



Security Council

Seventy-ninth year

Provisional

9526th meeting

Wednesday, 10 January 2024, 10 a.m.

New York

<i>President:</i>	Mr. De Rivière	(France)
<i>Members:</i>	Algeria	Mr. Bendjama
	China	Mr. Geng Shuang
	Ecuador	Mr. Montalvo Sosa
	Guyana	Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett
	Japan	Mr. Yamazaki
	Malta	Mrs. Frazier
	Mozambique	Mr. Fernandes
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Hwang
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Sierra Leone	Mr. Kanu
	Slovenia	Mr. Žbogar
	Switzerland	Mrs. Baeriswyl
	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 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine

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

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs; and Ms. Edem Wosornu, Director of Operations and Advocacy, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I also invite Her Excellency Mrs. Hedda Samson, Chargée d'affaires a.i. 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 Ms. DiCarlo.

Ms. DiCarlo: The new year has brought no respite to Ukraine. On the contrary, in recent weeks the country has been suffering some of the worst attacks since the beginning of the illegal war. Over the holiday period, Russian missiles and drones targeted numerous locations across the country, including in the Kyiv, Lviv, Kharkiv, Khmelnytskyi, Dnipropetrovsk, Sumy, Cherkasy, Odesa and Zaporizhzhya regions of Ukraine. In Kherson, apartment buildings and a medical facility, as well as a railway station packed with more than 100 civilians awaiting evacuation, were struck. Similarly, almost daily shelling has been reported across part of the Kharkiv region.

Since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has verified 29,522 civilian casualties — 10,233 people killed, including 575 children, and 19,289 injured, including 1,260 children. Just between 29 December and 2 January, OHCHR recorded 519 civilian casualties — 19 people killed and

423 injured. On 29 December alone, 58 civilians were killed and 158 were injured in country-wide Russian drone and missile strikes. That was the highest number of civilian casualties in a single day in all of 2023.

Meanwhile, on 30 December, in the city of Belgorod in the Russian Federation, at least 25 civilians were reportedly killed, and more than 100 others were injured, in strikes attributed to Ukraine. Cross-border attacks have reportedly continued in recent days, prompting some civilians to evacuate from Belgorod. On Saturday, 7 January, 11 civilians, including five children, were reportedly killed in a missile strike in the town of Pokrovsk in the Donetsk region of Ukraine. Ukrainian authorities attributed the attack to Russian armed forces.

Civilians in front-line communities bear the heaviest burden of the missile, drone and artillery barrages. Sixty-nine per cent of all civilian casualties are recorded in the Donetsk, Kharkiv, Kherson and Zaporizhzhya regions of Ukraine. The impact of the war on children is particularly appalling. Since the start of the war, nearly two thirds of Ukrainian children have been forced to flee their homes, some of them alone, making them even more vulnerable. An estimated 1.5 million children are at risk of post-traumatic stress and other mental health conditions.

In addition to killing, maiming and displacing thousands of people, missile and drone strikes in densely populated urban areas are causing severe damage to civilian infrastructure. Recent Russian attacks damaged or destroyed at least eight schools and 10 health-care facilities, including a maternity hospital. In total, 7,000 schools remain inaccessible to children, restricting their right to education.

My colleague from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs will provide further details on the humanitarian situation in the country, emphasizing the urgent need for a United Nations response to hundreds of thousands of people left without electricity and water supply in frigid weather.

We unequivocally condemn all attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure, wherever they occur and whoever carries them out. Such actions violate international humanitarian law and must cease immediately.

Even as the fighting rages, Ukrainians are working on rebuilding their lives and homes, investing in areas

less exposed to direct hostilities. The United Nations, in coordination with Government partners, continues to support local recovery efforts, including in the energy sector, striving for durable solutions.

As the number of refugees from Ukraine reaches 6.3 million globally, with 5.9 million across Europe, UNHCR surveys indicate that nearly 80 per cent hope to return to Ukraine. However, security concerns and access to basic services, housing and livelihoods remain paramount. Therefore, continued support for refugees in countries hosting them is crucial.

