dead end. The task at hand is to push the parties to open the door for a political settlement as soon as possible, include the respective legitimate concerns in the negotiations and put all viable options on the table. The signing of the Black Sea Grain Initiative showed that, even in conflict situations, diplomacy can produce results and bring hope.

We need to uphold the international order based on international law and adhere to the basic norms of international relations based on the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, which should not be mere political slogans. As the core of the collective security mechanism, the Security Council should make full use of the mediation tools under the Charter and adhere to the right direction of a ceasefire and peace talks. In particular, it should take constructive and responsible actions to build the conditions and open up space for a political solution. China will work with all peace-loving countries to continue to make tireless efforts to de-escalate the situation and resolve the crisis.

Mr. Kimani (Kenya): I thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo for her briefing on the dire situation in Ukraine.

We again send our heartfelt condolences to all Ukrainians who are suffering the physical, psychological and economic ravages of war.

We are very concerned by the reports of the referendums being held in Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhya and their impact on Ukraine’s status as a Member of the United Nations and on international peace and security.

The Secretary-General clearly stated:

“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 of international law.” (*S/PV.9135, p.2*)

That is the fundamental truth that should be heeded by the Russian Federation and all Members of the United Nations.

The referendums will undermine the prospects of a longer-term negotiated peace settlement. By attempting to create a fait accompli, they will encourage those who increasingly put their faith in the strengthening of armed alliances in preparation for war.

As if that were not sufficiently alarming, we have heard serious threats being made of the use of weapons of mass destruction. To pull back from the brink of disaster, Kenya calls for an immediate cessation of hostilities and a stop to all attempts to unilaterally alter internationally recognized borders. Our frequent briefings, debates and consultations on the situation in Ukraine are taking place as the economic and conflict situations in different parts of the world worsen.

Unfortunately, the most powerful actors are focusing far more on the conflict in Europe than on any other crisis. There appears to be little appetite and, because of this war, even less unity to deliver the reforms and policies that we all know are needed.

Bold action is required to halt the extreme food insecurity, and even starvation, in the world. The World Food Programme (WFP) has calculated that in East Africa, as an example, fertilizer prices have more than doubled in the past year, in particular since the invasion of Ukraine. Fuel prices have also risen sharply. The WFP calculates that the result will be a year-on-year decline of 16 per cent in cereal production, representing 7.2 million metric tons. In an already food insecure region, the impact will be to increase the number of hungry people by almost 7 million. That situation is reflected in other regions.

It is a matter of life and death for all actors to respond to the global food insecurity crisis. The Black Sea Grain Initiative and the agreement to ensure unimpeded exports of Russian food and fertilizer to world markets were a promising start.

It is imperative that all institutions that are enforcing compliance with sanctions ensure that all unintended blockages are removed. There are sufficient reports of negative secondary effects on banking, insurance, transport and other critical enabling mechanisms.

We also urge major grain and fertilizer producers to avoid stockpiling and breaking delivery contracts. Ongoing plans to create emergency mechanisms in that regard may be to the serious detriment of global food security.

We urge that any efforts to design and deploy emergency food- and energy-security mechanisms be accompanied by planning for transformed food systems in the most food-insecure regions. A major part of that would be making the necessary investments in sharply increasing agricultural productivity, particularly in Africa.

Doing that is key to preventing cycles of humanitarian crises and the declining donor-funded responses to the worst of them. It will also allow investing in climate-change-resilient food systems at a time when catastrophic effects are being experienced in multiple regions. Finally, greater production, increased storage and sufficient transport infrastructure will lead to low food prices and therefore greater political stability.

The multilateral system cannot continue as it is today. The major Powers are so bent on protecting and projecting their interests and security concerns that they seem unable to act in the broader interests of our United Nations.

Today the inarguable truth is that the protections afforded by membership of the Organization are insufficient. Rather than the Charter granting us equality, we are governed by the destructive logic encapsulated by the saying,

“The question of justice only enters where there is equal power to enforce it, and that the powerful exact what they can, and the weak suffer what they must.”

