



# Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

**9464**<sup>th</sup> meeting

Tuesday, 31 October 2023, 10.15 a.m.

New York

*Provisional*

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<i>President:</i>	Mr. Moretti . . . . .	(Brazil)
<i>Members:</i>	Albania . . . . .	Mr. Hoxha
	China . . . . .	Mr. Geng Shuang
	Ecuador . . . . .	Mr. Pérez Loose
	France . . . . .	Mr. De Rivière
	Gabon . . . . .	Mr. Nanga
	Ghana . . . . .	Mrs. Hackman
	Japan . . . . .	Mr. Ishikane
	Malta . . . . .	Ms. Gatt
	Mozambique . . . . .	Mr. Irachande Gouveia
	Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Nebenzia
	Switzerland . . . . .	Mrs. Baeriswyl
	United Arab Emirates . . . . .	Ms. Shaheen
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
	United States of America . . . . .	Mr. Wood

## Agenda

Maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **Maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine**

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

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Ramesh Rajasingham, Director for Coordination, Coordination Division, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I also invite His Excellency Mr. Olof Skoog, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

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

I give the floor to Mr. Rajasingham.

**Mr. Rajasingham:** I want to thank the Security Council for this further opportunity to update it on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine.

While much international attention is rightly concentrated on the grave events in the Middle East, it is important that we do not lose focus on other crises, particularly one as brutal and far-reaching as that precipitated by the war in Ukraine. Indeed, this is more so as the conflict continues to inflict unimaginable levels of suffering. Countrywide, air strikes, artillery fire and ground fighting continue on a daily basis. People's lives are dominated by the constant sound of air raid sirens, as unrelenting air strikes rain down and destroy civilian objects — one day a post office terminal, another day a small café, yet another day a grocery shop. Near front lines, people's daily routines now include picking their way around land contaminated by landmines.

The dozens of people killed in the horrific attack on the village of Hroza in the Kharkiv region, which we discussed at the start of this month (see S/PV.9431), joined the thousands of others killed in strikes on homes, schools, fields and markets across Ukraine in the course of this war.

At the latest count, more than 9,900 civilians have been killed since the start of the invasion. To put that figure into perspective, that is equivalent to almost 16 civilians killed every day. As those are only the figures that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has formally verified to date, the actual toll is certainly higher. The devastating toll of those relentless attacks on civilians and civilian objects does not end there. Significant damage to, and destruction of, critical infrastructure continues to severely affect the civilian population's access to electricity, heating, water and telecommunications. That is a particular concern as winter fast approaches and temperatures start to drop towards -20°C.

Since the start of the invasion, the World Health Organization has also verified more than 1,300 attacks on health care. That is more than 55 per cent of all attacks against health care in the world over the same period. One hundred eleven health care workers and patients have been killed, and many more injured. In the past two months alone, since the beginning of September, 13 health facilities have been affected by attacks. The damage to Ukraine's health infrastructure comes at a time when it is needed more than ever. In some parts of the east and south, services have been decimated, as not even half of hospitals or clinics remain functional.

Humanitarian organizations have not been spared, and the operating environment has become more dangerous as the war in Ukraine continues. The number of humanitarian aid workers killed has more than tripled from 4 in 2022 to 14 so far in 2023. Attacks harming humanitarian assets have also increased, including the destruction of, or damage to, aid storage facilities and relief supplies. Once again, I am compelled to reiterate that under international humanitarian law, parties must take constant care to spare all civilians — including humanitarian personnel — and civilian objects, including homes, schools, hospitals and other essential infrastructure. Indiscriminate attacks are strictly prohibited.

Russian strikes have also continued on port infrastructure on the Black Sea and the Danube River, with consequent impacts on the export of grain and other foodstuffs. Ukraine has nonetheless reported a growing number of vessels entering and departing from its Black Sea ports via a temporary corridor announced in August, following the withdrawal of the Russian Federation from the Black Sea Grain Initiative. As we have said in this Chamber many times before, at a time

of staggering levels of hunger around the world, it is imperative that all sources of food supplies are safely and sustainably connected to global supply chains. The functionalities of Ukraine's ports and the ability of cargo vessels to move through the Black Sea safely and predictably have a direct bearing on global food prices and, by extension, on global food security. Any broader escalation of the situation in the Black Sea could have far-reaching global consequences, and we renew our appeal to the Council to do everything in its power to prevent that from happening.

The scale of humanitarian needs in Ukraine more than a year and a half into this war is vast. Currently some 18 million people — more than 40 percent of the entire Ukrainian population — are in need of some form of humanitarian assistance. Ten million people also remain displaced, either internally or as refugees in other countries. The war is robbing Ukrainian children of education, of the stability and safety they need during the critical developmental period of their lives and of their hopes for the future. The mental wounds of the war will undoubtedly affect children well into adulthood.

The war's gender dimensions are alarming. The crisis has further exacerbated existing gender inequalities and discrimination, with women and girls, particularly those with disabilities, older women and adolescent girls, facing heightened risks of gender-based violence and limited access to services. It is vital that resources be made available to address those gendered impacts, including for local women's organizations, which play a critical role in the equitable provision of life-saving assistance.

The humanitarian community continues to do everything it can to meet humanitarian needs across Ukraine. Despite the risks, more than 500 humanitarian organizations — the majority of which are local organizations — reached 9 million people with life-saving aid in the first nine months of 2023. That was enabled by substantial donor contributions to the 2023 Ukraine humanitarian response plan — more than \$2 billion has been received against requirements of \$3.9 billion for this year. I thank donors for their hugely generous support.

However, as winter approaches and temperatures start to drop below freezing, humanitarian needs will be magnified, and the most vulnerable — the elderly, those with disabilities and the displaced living in

collective centres — will be most at risk. In preparation, the humanitarian community is putting into effect its winter response plan. The plan focuses on providing support to front-line communities, those in hard-to-reach areas and in collective centres. It includes assisting people to carry out essential household repairs, and it includes ensuring district water and heating systems are functional. The aim is to ensure that every civilian has access to somewhere both safe and warm during the winter ahead.

One of the most significant challenges to our operations remains the lack of humanitarian access to the parts of the Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk and Zaporizhzhya oblasts that are under the temporary military control of the Russian Federation. We are extremely concerned about the plight of civilians in those territories, whom we are unable to reach at any adequate scale. The consequences of not delivering assistance to the estimated 4 million people in need in those areas are dire, particularly with the winter months soon upon us. Again — as has been stated before — under international humanitarian law, all parties must allow and facilitate the rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief for civilians in need and must ensure that personnel have the freedom of movement required for their work.

It is vital that we be able to alleviate the human suffering caused by this war, regardless of where in Ukraine it is caused. As long as this war continues to be waged, civilians across Ukraine will suffer the horrendous humanitarian consequences, and the humanitarian community will continue to do everything it can to assist the people of Ukraine in their hour of need. However, what the people of Ukraine need more than anything else is for this devastating war — with its unceasing death, destruction and suffering — to be brought to an end.

**The President:** I thank Mr. Rajasingham for his briefing.

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

**Mr. Pérez Loose** (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the Director of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Ramesh Rajasingham, for his informative briefing and, above all, for the always valuable work done by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in facilitating and coordinating

humanitarian responses around the world, be it in Ukraine, South Sudan, Haiti or Gaza.

My delegation will consistently continue to acknowledge that self-sacrificing effort and the efforts of all humanitarian personnel and the impact that conflicts have on them. The context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine is no exception in that regard. That is why we insist on the need for the parties to fully respect their obligations under international humanitarian law, including the principles of humanity, distinction, proportionality and precaution.