Amid the nearly unrelenting grim news from the war, one recent development stood out as positive. On 3 January, a long-awaited exchange of more than 200 prisoners of war, on each side, took place between Ukraine and the Russian Federation. That was the largest such exchange since February 2022. As the Secretary-General noted, we commend the efforts of both parties and the third-party facilitation by the United Arab Emirates. While acknowledging that positive development, we remain gravely concerned about the situation of the remaining prisoners of war. All parties concerned must uphold international law, particularly international humanitarian law, in their treatment of prisoners of war.

Accountability for all human rights violations remains paramount, requiring adherence to international standards and a survivor-centred approach. In areas of Ukraine under Russian control, impunity for serious human rights violations, including killings, disappearances and torture, fuels a climate of fear. Also in occupied territory, Ukrainian nationals, including children, are under pressure to acquire Russian citizenship after a new law classified them as foreigners in their own country. Without a Russian passport, those Ukrainians face limits in accessing health care, social services and employment. We also remain deeply concerned about the well-being of Ukrainian children taken to the Russian Federation. We emphasize the urgent need for their immediate return to their families in Ukraine.

The situation in and around the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant remains gravely worrisome. Since August 2022, the plant has suffered eight instances of complete loss of off-site power. A team from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) continues to monitor the situation at the plant. However, despite repeated requests to the Russian authorities, IAEA

experts have not been granted access to all parts of the site. At the Rivne, Khmelnytskyi and South Ukraine nuclear power plants and the Chornobyl site, IAEA experts continue to report that nuclear safety and security is being maintained, despite wide-ranging missile attacks nearby. Attacks between 29 December 2023 and 2 January 2024 forced experts at the Khmelnytskyi plant to take shelter three times. The denial of full access to IAEA experts and the danger caused by repeated attacks around nuclear sites are worrisome and should concern us all.

Since the start of the full-scale invasion, the Council has met more than 100 times, in various formats, to discuss the harrowing consequences of the war. We have heard numerous testimonies about the horrors endured by Ukrainian civilians. We have consistently voiced clear warnings about the risks of further escalation and spillover outside Ukraine's borders and even beyond. And yet, here we are, on the brink of the third year of the gravest armed conflict in Europe since the Second World War, with no end in sight. The toll of this senseless war — in death, destruction and destabilization — is already catastrophic. It is terrifying to contemplate where it could lead us. It must stop. Our commitment remains steadfast to support all meaningful endeavours aimed at a just, sustainable and comprehensive peace — in line with the Charter of the United Nations, international law and the resolutions of the General Assembly.

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

I give the floor to Ms. Wosornu.

Ms. Wosornu: Nearly two years after the major escalation of war in Ukraine, there is no let-up in the death, destruction, forced displacement and human suffering. As Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo highlighted, on the contrary, since 29 December 2023, we have witnessed yet another intensification in the conflict, with aerial attacks across Ukraine causing more deaths and injuries and widespread damage and destruction to homes, schools, hospitals and energy and other critical civilian infrastructure.

As Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo also highlighted, almost no region of the country has been spared. The attacks are taking a particularly heavy toll on civilians close to the front line, in the Donetsk, Kharkiv, Kherson and Zaporizhzhya regions, where needs are already dire. But communities in the west of Ukraine

and in the capital, Kyiv, far from those front lines, have also been affected. As previously highlighted, here are a few numbers from our perspective as well: we have recorded the deaths of 125 civilians and injury to more than 550 others across Ukraine. Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo highlighted the confirmed numbers since February 2022: more than 10,200 — including 575 children — have been killed and more than 19,300 have been injured. Among them are nearly a dozen civilians killed in a series of strikes on Pokrovsk district, in Donetsk region, among them five children. In Kharkiv city, wave after wave of attacks have killed over a dozen civilians and damaged an oncology centre, three hospitals, a school and numerous houses. Damage to gas and heating supply facilities has led to power cuts and disruption to heating in parts of the city.

Across the country, attacks and extreme weather left millions of people in a record 1,000 villages and towns without electricity or water since the beginning of this week, as temperatures dropped to -15°C. Amid that turmoil, the people of Ukraine have continued to demonstrate extraordinary resilience. The emergency services, volunteers and family members work tirelessly to free people from under the rubble of damaged buildings, or to recover the bodies of those killed so they can receive the dignity of a funeral and proper interment.