It is time that we sought real changes in global institutions, including the Security Council. It is time for real inclusion and real fairness. We can start with procedural rules in the Council and eventually make changes to the Charter. Reforms should not be limited to allowing only for other major Powers to have a seat at the table. It is clear from the historical record that the voice and presence of developing countries with no major military interests to protect regionally or globally need to be strengthened significantly. A multilateralism founded on the principle of the powerful exacting what they can while the weak suffer what they must is a poor protection against the scourge of war, as we are all witnessing today.

Kenya once more reaffirms its recognition of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

Mr. Abushahab (United Arab Emirates): I would like to begin by thanking Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo for her updates.

Having just concluded this year's high-level week of the General Assembly, a resounding message that we heard from many world leaders remains at the forefront of our minds: the world wants peace in Ukraine. It seems, however, that we are moving further away from this common objective of peace and stability. The referendums that are now under way further complicate efforts for a peaceful resolution to this conflict. In order to be credible and sustainable, any processes that aim to bring us closer to peace must be inclusive, and any actions that undermine the prospects for constructive dialogue must be avoided by all parties.

We re-emphasize the need to respect the principles of territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence, which are at the core of the United Nations Charter and central to constructive relations between States. These principles protect all States equally, whether large or small, and collectively we must not allow them to erode. In pursuit of peace, the Security Council has an essential role to play in preserving these principles, prioritizing the peaceful settlement of disputes and maintaining international peace and security. We recall in this regard the January 2022 joint statement of the permanent members of the Council, affirming that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.

Over the past few months, we have seen incremental movement between the parties that has led to tangible, positive outcomes on concrete issues. We commend the United Nations and others that have facilitated constructive engagement in this regard. Most recently, the fruits of these efforts have included prisoner exchanges conducted with the assistance of Türkiye and Saudi Arabia and agreements related to the export of grains and fertilizer, which have helped to alleviate pressure on global food supplies and prices.

There is further potential to build on these agreements. Moreover, the direct engagement that brought them to fruition can help defuse tensions and open a pathway for conflict resolution. To this end, the parties must be supported in moving towards dialogue and away from further escalation. We once again underline the necessity of all parties abiding by their obligations under international law and international humanitarian law.

The war has been carried on for over seven months with no signs of abating. During this time, nearly 14.5 million people were forced to flee their homes, with more than 7 million of them now displaced across Europe. Humanitarian costs have been immense, with more than 17 million people in need of humanitarian assistance.

It is long past time for this conflict to come to an end. For that to happen, we continue to emphasize the importance of an immediate cessation of hostilities throughout Ukraine. Additionally, it is essential to build on and amplify positive developments between the parties, so that we can begin to pull back from this dangerous point of heightened global tensions. What we need now is to secure a peace that is sustainable

and in accordance with the United Nations Charter and international law.

Ms. Juul (Norway): We thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo for her briefing.

In recent days, we have all seen images of armed Russian soldiers going door to door in occupied parts of Ukraine to collect votes for a so-called referendum on joining Russia. This is a phony pretext from the aggressor, Russia, to try to annex more parts of Ukraine.

Let me be clear: Ukraine has not authorized these referendums, and Norway rejects these Russian fabrications in occupied regions of Ukraine. Whatever outcome Russia announces, they remain contrary to international law, have no legal effect and would in no way change Ukraine's sovereignty within its internationally recognized borders.

We are also clear that no territorial acquisition resulting from the use of force shall be recognized as lawful and that no Russian claim to annex territory can take away Ukraine's right to defend its own land. All States, including Russia, have an obligation under Article 2 of the Charter of the United Nations to refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State and to settle their international disputes by peaceful means.

Russia's announcement of the mobilization of reserve forces is another issue of grave concern. It is a dangerous escalation that will lead to increased suffering for people in all parts of Ukraine.

Unspeakable horrors were revealed in Bucha, Izyum and other places occupied by Russian forces. The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine concluded, in the update given last Friday, that war crimes have been committed in Ukraine by Russia. The use of explosive weapons in populated areas — not distinguishing between civilians and combatants or adults or children — has been a source of immense harm and suffering. The Commission also found accounts of ill treatment and torture carried out during unlawful confinement and that Russian soldiers have committed sexual and gender-based violence. The age of victims ranged from 4 to 82 years. The Commission has documented cases in which children have been raped, tortured and unlawfully confined. Norway condemns these acts in the strongest terms and calls for accountability for the perpetrators.