We are very concerned about the seriousness of the human rights violations and abuses reflected in the report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, which was established by mandate of the Human Rights Council. Such violence cannot be tolerated in any region of the world. In the face of such violence, accountability will continue to be a necessary mechanism for reparation and prevention, regardless of where the violations and abuses occur. We call on the parties to protect humanitarian workers. In particular, we call on the Russian Federation to facilitate safe humanitarian access in the areas under its temporary occupation, even more so as winter approaches and the population suffers from lack of access to basic services, including water, sanitation and health services.

The impact of Russian Federation's invasion continues to cause a deterioration in agriculture and livelihoods in Ukraine, with tens of billions in losses for households and the destruction of machinery and equipment, storage facilities, crops, inputs and agricultural land. We recall the existing prohibition against attacking, destroying, removing or rendering unusable goods that are essential for the survival of the civilian population, including agricultural goods and crops. In that context, we very much regret that in the last quarter the Black Sea Grain Initiative, described by Secretary-General António Guterres as a beacon of hope, was not continued. The Initiative was central to also alleviating food insecurity in several regions of the world. The Council cannot accept the extinguishing of that light, or the attacks on ports and grain storage and logistics infrastructure by the Russian Federation.

We also reiterate our call to the parties to refrain from using explosives in populated areas, due to their disastrous humanitarian consequences, which indiscriminately affect the civilian population.

We are particularly concerned about the situation of children, both of those who fled the war and are displaced and of refugees, as well as of those who experience daily violence, without access to health and education services. We also remain attentive to the situation of the minors who were transferred and call for the safeguarding of their rights and the facilitation of their return. We must also recognize the tireless work of UNICEF for the protection of children around the world. Wars put children in extreme situations, during and after hostilities.

What will the generations of surviving children be like in Ukraine and in the rest of the world? Ecuador agrees with Ms. Catherine Russell, Executive Director of UNICEF, for whom any war is, ultimately, a war against children. In the last 20 years, 120,000 children were killed or maimed in more than 30 conflict situations. How many more children's lives must be stolen in Africa, in Latin America and the Caribbean, in Europe and in the Middle East? The Security Council has more than enough vetoes, but it lacks tools. Let us give ourselves the opportunity to change that dynamic and provide the Secretary-General with the necessary mechanisms to further develop humanitarian and political efforts geared towards a just and lasting peace, based on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

**Mr. De Rivièrè** (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Rajasingham for his intervention.

The toll of the war of aggression launched by Russia against Ukraine continues to rise. Just last Wednesday, as Russia carried out an attack in western Ukraine, in the Khmelnytskyi region, its strikes destroyed dozens of homes, dozens of schools and other civilian infrastructure. As winter approaches, Russia is once again targeting civilian infrastructure. Intentionally directing attacks against civilians not directly participating in hostilities constitutes a war crime. Already, in 2022, Russian troops had launched waves of air attacks, deliberately targeting energy infrastructure. Because of that past destruction, populations are more vulnerable today than last year. Last Friday, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine denounced before the Council those indiscriminate attacks against civilians and critical infrastructure, as well as their consequences for the population.

Nearly 17 million people on Ukrainian territory are in need of humanitarian assistance. Since the start of the Russian aggression, hostilities have killed or injured thousands of civilians, forced millions from their homes, destroyed jobs and livelihoods and left many people struggling. The Russian aggression has already caused at least 23,000 civilian victims, including more than 1,000 children. That figure represents only a fraction of the actual toll, as the verification process has encountered immense difficulties, including the inability to access areas under Russian military control. We urge Russia to comply with international humanitarian law by allowing humanitarian actors access to civilian populations in the territories it occupies.

The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine has also had negative repercussions on the rest of the world, for which Russia bears sole responsibility. Russia's unilateral decision to end the Black Sea Grain Initiative and its deliberate attacks on Ukrainian grain storage and export facilities show that Russia continues to use food as a weapon, bringing about a global crisis in the sector. France remains committed to allowing the export of Ukrainian cereals and agricultural products, with our European partners, through the implementation of solidarity routes, which have enabled the export by river and land of at least 53 million tons of cereals and other food products. We support United Nations efforts to re-establish a secure export corridor in the Black Sea for vulnerable countries.

Russia cannot bet on our weariness. The London conference to be held next month will provide another opportunity to demonstrate that. Faced with this aggression, France will continue to stand alongside Ukraine and provide it with all the humanitarian, economic and military support it needs to exercise its right to self-defence and preserve its freedom.

**Mr. Wood** (United States of America): I thank Director Rajasingham for his briefing and the life-saving efforts of his colleagues in Ukraine.

As winter arrives, Ukraine is preparing for Russia's continued attacks on critical infrastructure. Last winter Ukraine faced near daily targeted attacks by Russia on its energy infrastructure. Those attacks have already resumed, risking critical services and exacerbating the humanitarian crisis. In just one day in September, Russia's forces launched 44 missiles against energy facilities in six different oblasts. The Government of

Ukraine also reported that between 11 and 12 October, Russia launched aerial attacks, including artillery, missiles and uncrewed aerial vehicles, against the Kherson oblast an estimated 100 times — 100 times.

In conjunction with the winter weather, those attacks will further strain the already degraded infrastructure in Ukraine, where from October 2022 to March 2023, many civilians spent roughly 35 days without power. Last June, the United Nations estimated that Ukraine's power generation capacity had been reduced to roughly half the levels it possessed before Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022.

Russia's attacks also continue to destroy Ukraine's grain stores and infrastructure. As of mid-October, Russia's attacks had destroyed nearly 300,000 metric tons of grain since Russia unilaterally terminated its participation in the Black Sea Grain Initiative on 17 July. Humanitarian organizations have noted that attacks against humanitarian aid distribution points have steadily increased in 2023, regularly resulting in the temporary suspensions of aid.

Ukraine's people have shown extraordinary resilience in the face of Russia's unrelenting attacks. In defiance of the Kremlin's brazen efforts to decimate Ukraine's power grid and weaponize winter, Ukraine continues to work to restore nuclear power plants. However, it needs the support of the international community. We call on the international community to continue providing essential humanitarian support to Ukraine, including supporting Ukraine's efforts to restore its energy grid. The United States will continue to lead our Group of Seven plus partners in coordinating that aid to the energy sector.

The United States has provided nearly \$2.8 billion in humanitarian assistance both inside Ukraine and in the region since February 2022. Our assistance will continue to prioritize winterization efforts. However, as Russia's war of aggression rages on, Ukraine's humanitarian needs continue to grow, including a need for additional shelter repairs, insulation, winter clothes and food assistance, protection of the water supply and wastewater systems against freezing, and protection for vulnerable groups, especially near front-line areas.

The United Nations revised winterization plan calls for \$435 million in funding to help keep more than 1.7 million civilians in Ukraine warm, dry and fed during the winter season. We call on the international community to ensure that United Nations funding

appeals are met. As President Biden has said, the commitment of the United States to Ukraine will remain strong. Putin may believe he can outlast Ukraine, but he is wrong. Ukraine will not be subjugated by Russia. The will of Ukraine's people will never be broken.

**Mr. Hoxha** (Albania): I thank Director Rajasingham for the detailed and substantial briefing.

While the world, including the United Nations and the Security Council, has the dramatic events unfolding in the Middle East as its primary focus, we must not forget that Russia's unjustified and unprovoked military aggression against Ukraine has not stopped, that the suffering of civilians and the destruction of civilian infrastructure in Ukraine continue, and that the humanitarian needs for the population there only keep rising. That is why this meeting is important, and I thank France and Ecuador for calling it.