The latest wave of attacks has further impacted aid operations and affected humanitarian workers. The number of humanitarian aid workers killed has more than tripled, from four in 2022 to 15 in 2023. Another 35 were injured. The spike in attacks on aid storage facilities over the past two months has brought the number of incidents negatively impacting aid operations in 2023 to more than 50, the majority of them bombardments that have hit warehouses. In December alone, as highlighted before, five humanitarian warehouses were damaged and burned to the ground in the Kherson region, destroying tons of much-needed relief items, including food, shelter materials and medical supplies. As reported by Russian Federation authorities and discussed in the Council on 30 December (see S/PV.9524), recent attacks on Belgorod oblast — not far from the Ukrainian border — caused the death of at least 25 civilians in Russia, including five children, and injuries to over 100. The attacks also reportedly resulted in damage to civilian infrastructure, including a university building.

Let me reiterate that international humanitarian law must be strictly respected at all times. International humanitarian law explicitly prohibits directing attacks against civilians and civilian objects, as well as indiscriminate attacks. That includes humanitarian personnel and assets. In addition, constant care must be taken throughout military operations to spare civilians and civilian objects.

The scale of humanitarian needs in Ukraine remains vast — simply put. More than 14.6 million people — about 40 per cent of Ukraine's population — require some form of humanitarian assistance. Four million people — including nearly 1 million children — are still displaced within the country. Over 6.3 million people continue to live as refugees in neighbouring European countries and across the globe. Medical facilities have been hit relentlessly throughout the war. Since February 2022, 1,435 attacks on the health-care system have been verified, including the killing of 112 health workers. At least 10 facilities were damaged in the latest wave of aerial attacks. In the past two years, more than 3,000 educational facilities have also been damaged or destroyed. Many remaining educational facilities are being used to accommodate displaced people or as aid distribution centres. As a result, almost a million war-affected children have no safe and reliable access to continue their education. The time lost will jeopardize the future of an entire generation.

The war has also exposed millions of Ukrainians to heightened risks of gender-based violence, trafficking and exploitation. Few segments of society have been unaffected. We have received reports of men, women and children — from 4-years-old to 80-years-old — who have been subjected to conflict-related sexual violence. That leads me to a deeper point about this war. Underneath the very evident physical repercussions for Ukraine and Ukrainians, there lurks a much less visible, but no less damaging, impact: signs of a deeply rooted psychological trauma that could affect millions of people for years to come.

Despite the challenges and risks on the ground, the humanitarian community — 60 per cent being Ukrainian organizations — continues to make every effort to provide life-saving and life-sustaining assistance across Ukraine. That humanitarian response is being delivered in close coordination with, and to complement the efforts of, the Ukrainian Government. And much is owed to the brave work of volunteers, civil society organizations and other groups who

risk their own lives to bring assistance and hope to people affected in their time of need. In particular, I welcome the tremendous efforts of Ukrainian women-led organizations that are stepping up to provide specialized assistance to displaced women and children who have experienced gender-based violence.

However, a lack of humanitarian access persists. In particular, our access to areas occupied by the Russian Federation remains significantly impeded. That is a serious concern for hundreds of thousands of people living in occupied areas close to the front line, where needs are most urgent. International humanitarian law clearly requires the facilitation of rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief to all civilians in need. Obstructions that leave the civilian population without the essentials to survive run contrary to that obligation, under international humanitarian law.

In 2023, humanitarian organizations, despite all of those challenges, reached nearly 11 million people across Ukraine with some form of assistance. That was only possible due to the staunch support of donors. I thank all of the donors who have been generous in their support. By the end of 2023, more than \$2.5 billion of the \$3.9 billion requested under the humanitarian response plan had been received.

But as this war continues unabated, driving high levels of humanitarian need, financial support must absolutely be sustained. This year's humanitarian needs and response plan for Ukraine, which will be launched in Geneva next week by Ms. Denise Brown, Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator in Ukraine, is seeking \$3.1 billion to assist 8.5 million people. In 2024, we urge all donors to once again step up to help the people of Ukraine.

Work also continues to address the wider global impact of the war in Ukraine. Exports from Ukraine's Black Sea ports have continued to increase, despite Russian strikes on ports and related infrastructure and broader security concerns.