This war has had abhorrent impacts on the people of Ukraine and is now being felt across the globe. We must work urgently to bring it to an end.

Norway expresses its full support for the Secretary-General's good offices, and, when the time comes, we will stand firmly with United Nations efforts to build and sustain peace.

The Ukrainian people are paying with their lives to defend universal values and their own independence. Ukraine can count on Norway's continued support.

Russia must stop the war and fully, immediately and unconditionally withdraw its forces and military equipment from all territory of Ukraine. And, again, Norway will never recognize these so-called referendums, and we stand by Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Ms. Koumbi Missambo (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I welcome the participation of President Zelenskyy in this meeting. I thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo for her briefing.

We are concerned about the many indicators that the war in Ukraine is escalating. During the general debate in the General Assembly, we heard most world leaders emphatically call for negotiations to find a lasting solution to the situation in Ukraine. We will continue to call for de-escalation. The parties must refrain from any action that might add fuel to the fire and prioritize issues that can ensure peaceful coexistence.

The Charter of the United Nations, which is the cement of our coexistence, must be the compass of all parties as we respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of each member of the international community.

We call on the parties to do their utmost to resume negotiations unconditionally in order to put an end to the war. The humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate, and the shockwave of the war continues to widen, causing ever-more death and desolation.

My country urges the parties to cease all outrageous rhetoric likely to aggravate the belligerence and to stir up the use of weapons of mass destruction.

In conclusion, we call once again on the parties to silence their weapons and to seize every opportunity to seek peace. We support the various initiatives, both bilateral and multilateral, aimed at a constructive dialogue and a lasting peace between the parties.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Referendums on accession to the Russian Federation were held in the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics, as well as in the Kherson and Zaporizhzhya regions. The official results will be announced over the next few days. This is a long-awaited event for the people of Donbas. It should bring peace to their lands, which they have not seen for eight years, during which time the people have lived in constant fear for their lives. Throughout those years, bombardments of the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics killed about 10 people a week, including children. As for the residents of the Kherson and Zaporizhzhya regions, they will finally be able to rest assured that no one will take away their right to speak Russian and have their children educated in the Russian language. They will also know that on Victory Day, which is a sacred holiday to us all, they will be able to pay tribute to those who fought against Nazis to liberate their lands rather than those who collaborated with them and committed heinous crimes.

From 2014 onwards, Kyiv deliberately adopted a course towards physical extermination of the unwanted people of the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics — who are, by the way, Ukrainian citizens — with the backing of the European Union and the United States. They did not lift a finger to force the Kyiv authorities to uphold the Minsk agreements, which guaranteed the safety of the people of those republics and a dignified future within Ukraine. Let me recall that the Minsk agreements provided for a ceasefire and direct dialogue between Kyiv and Donbas, granting a special status to Donbas through the adoption of a new constitution.

The authorities in Kyiv cynically flouted all those agreements and violated resolution 2202 (2015). Western delegations not only failed to condemn it, but even secretly and clearly supported that. Had it not been for that criminal connivance and hypocrisy, had the West forced its subordinates in Kyiv to uphold the basic human rights of respect for its people and their right to life, there would have been no need for our special military operation.

Ukrainian authorities openly proclaimed that the Russian and Russian-speaking residents of those territories were “non-humans” and “species”. In an interview in August 2021, Volodymyr Zelenskyy advised all those who considered themselves Russian or loved the Russian language to leave Ukraine for

Russia for their own sake and for the sake of their children. Now the people living in the Donbas, Kherson and Zaporizhzhya regions are carrying out his cynical recommendation. They are returning back home and taking back the lands where their ancestors lived for centuries.

What also played a role is the fact that we were able to save the people of Crimea, who chose to return to Russia in 2014, from the tragic Donbas scenario. Back then, we heard similar accusations of aggression and annexation. Over these eight years, life in Crimea has changed for the better. People no longer fear for their lives. The economy is thriving, and infrastructure is developing. For all those years, we have been investing in the development of that region, as we will do with Donbas and other territories that Kyiv is deliberately trying to ruin.