Twenty months of uninterrupted war have caused extreme harm to civilians, leaving millions without access to food, water and other essential supplies. Innocent civilians continue to be cruelly caught in the conflict, with almost 23,000 casualties since the start of the war. Moreover, the signature attack of the Russian war — the deliberate targeting of Ukraine's vital infrastructure — has continued. Residential areas, homes, schools and hospitals are constantly being targeted by missile and drone attacks. The damage inflicted to Ukraine's energy infrastructure alone — and let us remember that it is civilian infrastructure — amounts to \$10 billion.

Russia's brutal invasion has driven millions into poverty and has seriously affected Ukraine's economy. Since the start of the war, people's incomes have plummeted. In 2022, the proportion of the population living in poverty soared from 5.5 per cent to 24.2 per cent, according to the World Bank. The war has pushed 7.1 million people into poverty, undoing 15 years of progress. The World Food Programme estimates that one in three Ukrainian households is food insecure, and the situation is worse in some areas of the east and south. The job market has been decimated following Russia's destruction of infrastructure such as ports and manufacturing plants, but also as a result of the slowdown or cessation of economic activity, including agriculture. Also, 15 per cent of Ukraine's pre-war population has been forcibly displaced, leaving a large void in the national workforce. We all know that war destroys farms, erodes soil and displaces farmers. Huge

parts of the land have been heavily mined as well. That is particularly damaging in a part of the world known as the breadbasket of Europe.

As we all know, the economic effects of the war are not limited to Ukraine only. While one may say with certainty that there is never a good time for a war — even less so for a war of aggression — the timing of Russia's full-scale attack on Ukraine in February 2022 was particularly brutal. Countries around the world were timidly attempting to return to normality after two gruelling years of the pandemic. They were faced with trade disruption, food insecurity, a rise in commodity prices and other negative impacts, which have not stopped.

For as long as this war of choice goes on, there will be further harm, as it drives food insecurity and poverty to perilous levels, leaving lasting scars on the global economy, including Russia's economy. It is precisely under those circumstances that Russia decided to dismantle the Black Sea Grain Initiative, the single positive development in the course of the war, as confirmed by everyone — the United Nations and those benefiting from it.

As clearly explained by Mr. Rajasingham, the humanitarian situation is expected to deteriorate further in the coming months, with the winter and freezing temperatures bringing additional challenges and risks to people already facing harsh conditions. Protecting critical infrastructure facilities and ensuring people's safety therefore become primary tasks. We commend United Nations agencies and other partners in the humanitarian community for the immense work they are doing to assist people in need.

Last Friday, the Chair of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine briefed the Council in an Arria Formula meeting on torture, killings, unlawful confinement and other serious offences committed by Russian troops in the territory of Ukraine. The reports once again show that Russian forces have committed a wide range of violations, many of which amount to war crimes, and the situation may get worse. A few days ago, the Russian Defence Ministry revealed that it has been recruiting prisoners to fight in Ukraine, apparently taking over from the mercenary Wagner Group, which was the first to adopt the practice last year. After the mutiny last June, the Wagner Group was absorbed into the Russian army. Now it seems the Russian army is being Wagnerized,

recruiting criminals and giving them weapons and a uniform to go to fight in Ukraine, which as we know, has proven a meat-grinder experience for many of them. Whoever has committed crimes must be held accountable and face justice, and accountability is an inescapable component of the peace talks, as it makes any peace efforts realistic, human and sustainable.

Despite the challenges of the war imposed on it, Ukraine has firmly cast its economic, cultural and political future with Europe, something that Russia has tried to prevent over years but is now inadvertently speeding up. We support the peace formula proposed by President Zelenskyy. A meeting of 66 countries was held a few days ago in Malta, confirming the growing support for a path to a just peace, as called for in the General Assembly resolution (resolution ES-11/6).

As this war moves into its second full winter, we should acknowledge the unavoidable reality that the outcome in Ukraine will significantly determine whether our world will be governed by laws or by sheer violence. That is why we should be grateful for the extraordinary sacrifices of Ukrainians to defend justice, liberty and law. We reiterate our call for Russia to stop the war, withdraw all its troops from the internationally recognized borders of Ukraine and seriously engage in a genuine and just peace process, because war is not a solution — even less so a war of choice, of convenience and of aggression, such as the war that Russia continues to wage in Ukraine.

**Mrs. Hackman** (Ghana): I thank the Director for Coordination, Coordination Division, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Rajasingham, for his update on the prevailing humanitarian conditions in Ukraine. I also take this opportunity to express my delegation's appreciation for the support provided by United Nations humanitarian agencies and to commend in particular the efforts in providing vital aid to 9 million affected civilians this year.

The Russian Federation's war on Ukraine continues to spawn violations of international law, including international humanitarian law and human rights law. As the Council deliberates once more on the matter, we cannot deny the growing evidence that ending the war now offers the best guarantee against the legacy of death, suffering, destruction and displacement that the conflict is creating. The humanitarian toll of the war continues to rise, with a devastating

impact on the civilian population in Ukraine. Since the commencement of the war in February 2022, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has recorded an estimated number of around 28,000 civilian casualties, with 9,806 killed and 17,962 injured. Those numbers reflect the lives of real human beings and will continue to increase should the war carry on in a protracted manner. In the light of the continuing attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure on the front lines of the conflict, we are compelled to re-emphasize the binding obligations on the parties to armed conflict to respect and adhere to applicable rules of humanitarian law, including the principles of proportionality, distinction and military necessity. Civilians and civilian infrastructure should not be targets of war.

As a result of the extensive damage caused to the energy and heating infrastructure of Ukraine, last winter millions of civilians faced terrible conditions in sub-zero temperatures without heating, water and food. Therefore, as the cold season approaches once again, we highlight the need for early interventions to mitigate the harsh weather conditions, especially for the women, children, sick and elderly who are displaced from their homes. We note that there is already in place a winter response plan targeting 900,000 vulnerable, displaced and war-affected people between September this year and February 2024, and we look forward to further reports on its operationalization.

Allow me also to register my delegation's serious concern with regard to reports of several allegations of sexual and gender-based violence committed against women and girls. We reiterate our call for such violations to be treated and prosecuted like other war crimes. There must be no impunity in Ukraine, and we value a holistic approach to accountability involving a deliberate focus on providing justice and support to victims.

Despite the sobering reality on the ground, we choose to hold firm our belief in a new horizon of peace between the Russian Federation and its neighbour Ukraine. We reiterate the call for the immediate cessation of hostilities and emphasize diplomacy and dialogue as opposed to military contestations for a peaceful, just and comprehensive resolution of the conflict in line with the principles of international law and the values and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations.

**Mr. Irachande Gouveia** (Mozambique): Mozambique thanks Mr. Rajasingham for his update and acknowledges the presence in this meeting of the representative of Ukraine.

According to the *Global Humanitarian Overview 2023*, published by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs:

“[...] grinding conflict, the deadly climate crisis and health epidemics, including cholera and COVID-19, caused record levels of hunger and displacement, worsened poverty, and put equality for women and girls increasingly out of reach. As a result, one out of every 23 people worldwide needs humanitarian relief, more than double the percentage just four years ago.”