On 27 December, a cargo ship travelling to the port of IZMAIL was damaged and grounded due to a reported sea-mine explosion. That incident triggered an immediate spike in wheat futures, demonstrating the continuing link between safe navigation in the Black Sea and global food security.

Ukrainian authorities have also reported continued drone and missile attacks on Odesa in recent weeks,

resulting in civilian casualties, the destruction of homes and further damage to port infrastructure. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations reports that global cereal prices rose by 1.5 per cent in December, due in part to tensions in the Black Sea affecting wheat and maize exports.

The Secretary-General remains firmly committed to ensuring that food exports from the Russian Federation and Ukraine can traverse the Black Sea safely, predictably and efficiently and continues his engagement with the parties and a broad range of other stakeholders to that end.

At the most recent briefing of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to the Council, on 6 December (see S/PV.9494), we called for redoubled efforts to prevent a further deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Ukraine. We are deeply concerned that in the period since then, the war has, instead, intensified. Let me once again call for urgent action to bring this war and the suffering of the people of Ukraine to an end.

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

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

Mr. Montalvo Sosa (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am grateful for the informative briefings by Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo and Ms. Edem Wosornu, Director of Operations and Advocacy of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

It will soon be two years since the military aggression was launched against Ukraine and the death toll, misery and despondency continue to mount. The severe and negative impact on the civilian population, basic infrastructure and the increased need for humanitarian assistance must stop.

Ecuador rejects the recent massive air strikes with missiles and drones in several Ukrainian towns and densely populated residential areas, including Kyiv, Odesa, Kharkiv, Zaporizhzhya, Lviv and Dnipro. According to OCHA, attacks launched since 29 December have killed around 100 civilians, including women and children, injuring more than 400. Those figures could rise as rescue operations continue. The attacks have also left hundreds of thousands of people without electricity and water supplies, at a time

when forecasts indicate that temperatures could drop below -20°C in the coming days.

In addition, according to the World Health Organization's Surveillance System of Attacks on Healthcare, at least 10 health-care facilities are reported to have been damaged across Ukraine. Nothing in this or any other conflict justifies attacks on hospitals, schools, residential buildings and basic infrastructure. We insist once again on the responsibility of the parties to strictly comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law, including the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution.

Ecuador acknowledges the recent exchange of prisoners of war between Russia and Ukraine and hopes that such actions will continue in future.

On the other hand, we are particularly concerned about the situation of children, both those who fled the war and are displaced or refugees, as well as those who experience violence on a daily basis, with a lack of access to health and education services. We also remain attentive to the situation of the minors who were transferred and call for the protection of their rights and the facilitation of their return.

Ecuador wishes once again to acknowledge the work of humanitarian actors and their efforts to alleviate the impact of the war on the civilian population, in particular those who are working tirelessly this winter to pull out people trapped under the rubble. We insist on the obligation to respect and protect humanitarian workers.

We urge the Russian Federation today to end this military aggression, which continues to inflict so much pain and destruction. We call for progress towards a peaceful solution that will allow for a just and lasting peace within the framework of respect for the territorial integrity of Ukraine, within its internationally recognized borders, in full respect of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo and Director Wosornu for their very important and — I might add — sobering briefings today.

As this is the first meeting this year on the impacts of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, we must not lose sight of the fact that the Charter of the United Nations gives the Council the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. Because

the Council is entrusted with that responsibility, we must call out violations of international law.

In August, the United States, along with Japan, the Republic of Korea, France and the United Kingdom warned that arms negotiations between Russia and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea were actively advancing. We noted how the Russian Defence Minister stood beside Kim Jong Un at a military parade that showcased ballistic missile advancements of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that were prohibited by the Council. Russia and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea did what they always do when confronted with the truth — deflect.

The United States has shed light on this situation, and the world is taking notice. This morning, the United States, along with France, Japan, Malta, the Republic of Korea, Slovenia, Ukraine and the United Kingdom, issued a joint statement condemning the military cooperation that has now come to fruition between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Russia. It is abhorrent that a permanent member of the Security Council is flagrantly violating Council resolutions to attack another Member State — violations that further the suffering of the Ukrainian people, support Russia's brutal war and undermine the global non-proliferation regime. And yesterday, Secretary Blinken, along with 48 other foreign ministers and the High Representative of the European Union, condemned the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's export and Russia's procurement of ballistic missiles from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, as well as Russia's recent use of those missiles against Ukraine.