I know that our former Western partners will not listen to us, or rather they will pretend to have not heard us. But I will say that the referendums were held under exceptionally transparent conditions, with all electoral norms being fully observed. That is a firm fact, whatever the Kyiv regime and its Western sponsors say to the contrary. More than 100 independent international observers from 40 States monitored the vote. They have actively shared their feedback on media and social networks. They say that they were surprised to see how enthusiastic the people in the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics and the Kherson and Zaporizhzhya regions were about the referendums and how long they had waited for them.

Unfortunately, neither those assessments, nor interviews with residents of those regions, are aired in Western media coverage. Western States said from the very beginning that they would not recognize the results of those referendums, and they threw their entire weight behind the propaganda machinery to besmirch those votes. We are not surprised by the propagandist fake information that people were allegedly forced to vote and that they have been tortured for days in order to make them vote in favour of accession to Russia. The Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany, Annalena Baerbock, said that they were being "shot and raped and then made to check the box on the ballot sheet while soldiers with Kalashnikovs stood beside them". It would seem then that they have to vote after they have been shot and raped. Those soldiers who were holding the Kalashnikovs, incidentally, were

protecting the participants of the referendums from likely provocations on the Ukrainian side.

Apart from the propaganda machine, the Ukrainian armed forces employed the full capacity of its own, or rather, the Western military machine, intensifying their artillery bombardment of cities where the referendums were being held in order to sew panic among the people there in a futile attempt to disrupt the voting.

The hysteria of Western delegations, including today in the Security Council, shows that the direct vote of citizens has long ceased to be the criterion of a democratic election. Self-determination is considered a democratic choice only if the West approves of it. In general, the Western model of democracy has been reduced to the liberal minority dictating its will to the conservative majority. This negation of the right to non-liberal and non-Russophobic non-conformity is applicable not only to Ukraine, incidentally, but also to their allies in the Western bloc. As recently as the day before yesterday, Head of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen openly threatened Italy with consequences if Brussels did not like the outcome of the election in that country. Hungary is already on the blacklist.

Speaking about candidates for accession to the European Union, despite the fact that it has historically sympathized with Russia, today Serbia is being forced to adopt an anti-Russian position and to support the sanctions against my country, which would devastate Serbian economy. As a recent example, the United States Ambassador in Belgrade yesterday called on Serbia demanding explanations from the Serbian side regarding the plan for consultations between Russian and Serbian foreign ministries that was signed on the sidelines of the high-level week. What is that if not neocolonial diktat?

When denying the people of Donbas and the liberated territories of Ukraine their right to self-determination, Western delegations are demonstrating egregious double standards. The loudest critics of the referendum in the Donbas, Kherson and Zaporizhzhya regions used to be at the forefront of those supporting Kosovo's independence back in the day. They used to say that the territory of Kosovo had the right to secede from Serbia in case of a real threat that the rights of Kosovar Albanians could be seriously violated. They called it "remedial secession". Let me emphasize that those were not just claims, but the official legal position

presented by Western countries at the International Court of Justice in 2008. At that time, however, Kosovar Albanians had not been threatened by anything for quite some time. Yugoslavia no longer existed and Serbia, which had been bombed by NATO, had foreign contingents stationed as peacekeepers.

I would like to underscore that, unlike Crimea, the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics, Kherson and Zaporizhzhya, Kosovo had no referendum. There was no free expression of the people's will. There only was a declaration of independence adopted by the interim self-governing authorities, which had clearly exceeded their remit. But for the West, it was enough to recognize Kosovo's independence.

They said the international law did not prohibit declaring independence. Today we hear a completely different position from Western delegations. That is another demonstration of their cynical double standards.

I want to tell my colleagues from developing countries to not let themselves be misled. Let it be clear that, although, for show, Western delegations today are lamenting alleged violations of international law and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, in reality they do not care about either of those. They fully support the right to self-determination only when it suits their geopolitical interests, as in the case of Kosovo, as well as for pursuing their own agenda in the Balkans, while preventing nations from pursuing a path of sovereign development. But when self-determination appears to be the only way to save the people of Donbas from genocide, the West says they have no such right.