As of today, those figures are even higher owing to the ongoing conflict in the Gaza Strip and geopolitical tensions elsewhere. As we heard from Mr. Rajasingham, the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine is expected to worsen in the coming months as the onset of winter brings additional challenges and risks to people already in dire straits. We therefore appeal for concerted actions and efforts from all stakeholders to better address the root causes of the humanitarian crisis. It is our firm conviction that wherever we face humanitarian crisis, including in Ukraine, core humanitarian principles — namely, humanity, impartiality, independence and neutrality — must be scrupulously observed as a humanitarian imperative without any bias. Indeed, the humanitarian imperative is not an option, and Mozambique reaffirms its primacy, as it encompasses legal, ethical and political dimensions, aimed at preventing or alleviating human suffering.

Whatever measures the international community agrees on will not prevent humanitarian demands if they do not include the cessation of hostilities. Accordingly, Mozambique emphasizes, time and again, that conflict-driven humanitarian problems require political solutions. Humanitarian aid can provide temporary relief, but it cannot address the root cause of the problem. A political solution based on a cooperative approach rather than competitiveness is therefore necessary to resolve the underlying issues and prevent relapse. With that in mind, Mozambique reiterates its urgent call to the contending parties to immediately return to direct negotiations conducted in good faith as the only way to find a commonly agreeable, lasting and sustainable peace.

**Ms. Shaheen** (United Arab Emirates): I begin by thanking Mr. Rajasingham, Director for Coordination, Coordination Division, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, for his valuable briefing today.

Our meeting today comes after 18 months of unrelenting war in Ukraine. The war has had tremendous consequences for the civilian population. Eleven million people have been displaced and more than 9,500 people have been killed, 545 of them children. There has been no reprieve from the war. Indeed, hostilities have expanded in recent months. Following the expiration of the Black Sea Grain Initiative in July, conflict has intensified in the Black Sea. Ukraine's ports were also damaged by repeated strikes, which reduces Ukraine's ability to export grain and other food items, keeping prices stubbornly high around the world and affecting the lives of the world's poorest people. The expansion of conflict in the Black Sea poses risks to commerce and the livelihoods of people living around the Black Sea. Fighting has also been heavy and has affected civilian communities near the front lines. In recent weeks, villages in eastern Ukraine have been evacuated. Hundreds of children have had to leave their homes, in addition to the two thirds of children in Ukraine who have already been displaced by the conflict. The war's longevity is only increasing the suffering borne by civilians.

We note with concern that winter will soon begin, and we highlight the need for civilians to have access to electricity and heating. Just last month, attacks hitting Ukraine's energy infrastructure affected the supply of power in nearly one third of Ukraine's oblasts. We underline that civilians and civilian objects must never be the target of an attack, and we stress the need for the parties to armed conflict to refrain from attacking, destroying and rendering useless objects that are indispensable to the survival of civilian populations.

The law is also clear about the imperative to protect civilians and humanitarian and medical workers. We express our condolences to the families and loved ones of the six humanitarian workers who were killed in Ukraine over the past month and reiterate that humanitarian workers must be protected.

Allowing for the war to go on without a just and lasting resolution will only prolong the humanitarian suffering of the Ukrainian people. We have reiterated, many times over, that there is no military solution to the conflict and that only direct negotiations will produce

a sustainable peace between Russia and Ukraine. That remains our position, and we reaffirm our willingness to support any credible efforts to that end. In our region, we are deeply familiar with the cost of allowing such conflicts to fester. As we speak, another bloody chapter of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is being written, with a horrific and disproportionate impact on civilians. It is not nearly enough to have meetings and talk about terrible situations across the world. The Security Council has a duty and a responsibility to bring those conflicts to an end and not just manage them.

**Dame Barbara Woodward** (United Kingdom): I start by thanking Mr. Rajasingham for his briefing today and, through him, his colleagues in the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for their work.

Russia's brutal, illegal and full-scale invasion of Ukraine has shattered lives, families and livelihoods. As we have heard, the humanitarian needs are most acute around the front lines and in the temporarily Russian-controlled territories. Reporting indicates that civilians face significant hardship, with shortages of food, fuel and water. We call on Russia to allow for humanitarians to operate safely in those areas, to deliver aid to people who desperately need it. But no Ukrainian is unaffected. More than 5 million Ukrainians are internally displaced, and more than 17 million need humanitarian assistance. In that regard, I want to echo the concerns expressed by the representative of Ecuador and the Executive Director of UNICEF in terms of the harm that Russia's invasion is doing to Ukrainian children.

Ukrainian organizations and volunteer networks remain the primary humanitarian responders in those parts of Ukraine. Their work is critical, and the United Kingdom commends them for their courage and commitment. And it is vital that the international community, including the United Nations, continue to support them. As we have heard from Mr. Rajasingham and as we have discussed before, Russia's attacks on Ukraine's ports and grain infrastructure destroyed more than 280,000 tons of grain in a month — enough to feed many more than 1 million people for a year. Those attacks are clearly intended to block Ukrainian grain exports, which are crucial to global food security and World Food Programme's work.

Therefore, as winter approaches, I want to underline two points.

First, we repeat our call on Russia to comply fully with its obligations under international humanitarian law, to act in line with their statements in other contexts in recent days, to allow for humanitarians to operate safely and to stop using food as a weapon of war.

Secondly, Russia must end its illegal invasion of Ukraine. That is the only way to protect global food markets and end the suffering of the Ukrainian people.

**Ms. Gatt** (Malta): I thank Mr. Rajasingham for his important briefing and for all the work being carried out on the ground.

Since the beginning of its war of aggression, Russia has been violating the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations, international humanitarian law and international human rights law. With its shelling deliberately targeting civilian populations and civilian infrastructure, the Russian Federation is also inflicting untold suffering on Ukraine and its people. Just last week, Russia shelled a postal terminal in the Kharkiv region, a strictly civilian site, with no evidence of its military use. Six people were killed, and several others were injured. That is but the latest in a series of such attacks. Each time, Ukrainian civilians are losing their lives because of Russia's continued aggression against the country.

The war is also having a multilayered impact on men, women and children. It is affecting people's mental and physical health and livelihoods and compromising their access to education and health care. The onset of winter conditions in Ukraine brings a new dimension to the grave humanitarian crisis. Almost 18 million people — half of Ukraine's population — are in need of humanitarian aid. Sustained and predictable humanitarian assistance will be critical during the cold season. Malta will continue to support the Ukrainian people by providing humanitarian aid and assistance as long as necessary.

On 19 October, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine shared new evidence showing that Russian authorities may have committed war crimes. These include wilful killing, torture, rape, other forms of sexual violence and the deportation of children to the Russian Federation. Malta condemns such deplorable acts against civilians. Those actions are prohibited under international law and may amount to war crimes. International humanitarian law must always be respected. Malta remains firmly

committed to ensuring that the perpetrators are held fully accountable for their crimes.

In conclusion, last week's Ukraine peace formula meeting, which was held in Malta, is a clear example of the international community's desire to reach a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine, in line with the Charter of the United Nations. It is clear that that can be achieved only if Russia withdraws completely and unconditionally all its forces and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine, within its internationally recognized borders.

**Mr. Geng Shuang** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Director Rajasingham for his briefing.

The Ukraine crisis continues to drag on, with millions of people displaced and a worrisome humanitarian situation on the ground. There are no winners in any war or conflict. They only bring suffering to innocent people. The escalation of the war has already resulted in the destruction of critical civilian infrastructure and shortages of water, electricity, heating fuel and other supplies in many areas of the conflict. As another winter approaches, the local population will inevitably face the hardships of the war and the cold. We are deeply saddened by and concerned about this. China calls once again on the parties to the conflict to comply strictly with international humanitarian law, abide by the principles of necessity, distinction and proportionality, and spare no effort to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure. The international community and humanitarian organizations should step up their efforts to provide humanitarian relief to the people affected by the crisis, assist in the repair of civilian infrastructure and help those affected during these challenging times.