We know why the Russian Federation seeks to call so many meetings on legitimate military assistance to Ukraine. It is desperate to deflect attention away from its and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's violations of Security Council resolutions, including the United Nations arms embargo, which prohibits all Member States from procuring arms or related materiel from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and prohibits the Democratic People's Republic of Korea from exporting arms or related materiel. Russian forces have now used ballistic missiles from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in Ukraine several times. We expect that Russia will use additional missiles to destroy more of Ukraine's critical infrastructure and kill Ukrainian civilians.

Upholding the Charter of the United Nations and addressing the terrible situation that has now been ongoing for almost two years in Ukraine also requires addressing the Russian Federation's Security Council violations. We urge all Member States to make clear that the Russian Federation's actions are unacceptable, even more so as a permanent member of the Council. Russia will again attempt to deflect, but here are some of the recent findings of the United Nations on the effects of Russia's war of aggression. In November, the United Nations reported that the civilian death toll of Russia's full-scale invasion had reached 10,000 civilians, including more than 560 children. That number continues to grow, as Russia's air attacks have intensified. The World Health Organization recorded more than 1,400 attacks on health facilities since February 2022, and not even half of the hospitals are functional in the east and the south. In the territory of Ukraine occupied by Russia, the United Nations has documented the deaths of more than 100 Ukrainian civilians, including a child, after being taken into Russian custody. The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations noted the war's significant economic repercussions in terms of global food, agricultural inputs and energy prices. Russia's war has led to the destruction of agricultural production, corrupted natural resources and disrupted the export of grain to countries facing food insecurity.

After nearly two years, we have seen the massive destruction the Russian Federation has wrought upon Ukraine's cities and people. However, the full-scale and long-term effects of Russia's war remain unknown. What we do know is that Russia alone has the ability to end this war today. Russia must end this brutal war against Ukraine and withdraw its troops from Ukraine's internationally recognized borders. If Russia had any interest in demonstrating to the Council and to the world a commitment to maintaining international peace and security, it should start by ceasing its violations of the Charter and relevant Council resolutions.

Mr. Žbogar (Slovenia): I too would like to thank Ecuador for calling for this meeting and the President for arranging for it. I would also like to thank the briefers, Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo and Ms. Edem Wosornu from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, for their contribution and briefings this morning.

Let me make three points on behalf of my delegation.

My first point concerns the disheartening lack of progress in our discussions on the war in Ukraine and the way forward. We have been following the Security Council discussions with great diligence — and as Ms. DiCarlo just reminded us, the Council has met more than 100 times on this issue — and we could not help but notice the somewhat repetitive nature of the discussions in the Chamber. Why? Because nothing has changed. Russia's aggression against Ukraine, which Slovenia condemns in the strongest possible terms, continues to blatantly violate the Charter of the United Nations, international law, international human rights and humanitarian law. The situation on the ground is not stabilizing. On the contrary, the death toll is rising at an alarming rate, and civilians continue to be targeted, as we heard from both briefers. In the past weeks, the festive period brought destruction and death, not peace.

More than 11,000 missiles and drones have been launched against Ukraine since the beginning of the war. We are deeply concerned about Russia's use of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's ballistic missiles in Ukraine. The very transfer — let alone the use — of ballistic missiles constitutes a serious violation of numerous Council resolutions.

As long as the principles of the Charter and international law are being trampled, and as long as civilians are suffering, there should be no room for fatigue. We should call out the aggression for what it is, again and again. The Council needs to break its silence and speak in defence of the Charter and peace. Slovenia will continue to remind the Council of its obligations, and we will continue our unwavering support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

There is no room for double standards when it comes to respect for international law, including international humanitarian law and human rights law. Those laws apply to Ukraine the same way they apply to Gaza. Slovenia will call for adherence to those principles equally and with respect to every armed conflict.