The Charter of the United Nations stipulates the principle of respect for territorial integrity. However, such respect under international law is not unconditional. As we know, the General Assembly provided collegially and by consensus an interpretation of the principle of territorial integrity in its Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. According to the Declaration, all States should respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of any State whose Government respects the principle of self-determination of peoples and represents all peoples within its territory. Today our Western colleagues prefer to not recall that crucial criterion.

After the 2014 coup d'état; after the ban on the Russian language, education and media; after the

Maidan authorities for years had bombed the area where people refused to recognize the results of the coup d'état; after they burned alive Russian activists in Odessa; after they established a regime in Kyiv that raised Ukrainian nation above all and glorified the Nazi collaborators and their legacy — after all that how dare anyone say that the Kyiv authorities represent the interests of the people of Donbas and the Russian-speaking population at large, whom they subject either to Ukrainization or extermination?

It is clear, however, that States that fully respect all of their resident peoples and historical ethnic groups need not fear for their territorial integrity. Our European neighbours, except the hopelessly Russophobic Baltic States, are well aware of that and never behave like the Kyiv regime does at home. Belgium, Switzerland and Finland are the brightest examples of tolerance for a plurality of cultures and languages. The same can be said of the vast majority of Asian and African States with diverse ethnic compositions. It was only in Ukraine, where Russian-speakers account for at least 40 per cent of the population, where the West was given carte blanche for the forced Ukrainization of those people, contrary to all civilized norms and recommendations of international organizations. So why is the West so surprised that people in Ukraine are now welcoming Russian troops as liberators, no matter how hard the Kyiv regime, which is only sustained by NATO spears, tries to assert the opposite, while threatening to punish the inhabitants of those regions for collaborationism?

By the way, the authorities in Kyiv do not shy away from sometimes using the Russian language for tactical and propaganda purposes. Suffice it to mention that lately, President Zelenskyy has recorded a few video addresses in Russian in an attempt to disrupt the partial mobilization recently announced in Russia and drive a wedge between the authorities and society — following the traditional Maidan playbook. In his address today, President Zelenskyy again claimed that our mobilization efforts were aimed at primarily recruiting non-ethnic Russians, namely, men representing indigenous peoples of the Russian regions. But making such claims will not work in Russia. Western propaganda makers have but a poor understanding of the mentality of the Russian people.

Our people can tell truth from lies. They know what they are fighting for — the way their grandfathers and great-grandfathers fought for centuries every time an external enemy tried to weaken our country. Time after

time, in bloody battles, in different historical periods, we fought in battles to defend our right to freedom — our right to follow our own path. Our people remember their history, and they remember how hard it was earned. But today, like decades and centuries ago, we stand ready to uphold the interests of our homeland and protect the weak. It is in our genes. No Western propaganda or sophisticated political gameplay are going to change that. Everyone understands all too well that the only goal of the West, which we have been facing head-on near our borders, is to weaken and exsanguinate Russia as much as possible, and Western policymakers dream of subjugating Russia to their will.

Kyiv's Western sponsors completely disregard the wishes and interests of Ukraine. The people of Ukraine, just as the people of Russia, want peace. But that does not fit into the plans of London and Washington, who, as usual, are earning billions of dollars on the back of other people's suffering — or Brussels, which plays along with them. Otherwise they would not have stopped Kyiv in March when a peace deal was already visible. Instead, a terrible provocation in Bucha took place, followed by an order given to fight to the last Ukrainian, under the supervision of NATO mercenaries and instructors. The result of that scenario, as we predicted, turned out to be terrible.

The people of Crimea and Donbas, but also those of the Kherson and Zaporizhzhya regions have turned their backs on Kyiv. This process will invariably continue unless Kyiv realizes its mistakes and strategic miscalculations, begins to be guided by the interests of its own people and stops blindly carrying out the will of those who are quite pleased with themselves for having pushed the two brotherly nations against one another. We would like to believe that, among our colleagues in the Security Council and the General Assembly, someone will be able to intelligently explain that simple truth to Kyiv.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of France.