The crisis in Ukraine has affected global food, energy and financial security, slowed down the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and affected the recovery of the world economy and global development, with developing countries bearing the brunt of those effects. We call on the countries concerned to lift unilateral sanctions and long-arm jurisdiction measures, maintain the security and stability of the global industrial and supply chain, minimize the negative spillover effects of the crisis in Ukraine and reduce the negative impact of the crisis on ordinary people in various countries.

China has always called for a ceasefire as soon as possible on the question of Ukraine, has always been committed to promoting peace talks and has always

hoped for an early political settlement of the crisis. We urge the parties concerned to respond positively to the international community's call for peace, strengthen their engagement, build consensus and gradually create conditions for the resumption of peace talks as soon as possible. Countries with important influence over the situation should play a constructive role and refrain from exacerbating confrontation, intensifying the conflict and prolonging the fighting, in addition to creating conditions that are conducive to achieving peace. China will continue to stand on the side of peace and dialogue, maintain contact and communication with all the parties concerned and work for a political settlement of the Ukraine crisis and the restoration of peace and stability in Europe.

**Mr. Nanga** (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Mr. Ramesh Rajasingham, Director for Coordination of the Coordination Division of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), for his briefing. I welcome the participation of the Permanent Representative of Ukraine in this meeting.

The war in Ukraine is about to enter its second winter. The needs of people already living in precarious conditions owing to the continued fighting will definitely increase, especially in the east and the south of the country, where the fighting is intensifying. We hope that OCHA's winter response plan will provide multifaceted aid to the people in need during this cold season, while underscoring the large scale of needs that has grown since the start of the year, with millions of elderly people, women and children with no access to the main international aid mechanisms and left in distress.

On another note, statistics have shown that grain imports from Ukraine have decreased by half as compared to the same period last year, as a direct consequence of the suspension of the Black Sea Grain Initiative.

Given the current stalemate in the conflict, we remind the parties to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law, including to protect non-combatants and civilian infrastructure and to allow unhindered access of humanitarian aid, without discrimination, to the areas and populations in need. We also call on the parties to the conflict not to resort to the use of weapons of mass destruction with indiscriminate effects, such as mines, cluster munitions or other guided weapons. Attacks have also continued to target

energy and agricultural facilities, civilian homes and non-military buildings, in violation of international humanitarian law and human rights law.

Since the destruction of the Kakhovka dam, the people living in the dam's surrounding areas have been facing a particularly alarming humanitarian situation, having lost not only their homes and means of production and subsistence, but also their water supply. Such continued attacks on essential infrastructure are unacceptable. The United Nations Environment Programme's *Rapid Environmental Assessment of Kakhovka Dam Breach* has confirmed the initial indications that that act of sabotage has catastrophic environmental effects beyond Ukraine's borders, the exact scale of which will certainly not be known for many years. The report cites the risks posed by the release of chemical pollutants, including machine oil and liquid fertilizers.

My country once again calls for dialogue and welcomes the peace formula summit that was held on 28 and 29 October in Malta. We encourage all initiatives aimed at finding a solution to end the conflict. We reiterate our call to countries with influence over the parties to the conflict to activate the channels of diplomacy and engage in good-faith negotiations in order to give peace and peaceful coexistence a chance.

**Mrs. Baeriswyl** (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Director Rajasingham for his briefing and especially for the work that the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is doing in Ukraine and elsewhere in the world.

While our attention is now monopolized towards another terrible conflict, the military aggression against Ukraine continues unabated. Millions of people have been affected by death, injuries and destruction. Half of the people who remain in Ukraine need help, and we must not forget about them. During the summit on the key principles of peace for Ukraine held last week, Switzerland reaffirmed its commitment to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace. We will continue our efforts to contribute to the recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine. However, immediate action must be taken in order to protect civilians. As the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Ukraine said, "the only way to change this is for the war to stop". We once again call on Russia to cease all combat operations and withdraw its troops.

The most recent report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine documents attacks on residential buildings, shops, a railway station and a warehouse for civilian use, among others. It concludes that the Russian armed forces have committed indiscriminate attacks and failed to take the necessary precautions to verify that the objects affected were not civilian. We underline the Commission's recommendation for Russia to cease all acts of violence committed against civilians. We also underline the call to take all feasible precautions to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure, including energy-related infrastructure, much of which was damaged during last winter's massive attacks. The rules of international humanitarian law, including the fundamental principles relating to the conduct of hostilities — distinction, proportionality and precaution — must be complied with. International humanitarian law applies to all armed conflicts, regardless of their location.

As winter approaches, the grave humanitarian crisis in Ukraine is taking on a new dimension. We are particularly concerned about the effect of the freezing temperatures on vulnerable groups, including the elderly and the sick. Thanks to the tireless work of local, national and international humanitarian organizations, more than 9 million people affected by the war have received aid since the beginning of the year. Rapid and unimpeded access for humanitarian aid must be guaranteed so that those organizations can support all those in need, including in the regions under Russian occupation. Switzerland will continue to support humanitarian actors by making financial contributions, sending relief supplies and sending humanitarian experts to the region. Given the growing insecurity, I reiterate that international humanitarian law provides specific protections for humanitarian activities. It is therefore appalling that six humanitarian workers were killed in Ukraine in the month of September alone.

I want to conclude my remarks by recalling the grave regional and international implications of this military aggression, in particular with regard to global food security. Ensuring the safety of shipping across the Black Sea remains crucial. Switzerland welcomes the ongoing efforts of the United Nations to facilitate food and fertilizer exports from Ukraine and Russia to world markets. Achieving rapid and substantial progress on that front is critical for reducing the pressure on the most vulnerable around the world.

**Mr. Ishikane** (Japan): I thank Mr. Rajasingham for his sobering briefing. I echo his concerns that Russia's actions in Ukraine have precipitated a severe humanitarian crisis. Japan is deeply alarmed that, as of September 2023, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights reported 27,449 civilian casualties, with 9,701 fatalities and 17,748 injuries. Actual numbers, however, may well be significantly higher. We are also concerned that, currently, 5.1 million Ukrainians are displaced, and more than 116,000 face the rigours of winter in displacement camps.

Furthermore, approximately 1.4 million homes, especially in front-line communities, are damaged or ruined. Vital infrastructure, including energy, health-care and education facilities, is under persistent threat. Shockingly, only 30 per cent of Ukraine's 3 million school-aged children are able to attend regular schools. Front-line areas face precarious access to health care. Significant cultural heritage sites, like the Transfiguration Cathedral in Odesa, show the damage caused by Russia's assaults.

As we all heard on Friday (see S/PV.9457), the report from the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine discusses evidence of war crimes committed by Russian authorities, including torture, wilful killings, rape and other sexual violence, as well as the deportation of children. In 2023, over 100 security incidents, including attacks impacting distribution points and the tragic deaths of six aid workers, have been documented. And in the south, the discontinuation of the Black Sea Grain Initiative in July led to attacks by Russia on port and grain infrastructure, hampering agricultural exports, the safety of navigation and, thus, the global supply of commodities, especially food.