That brings me to my second point: the repeated barrage on Ukrainian civilian infrastructure. There has been a marked increase of Russia's attacks on Ukraine's critical infrastructure with the start of winter. Ukrainians have been subjected to the largest aerial missile attacks since the beginning of the war. An additional worrisome aspect is the impact of attacks on Ukrainian nuclear infrastructure. A month ago, the largest nuclear power plant in Europe underwent

another complete loss of off-site power supply. That entails obvious nuclear safety and security risk factors. The issue of nuclear safety and security in Ukraine and in armed conflicts in general is of the utmost importance. The seven pillars and five principles on nuclear security and safety of the International Atomic Energy Agency need to be fully observed.

My third and final point is that we should not give up hope for peace. Slovenia welcomes the efforts of President Zelenskyy within the framework of Ukraine's peace formula. Slovenia actively participates in the discussions and hopes to see — sooner rather than later — the concrete proposals to return peace to Ukraine — a lasting, just and sustainable peace that would be based on respect for international law and the Charter.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo and Ms. Wosornu for their briefings.

The Ukrainian crisis continues to drag on. Vicious attacks and civilian casualties occur frequently, and the humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate. China is deeply alarmed and saddened by that. We call on the parties to the conflict to remain calm and exercise restraint, strictly abide by international humanitarian law and make every effort to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure, especially the safety and security of nuclear facilities. We also call on the international community and humanitarian agencies to scale up their relief efforts in order to help the people affected by this crisis overcome their difficulties.

History has proven time and again that there are no winners in wars and conflicts. All parties need to embrace the vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security, pursue the general direction of a political settlement and support and bring about de-escalation. The parties to the conflict should actively respond to the international community's calls for peace and step up their engagement to build consensus and resume peace talks as soon as possible. The international community, for its part, should increase its diplomatic and mediation efforts to create the necessary conditions and atmosphere to achieve that goal. We welcome the recent exchange of prisoners of war between the two warring parties, completed through the United Arab Emirates' mediation.

On the Ukraine issue, China consistently advocates for peace and dialogue and has always stood firm in

promoting peace and facilitating talks. We will continue to engage with all parties concerned and undertake unrelenting efforts towards a political settlement of the Ukrainian crisis.

Mr. Bendjama (Algeria): I thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo and Ms. Edem Wosornu for their briefings.

Algeria is concerned about the continuing deterioration of the humanitarian situation resulting from the ongoing military activities in Russia and Ukraine. They are heavily and tragically impacting civilian populations, with consequences that are felt both regionally and globally. The loss of civilian lives, the suffering of refugees and internally displaced persons and the destruction of civilian infrastructure — including residential areas, hospitals, universities and energy and transport networks, both in Ukraine and in Russia — are still a source of deep concern. At the same time, the situation on the ground also remains an issue of great concern, as attacks keep occurring both in Ukraine and Russia. Unfortunately, tensions have not decreased.

Against that backdrop, Algeria is convinced of the urgency of addressing the following elements.

First, it is of the utmost importance to intensify diplomatic efforts to put an end to the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine without discrimination when it comes to treating human suffering. It is also imperative that all parties de-escalate hostilities, prioritize the protection of civilians and fully comply with the Charter of the United Nations and international law, including international humanitarian law.

Secondly, it is also urgent and critical to abandon the mindset of confrontation and to exercise restraint while creating the conditions for inclusive and constructive dialogue and negotiations guided by the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes. In that context, Algeria engaged in good faith in an effort of good offices within the framework of the Arab contact group, which met at an early stage of the conflict, echoing the call of the international community on the two parties to refrain from any action likely to hinder negotiations and prolong the crisis. Algeria remains committed to supporting any peace effort aimed at creating an environment conducive to a steady and peaceful solution to the dispute.

Thirdly, Algeria is deeply concerned about the exacerbation of the phenomenon of polarization, which contributes to the prolongation of the crisis and the risk of escalation, with repercussions for international peace and security, as well as economic and social consequences, including in terms of food and energy security.

Even though the situation is challenging, Algeria still believes that peace is not out of reach. Efforts towards a peaceful settlement, which have unfortunately been unsuccessful so far, need to make their way forward. Algeria calls for the intensification of international diplomatic efforts aimed at resolving the crisis to avoid the collapse of diplomatic norms and to achieve a just and lasting peace, based on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the legitimate security concerns of all parties.