I would like to thank Ms. DiCarlo for her briefing.

We have been calling on Russia to end its war of aggression against Ukraine for seven months. Despite our calls, Russia has opted for escalation and decided to take its violations of the Charter of the United Nations and international law even further. By announcing, on 21 September, a partial mobilization of its people, Russia

has finally admitted the truth: it is waging an illegal war in Ukraine — not a so-called special operation.

In its headlong dash forward, since 23 September Russia has also been organizing sham referendums in the currently occupied territories of Luhansk, Donetsk, Kharkiv and Zaporizhzhya, which are an integral part of Ukrainian territory and not controlled by Russia entirely. As President Macron stated, those so-called referendums are nothing but a farce. They have no legal basis or legitimacy. Let us be very clear: the results of the referendums, which are known in advance, do not represent the expression of the will of the Ukrainian people, who continue to fiercely resist the Russian invader.

The way Russia is operating is well-known — it is taking the same action it did during its illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014. Russia intends to instrumentalize those sham referendums in order to legitimize the annexation of the territories it is illegally occupying. The Secretary-General has recalled that any annexation of a State's territory by another State resulting from the use or threat of use of force is a violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. France will never recognize those illegal annexation attempts by Russia.

It is crucial that every Member of the United Nations unequivocally reject this charade. If we let Russia forcibly alter the internationally recognized borders of Ukraine, we are letting it once again trample on the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity enshrined in the Charter and international law. The fate of the occupied territories in Ukraine concerns us all. How can any country consider itself safe if we let Russia do what it is doing?

The sham referendums are a new lie by Russia to disguise reality. As our Minister Catherine Colonna reminded us last week in this very Chamber (see S/PV.9135), the reality is that Russia is continuing a war of its own provocation, that it maintains and that it aggravates every day.

The reality is that Ukraine is exercising its right to self-defence and is fighting to defend its territory. The reality is that the Ukrainian army's counter-offensive is succeeding thanks to the courage of its people. The reality is that tens of thousands of Russian citizens are currently fleeing their country to escape mobilization and an unjust war.

France will continue to provide Ukraine with the support it needs for as long as is necessary in order to ensure respect for its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. We stand by Ukraine and its people.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The representative of Albania has asked to make a further statement.

Mr. Hoxha (Albania): I hate to ask for the floor a second time, since it gives the impression that I was not clear enough at first, but in this case I need to. This is not, of course, to prolong today's discussion, in which everything was made clear, but to set the record straight.

The Russian delegation once again made a parallel with the Republic of Kosovo — an independent country that has been recognized by half of the United Nations, including half of the members of the Security Council. Such a parallel is wrong, inaccurate and regrettable. I already reacted to similar remarks on the matter in June (see S/PV.9069), therefore I will be very brief.

Nothing could be more difficult and forced than comparing an international effort to end a conflict, protect civilians and establish a peace process to find a lasting solution — which was the case in Kosovo — with a pure and unprovoked act of aggression and the sham referendums engineered in Moscow that are currently

being carried out in Ukraine. No one is, can be or will be fooled by that comparison.

No attempts to compare the incomparable or easy shortcuts out of a historic political context will help Russia divert attention from its war of choice in Ukraine or hide its blatant breach of international law, which has made it an international pariah.

Kosovo and Serbia are today bound by a dialogue to solve their problems. They meet; they do not fight. Above all, the issue here is not Kosovo or any other part of the world, but Russia's aggression, Russia's crimes and Russia's grabbing of territory to the detriment of its neighbour. We will not be misled.

The President (*spoke in French*): The representative of the Russian Federation has asked to make a further statement.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I will be very brief.

I would simply like to draw members' attention to the fact that what we have just heard from the representative of Albania confirms the double standards that I referred to with regard to Kosovo. I gave an example as to how our Western colleagues dealt with Kosovo and are now calling on us to take a completely different approach with respect to the referendums taking place in the territory that we are discussing.

The meeting rose at 4.45 p.m.