Russia's obligations are clear — to immediately halt indiscriminate attacks on civilians and infrastructure, which violate international humanitarian and human rights law; to be held accountable for war crimes, gender-based violence and other serious violations of international law, including against children; to respect the cultural heritage of the Ukrainian people; to promptly ensure unimpeded and sustained humanitarian access; and to maintain navigation safety in the Black Sea. In essence, Russia must withdraw immediately and unconditionally from the internationally recognized borders of Ukraine. None of those incidents would have happened in the first place if Russia had not started its illegal aggression against Ukraine.

Japan has announced and has been mobilizing \$7.6 billion in support for Ukraine, including humanitarian and winterization assistance to vulnerable people. Recent aid includes two autotransformers to bolster Kyiv's power infrastructure, benefiting nearly half a million citizens, in time for the onset of winter, which brings additional challenges and risks to people facing harsh conditions.

Looking ahead, Ukraine's medium- and long-term recovery and reconstruction are vital. Japan is committed to supporting a self-sustaining Ukraine. That support will focus on mine action; clearing debris; revitalizing livelihoods, including enhancing fundamental utilities such as electricity and recovery of agricultural production and industrial development; and strengthening democracy and governance. At the same time, Japan remains dedicated to aiding Ukraine's neighbours that shelter Ukrainian refugees, offering humanitarian assistance.

Furthermore, Japan urges all relevant parties, including the United Nations, to safeguard navigation in the Black Sea, thus ensuring a stable global supply of essential commodities, including food.

In conclusion, Japan remains steadfast in its support for Ukraine and its people. Japan reaffirms that we will continue to stand with Ukraine until the day peace returns to its lands.

**Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The fact that the Security Council is holding its second meeting this month on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine comes as a surprise to all those who are following the work of the Council against the backdrop of the worsening Palestinian-Israeli conflict, on which the United States and its allies have not yet requested a single meeting. It seems that at some Security Council meetings the Western members cry out about humanitarian problems, while at others, they carefully downplay those issues for political reasons.

I do not wish to diminish the scale of the tragedy that the people of Ukraine are facing. The issue is multifaceted. It dates back to the West-orchestrated coup in 2014 and is growing worse every day because of the destructive desire of the Kyiv regime to serve Western geopolitical interests in weakening Russia at any cost. The Ukrainian clique, as we all understand very well today, has had more than one opportunity to silence the guns. To do so, first and foremost, they would have had to stop the war against the civilian

population of Donbas, which began nine years ago; reject the glorification of Nazi collaborators who were responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Jews, Roma, Poles, Russians and Ukrainians; and grant the entire population of the country, without exception or discrimination, the rights that people in the vast majority of other countries enjoy by default. That includes countries of the European Union, which Ukraine so desperately seeks to join. In other words, Ukraine should have stopped being anti-Russia and should have returned to normal, civilized and good-neighbourly development.

However, the regime that came to power with Western help in 2014, as a result of an anti-constitutional coup, missed all those opportunities by not asking its citizens whether they wanted to fight a war until the last Ukrainian. What is more, the regime in Kyiv actually boasts about it as it begs for more and more Western military aid. To do this, Kyiv needs high-profile tragedies that can elicit the pity of the Western public. That is why Kyiv and its puppeteers try to pass off Ukrainian air defence missiles that hit civilian objects as Russian strikes, even though that runs counter to facts and video evidence. And if there are no such strikes, then abhorrent human-made tragedies like Bucha, Kramatorsk or Kostiantynivka are deployed. Those who plan and carry out such acts are not worried about being refuted. All they need is to disseminate more lies about Russia in order to acquire more weapons. Western delegations on the Security Council eagerly take up that propaganda by calling meetings once or twice a month to play along with the efforts of the Kyiv regime. Various biased entities created in the West rubber stamp the reports and data needed for that purpose. Those entities responsible for that propaganda and various Russophobic narratives can be found in Kyiv, Washington, London and Brussels. They spread brazen lies, including here in the Council, about indiscriminate attacks, rapes and the abduction of children.

And yet our Western colleagues deliberately keep silent about casualties and destruction on the territory of Donbas and the Azov region. From February 2022 to September 2023, the territory of the Donetsk People's Republic was subjected to more than 25,000 artillery and rocket attacks by the Ukrainian armed forces. Over that period, 4,712 civilians, including 139 children, were killed there, and 5,289 people, including 356 children, were injured. In addition, there were 136 reported cases

of civilians, including 11 children, being blown up by "lepestok" PFM-1 anti-personnel landmines — known as "butterfly mines". Three victims subsequently died. In total, from May 2014 to September 2023, in the Donetsk People's Republic alone, more than 9,000 civilians, including 230 children, were killed and more than 13,000 people, including 825 children, were wounded. Precise data on casualties and destruction in the new Russian regions are still being compiled, as the Ukrainian armed forces shell them almost every day.

Of course, there is no mention of the fact that, from the very beginning of the conflict in Donbas in 2014, the Kyiv military has been carrying out targeted attacks on critical civilian infrastructure, primarily water and heating facilities. Besides, medical and educational institutions have been, and continue to be, destroyed. Over the past 8 years, at least 50,000 civilian infrastructure facilities have been destroyed or damaged in the Donbas republics. Since February 2022, more than 16,000 residential buildings and nearly 3,500 civilian infrastructure facilities have been destroyed or damaged — including about 700 educational facilities, more than 180 medical institutions and 1,100 electricity, water, heat and gas supply facilities. However, none of our Western colleagues has said a single word about any of this in recent years.

Those figures also do not appear in United Nations reports, which contradicts assertions that the Secretariat is impartial. Fearing the wrath of Washington, London or Brussels, the United Nations keeps shamefully silent. Western States want their arms supplies to the corrupt regime in Kyiv to be perceived as perfectly justified, without allowing anything to be able to call it into question. The fact that those weapons are being used to kill civilians or are being sold off to enrich the Ukrainian Government could influence the sentiment among Western voters.

I want to address our Western colleagues. They are tripping over themselves today to decry the destruction in Ukrainian cities and alleged indiscriminate Russian strikes against them. I would like to ask Council members to not to be lazy, to go on the Internet and to read Ukrainian news and watch Ukrainian television. There they will see many reports about the restaurant and club scene in Kyiv, Odesa, Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk and other Ukrainian cities. State Government buildings and other municipal buildings are working normally practically everywhere. Transportation is running, and schools and hospitals are operating with the exception,

of course, of those facilities that have been damaged as a result of Ukrainian air defence, which we have already mentioned today and repeatedly mentioned before. And that is after almost two years of our special military operations which we launched to stop the war of the Kyiv regime against the population of Donbas. Precision strikes target exclusively military objects or infrastructure related to the Kyiv regime's military capabilities, including ammunition depots and the positions of the Ukrainian armed forces that are disguised as shops, hotels, grain storage and so forth.

Now look at pictures from the Gaza Strip, which Israel has been trying to raze to the ground for just three weeks, and Council members will see hospitals and schools utterly destroyed, as the area was burned to the ground, in the spirit of what the United States did to Fallujah or Raqqa. The death toll, which includes many children, is causing the non-Western world and normal people in the West to shudder, but people are still dying. After Council members have compared those two pictures, they should ask themselves, how many times have our Western colleagues condemned the methodical extermination of Palestinian civilians? How many times have they tried to convene a Security Council meeting on that issue? Did they support a single call for a ceasefire? We all know the answer perfectly well, and we also understand perfectly well the true aim of their efforts and the crocodile tears they are trying to shed today. They have no idea how cynical and duplicitous their efforts appear, but people in the Middle East, Africa, Asia and Latin America do fully understand that now.