Mr. Hwang (Republic of Korea): I thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo and Ms. Wosornu for their detailed briefings. I also welcome the participation of the Ukrainian, Polish, German, Estonian, Italian and European Union delegations in today's meeting.

For almost two years, Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine has entailed unspeakable suffering for the people of Ukraine. My delegation is deeply concerned over the deteriorating humanitarian situation on the ground. It is indeed alarming to see that indiscriminate attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure have intensified since last month. Those brutal attacks have targeted residential buildings, hospitals, schools, kindergartens and shopping malls.

According to the United Nations, nearly 100 civilians were killed and more than 400 were injured due to air strikes since 29 December. Those strikes have left hundreds of thousands of people without electricity and water, exacerbating the already harsh living conditions for Ukrainians during the cold winter season.

Furthermore, a cyberattack took place against Ukraine's largest mobile network operator, impeding the access of millions of Ukrainian people to vital communications services last month, according to a recent report by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Such actions are prohibited according to international humanitarian law. My delegation emphasizes that there can be no impunity for the perpetrators of the most serious crimes under international law.

Besides waging an illegal war of aggression and violating international humanitarian law, the Russian Federation is also relying on weapons illegally provided by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. As my delegation has repeatedly pointed out, any arms procurement from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea are violations of multiple Security Council resolutions that Russia itself voted in favour of.

Short-range ballistic missiles supplied by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea hit Ukraine on 30 December, 2 January and 6 January. We strongly condemn the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's export of ballistic missiles and launchers, as well as Russia's use of them against Ukraine. By exporting missiles to Russia, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea used Ukraine as a test site for its nuclear-capable missiles, in wanton disregard of Ukraine's territorial integrity and the safety of the Ukrainian people.

The introduction of North Korean missiles into the war in Ukraine has a significant implication for global nuclear non-proliferation. Some experts assess that the missiles fired into Ukraine are KN-23 missiles, which the Democratic People's Republic of Korea claims can deliver nuclear warheads. For the Republic of Korea, that comes as a clear and present demonstration of the existential threat. One of the missiles flew 460 kilometres, exactly the same distance between Wonsan, a typical missile launch site of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and Busan, the largest port city of the Republic of Korea. From the standpoint of the Republic of Korea, it amounts to a simulated attack. As such launches provide valuable technical and military insights for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, it could be further encouraged to export ballistic missiles to other countries and rake in new revenue to further finance its illegal nuclear and ballistic missile programmes.

The missiles from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea used in Ukraine are posing new challenges that require our joint response. My delegation calls on all Council members to make extraordinary efforts to curb the provocations of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and its nuclear programmes. The Security Council's inaction to date has only emboldened the Pyongyang regime, and continued inaction will further embolden it. As such, we need to rein in the unbridled offender before it is too late. The only thing necessary for bad to triumph is for good to do nothing. At the same time, all Member States must fully implement

relevant Security Council resolutions. In particular, we urge Russia to stop its military cooperation with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Turning again to Ukraine, my delegation once again urges the Russian Federation, as a permanent member of the Security Council, entrusted as one of the exclusive, ultimate guardians of world peace, to immediately withdraw its military forces from the territory of Ukraine and end the untold humanitarian suffering that the illegal war has caused. Currently, approximately 17.6 million Ukrainian people are in need of humanitarian assistance, with those near the front lines exposed to an even more dire situation, including acute food shortages. The war has resulted in millions of internally displaced persons and refugees around the globe. The deteriorating humanitarian situation and mass displacement increases the risk of sexual violence and trafficking, especially for women and girls.

In conclusion, my delegation expresses its solidarity with Ukraine in fighting for its sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity. In that connection, we will maintain our support for Ukraine in the areas of security, humanitarian affairs and reconstruction, as President Yoon Suk Yeol announced during his visit to Ukraine in July 2023.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): I thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo and Director Wosornu for their briefings today.