Our advice to our Western colleagues is that, instead of engaging in that cynical and duplicitous spectacle, they should do at least one good thing for the Ukrainian people, namely, stop the criminal neo-Nazi Zelenskyy regime from sacrificing the entire population of Ukraine on the altar of the vain geopolitical plans of the United States to weaken the Russian Federation. The head of the Kyiv clique is already very close to doing so.

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

I thank Mr. Rajasingham for his comprehensive briefing and welcome the delegation of Ukraine to this meeting.

Attacks in the past few weeks, which included the destruction of a postal centre in Kharkiv on 22 October,

confirm the worst predictions about the consequences of a protracted conflict for the civilian population. After 20 months of fighting, the number of civilian casualties continues to increase, and we are no closer to a solution. We mourn the human lives lost and condemn the continuing destruction of Ukraine's infrastructure, in particular energy and transportation, as well as residential areas.

Brazil shares the concern expressed by other Council members about the hardships that the Ukrainian population will be subjected to in the coming months, aggravating their already dire condition with the expected drop in temperatures in the region. We again strongly condemn attacks against energy and transport infrastructure and residential areas. We remind the parties of their obligations under international law and international humanitarian law.

This is the fourth formal Council meeting on the Ukraine crisis during our presidency. Our position remains unchanged: Brazil defends the cessation of hostilities and the resumption of dialogue between the parties. It is both essential and urgent to reverse the course of the war, in the name of the safety and well-being of civilians on both sides of the front line.

Article 33 of the Charter of the United Nations, dedicated to the peaceful settlement of disputes, provides the means to reach a just, comprehensive and lasting peace. Diplomatic negotiations and strict adherence to international law are the only way to achieve it.

Brazil believes that the international community has an important role to play, exerting its influence with the parties to find a way out of the crisis. We welcome the efforts of other international actors and remain willing to contribute to initiatives towards a peaceful settlement of the crisis, as soon as the parties are ready to engage in negotiations.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

**Mr. Kyslytsya (Ukraine):** I recognize the remainder of the Russian delegation in the permanent seat of the Soviet Union.

We thank Director Rajasingham for his briefing, which highlighted once again the devastating impact of the Russian war of aggression on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine.

Nearly 5 million Ukrainians have been registered as internally displaced persons, placing a heavy burden on host communities. Those living in areas adjacent to the front line suffer from limited access to basic services, food, water and medical care.

The coming frosts immediately remind us of the horrendous pictures of the past winter, marked with unabated terrorist attacks by Russia against energy infrastructure.

We are grateful to the United Nations and donors for programmes to assist the Government of Ukraine in preparation for the winter season.

At the same time, it is a matter of alarm that, according to the intelligence, Russia is stockpiling missiles and drones to resume massive strikes against critical civilian infrastructure as soon as temperatures drop to freezing. Russia is demonstrating no intention of ceasing its terrorist practices against millions of Ukrainian civilians, which makes it imperative to obtain additional air defence systems to safeguard those critical facilities during the winter.

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has also caused an environmental catastrophe. The damage in that area amounts to over €55.6 billion. Each day of the war inflicts around €120 million in damage. To date, more than 2,500 cases of environmental damage caused by Russia's war of aggression have been recorded, and 252 cases of environmental war crimes investigated.

Ukraine remains one of the most heavily mined countries with approximately one-third of the territory posing a danger owing to Russian mines and unexploded ordnance. Approximately 6 million people in Ukraine are at risk owing to the mine threat. Two hundred sixty-one people were killed, including children, and over 500 were injured by landmine blasts. We applaud the sappers who continue to examine vast areas and have already discovered over 707,000 explosive objects.

While most of Ukraine has been under missile threat in October, the Kharkiv region has suffered the most. Council members remember the Russian Ambassador cynically justifying the mass murder of 59 peaceful civilians — that is probably the reason why he ran away — including an eight-year-old child, in the village of Hroza in the Kharkiv region, on 5 October, on the basis of the supposed presence of neo-Nazi accomplices there (see S/PV.9431). That is also clearly reflected in the report published today by the Office of the United

Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. It is a very short report of eight pages. I encourage all Council members to read that United Nations report. Let me quote its conclusions. The Office of the High Commissioner

“has confirmed the identity of all victims and found no indication that any of the people attending the funeral reception at the café in the village were members of the Ukrainian armed forces”.

As the United Nations stated today in connection with making the report public, Russian armed forces either failed to do everything feasible to verify that the target was a military objective or deliberately targeted civilians or civilian objects. In fact, it is worth noting that on page 4 of the report, it states that the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation has “not explicitly” taken responsibility for the attack.

We are grateful to the Office of the High Commissioner for its immediate response and quick investigation of this terrible crime. The very next day, Russia killed another child, along with his grandmother, in Kharkiv, shelling the city centre with Iskander ballistic missiles. Thirty others were wounded. These attempts to play the “Nazi card” look especially obnoxious now as we witness the real antisemitic hysteria in Russia itself. By the way, the very same day that Hamas carried out its horrific terrorist attacks on civilians in Israel, Russia also continued its attempts to kill Ukrainian civilians by shelling the residential area of the city of Chernomorsk, in the Odesa region.

Indeed, for both Hamas and Russian forces, terror has been a means of preference. We also informed the Council of another Russian missile attack hitting a postal terminal near Kharkiv on 21 October. Unfortunately, two days ago, one of the victims of this attack died in hospital, thereby increasing the toll of casualties to 7 people killed and 16 wounded.

Now, Russia continues its attempts to “liberate” Donbas from everything alive. The Ukrainian town of Avdiivka, once home to approximately 30,000 people, is now sustaining relentless armed attacks and being reduced to rubble. In the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, Russia keeps killing, torturing, raping, looting and intimidating people with incredible cruelty.

According to the Ukrainian Human Rights Ombudsman, Russian troops killed the entire Kapkanets family — Andrii and Natalia, along with their children, Nastia and Mykyta — as well as five guests, who had

gathered for a birthday party in Russian-occupied Volnovakha, Donetsk oblast. The brutal massacre occurred because the family refused to surrender their home to Russian-Kadyrov troops.

This is a grim reality of what real life in the occupied territories looks like. And this reality contrasts sharply with idealistic hopes that a ceasefire without liberation of these territories from the Russian occupation could bring relief to the local population. It is crucial for Russia to understand that the international community is keenly aware of all its heinous crimes and atrocities, and that they will not go unpunished.

The human rights situation in Ukraine's temporarily occupied territories demands our unwavering attention and protection. The United Nations voice, in support and condemnation of all war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by an aggressor State, must be louder and stronger than ever. To this end, the annual resolution of the General Assembly on the human rights situation has been expanded to encompass all temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, including the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. The draft resolution was submitted today, and I kindly invite all delegations to join us as co-sponsors and supporters in this vital endeavour.

Alongside the daily shelling, Russian propaganda continues actively promoting hatred and violence against Ukrainians, with the Kremlin regime consistently conditioning Russians to view genocide as normal and acceptable. This is evident through the repeated assertions by the Russian President that Ukraine does not exist, as well as the wide dissemination of such views through Russian State media.

The consequences of this propagation of hatred and incitement to violence have been visible throughout the Ukrainian territories that Russian forces were able to reach. Mariupol, Bucha, Irpin, Izyum and dozens of other cities have been the places of the most heinous crimes, triggered by the long-lasting propaganda aimed at dehumanizing Ukrainians. The deadly nature of Russian propaganda, this time targeting Jewish people, was manifested last weekend in Makhachkala, in Dagestan, and a number of other Russian cities, where antisemitic mobs were literally seeking to carry out pogroms.

Other manifestations, so familiar in Hitler's Third Reich, such as landlords warning that their apartments are not for Jews, have quickly become routine in

Russia. Whom do members think the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has promptly accused of these antisemitic riots? Ukraine, of course, which, according to the delusional spokesperson of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, coordinated and directed the attack of mobsters on the airport in Dagestan. Believe me, if we were able to direct thousands of Russian mobsters, we would certainly direct them against those who kill Ukrainian citizens and send Russian cannon fodder to die on the front lines.

Ukraine wants peace more than anyone else. Peace means restoring respect for the Charter of the United Nations. Peace means the liberation of our people from the horrors of Russia's terror machine. The only way is the full restoration of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, within its internationally recognized borders. This is also the only and most effective solution to guarantee European and global security.

Allow me to express our deep gratitude to the Republic of Malta for its hospitality and organization of the third peace formula meeting of national security and foreign policy advisers with the leaders of partner countries and organizations, which took place on 28 October. The meeting holds significant symbolism, occurring on the seventy-ninth anniversary of the liberation of Ukraine from Nazi occupiers.

During the Second World War, Ukrainians joined forces with various nations in the collective struggle against the forces of evil. This unity provided the necessary strength not only to defeat Nazism and bring the perpetrators of heinous crimes such as the Holocaust and the decimation of nations to justice but also to construct a framework for peace and global security.

The Malta peace formula meeting was mainly focused on five key areas: radiation and nuclear safety; food security; energy security; the release of prisoners and deported persons; and the restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity and the world order. Cross-regional working groups developed plans for each of these key points.

Among the proposals discussed in Malta is a plan for the return of deported Ukrainian children, civilian hostages and prisoners of war. It involves establishing an international monitoring group, gathering information about deported individuals, imposing additional sanctions against Russia and applying international pressure to grant access to Ukrainian prisoners of war.

It was also proposed to create an international coalition of countries to facilitate the return of Ukrainian children deported or forcibly transferred by Russia. We believe that the collaborative efforts and the framework developed through those meetings may serve as a universal solution for peace and justice, extending far beyond Ukraine.

Ending the devastating Russian war of aggression will have a positive impact on resolving conflicts worldwide, sending a powerful message that peace is achievable and international law wins. Ukraine remains committed to working towards a comprehensive, just and lasting peace — not only for its own people, but for the entire world.

**The President:** I now give the floor to Mr. Skoog.

**Mr. Skoog:** I thank Ecuador and France for their initiative in requesting today's meeting.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the potential candidate country Georgia, as well as Andorra, Monaco and San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

I wanted to mention that several EU member countries would have wanted to speak today, as they have previously done, since they are directly affected by the situation concerning the Russian war against Ukraine.

I thank Mr. Rajasingham for his briefing and for the work that the United Nations and many other organizations are doing on the ground.

I wish to make three brief points: first, the importance of upholding international humanitarian law; secondly, the need for winterization efforts, especially in the light of Russia's targeting of critical infrastructure; and thirdly, efforts to address the global consequences of Russia's aggression.

First, all States undertake to respect and ensure respect for international law in all circumstances. Russia's ongoing campaign of systematic air strikes against civilian objects and critical infrastructure in Ukraine must stop. Those cruel, inhumane attacks aim only to increase human suffering and deprive Ukrainians of electricity, heating, food, medical care and water, as well as to destroy Ukraine's grain export

capacities. Such attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure add to the growing evidence of war crimes, as reported by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine. Russia and its leadership must be held fully accountable for waging a war of aggression against Ukraine and other most serious crimes under international law.

We commend the brave efforts undertaken by humanitarian organizations to deliver assistance and condemn all attacks on humanitarian workers and facilities. The United Nations has reported that almost 4 million people living in areas under Russia's current military control remain out of reach of humanitarian assistance. We therefore call on Russia to ensure safe and unimpeded humanitarian access to all areas under its temporary control. Aid cannot be denied to those in need. The EU supports all United Nations efforts to get humanitarian access to areas not controlled by the Government of Ukraine. We regret that no inter-agency humanitarian convoys have been able to cross from Government-controlled areas to non-Government-controlled areas, despite repeated attempts and notifications to the Russian Federation.

Ukraine is today the most heavily mined country in the world. Around 30 per cent of its territory requires survey and clearance. That contamination of landmines and remnants of war left behind by Russia's armed forces not only poses a serious obstacle to relief and aid delivery, but also a serious threat to the lives of civilians, in particular children. We welcome the outcome of the International Donors' Conference on Humanitarian Demining in Ukraine, held in Zagreb in October, which includes support for the efficient governance of mine action.

Secondly, winter is a particularly challenging period for the people of Ukraine. Temperatures will soon be below freezing, and we are deeply concerned that Russia will once again target critical infrastructure across Ukraine. Last year, as we were reminded here today, Russia's attacks on Ukrainian energy infrastructure, including power stations and heating plants, left millions of civilians without access to heat, electricity and water during the harsh winter months. It is disturbing to see that similar attacks have already been reported over the past weeks, such as the one on the Khmelnytskyi nuclear power plant. They must stop.

Russia is responsible for the massive damage caused by its war of aggression. In the face of continued

Russian attacks against Ukraine's civil and critical infrastructure, the EU will intensify our provision of humanitarian and protection of civilians assistance to Ukraine, including equipment such as power generators, power transformers, mobile heating stations and high-voltage and lighting equipment, to help Ukraine and its people face yet another winter at war. We welcome the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs' winter response plan and preparedness efforts by humanitarian organizations.

Thirdly, food exports passing through the Black Sea remain critical to global food security. Russia's unilateral decision to terminate the implementation of the Black Sea Grain Initiative, its deliberate attacks on Ukraine's grain storage and export facilities and its actions to hinder freedom of navigation on the Black Sea show that Russia continues to weaponize food and undermine global food security. It has destroyed almost 300,000 tons of grain and reduced Ukraine's export potential by 40 per cent.

The EU supports all efforts, including those of the United Nations, to facilitate exports of Ukraine's grain and other agricultural products to those countries most in need, notably in Africa and the Middle East. The EU solidarity lanes have become a lifeline for global food security. Between May 2022 and August 2023, they allowed Ukraine to export over 53 million tons of agricultural products. In addition, the EU will continue to deliver on its ambitious response to address global food insecurity. Together with our member States, we are providing €18 billion in grants

to countries and people in need across the world, including humanitarian and food assistance. Our total official development assistance increased last year, even discounting extra support to Ukraine. We praise Ukraine for its unwavering efforts to resume its grain exports via maritime routes, contributing to our joint efforts to combat global food insecurity.

We will continue to provide life-saving support to the people of Ukraine in accordance with the humanitarian principles. We will continue to support Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Russia must immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraw all of its troops and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. Ukraine is exercising its inherent right to defend itself and to regain full control of its territory.

The international community has repeatedly expressed its desire for peace in Ukraine in line with the Charter of the United Nations, the resolutions of the General Assembly and international law. The EU will continue its intensified diplomatic outreach efforts and cooperation with Ukraine and other countries to ensure the widest possible international support for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace and the key principles and objectives of Ukraine's peace formula, with a view to the holding of a global peace summit. In that regard, we welcome the latest meeting of national security advisers in Malta.

*The meeting rose at noon.*