Amid New Year's celebrations elsewhere, Ukrainian entered the new year in darkness, without heating, without shelter and with air-raid sirens ringing. A total of 90 drones were fired at Odesa, Lviv and other cities on New Year's Eve. Another massive assault took place on Monday, as temperatures across Ukraine dropped to as low as -20°C. More than 1,000 towns and villages in 9 regions were left without power. Responders are rapidly making repairs, and I do not doubt the resilience of Ukrainians and their determination to defend their freedom and territory. But the attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure must stop.

In addition, Russia's use of ballistic missiles from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is a sign of recklessness and desperation. It violates multiple resolutions. All United Nations Member States have an obligation to implement United Nations resolutions. I therefore call on Russia, one of the five permanent members of the Security Council, to halt its trading in arms with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea,

implement all Security Council resolutions in full and restate its commitment to the global non-proliferation regime. I also call on Iran, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and any third party that is providing material support to the Russian war machine to stop immediately. Ending Russia's access to foreign weapons will help end the war.

More specifically, near the front lines in Ukraine, the situation is even worse. The United Nations humanitarian needs and response plan for 2024 refers to entire communities pummelled daily, regions where no hospital or clinic has been left untouched by war. People have been without water and gas in their homes for more than a year. As we heard from the representative of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, more than 14.6 million people — about 40 per cent of the Ukrainian population living in Ukraine — will need humanitarian assistance in 2024. The United Kingdom has committed £347 million in humanitarian assistance to Ukraine and the region since 2022, and our support will continue. But, as I heard during my visit to Kyiv, Russia continues to impede humanitarian access for millions of people living in the temporarily controlled territories. Civilians are struggling to access water, food, shelter and other essential services. The situation is expected to get worse as the cold weather intensifies. As the Council has said repeatedly, Russia therefore must allow humanitarian organizations safe and unimpeded access to those areas immediately.

The beginning of the new year is a time for resolutions. We suggest that Russia make three: to abide by the Charter of the United Nations and Council resolutions, to stop its attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, and to withdraw its military from Ukrainian soil.

Mr. Fernandes (Mozambique): I thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo and Ms. Edem Wosornu, Director of Operations and Advocacy of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, for the insights they shared with us today.

The conflict in Ukraine is still having a serious negative impact on people's lives, destroying vital civilian infrastructure and the means of subsistence, forcing civilians to flee their front-line villages and increasing the need for humanitarian aid. It remains a major source of volatility in an already fragile world.

It is sad that conflicts continue to be a major factor in the worldwide humanitarian crises. The

circumstances in Ukraine are a part of that alarming and catastrophic pattern. Therefore, we must safeguard citizens, as well as the infrastructure necessary for their survival. Humanitarian assistance and protection, together with the protection of civilians, are interlinked, complementary and mutually reinforcing notions in the context of any conflict. We would like to remind all parties of their respective obligations to uphold, safeguard, protect and provide for the fundamental needs of civilian populations and to strictly adhere to the relevant international humanitarian law. The protection of civilians is the cornerstone of international humanitarian law. Therefore, the principles of distinction, precaution and proportionality must be scrupulously observed by all parties.

While underscoring the importance of humanitarian assistance and protection to alleviate human suffering, we hold the view that it cannot be seen as a solution in itself. From our humble perspective, resolving the conflict is the most viable approach to dealing with this humanitarian issue. In the light of that, Mozambique encourages the use of diplomacy and political negotiation to end the conflict as a first step towards a stable, long-lasting peace. For that desirable purpose, and as we have repeatedly advocated in this Chamber, we call upon the parties for the cessation of hostilities and the resumption of direct negotiations to resolve the underlying issues.

Ms. Baeriswyl (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Like my colleagues, I would first like to thank the Under-Secretary-General, Rosemary DiCarlo, and the Director of Operations and Advocacy at the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Ms. Edem Wosornu, for their briefings, however sombre. I also welcome the participation of the representative of Ukraine and the representatives of other delegations.

One hundred and sixty years ago, Henry Dunant of Geneva, marked by the horror of the battlefield of Solferino, provided the impetus for the development of modern international humanitarian law. Seventy-five years ago, the international community, scarred by the multiple horrors of the Second World War, adopted the four Geneva Conventions, reinforcing the protection of civilians. That right must still, and always, be respected by all parties to an armed conflict. Yet, just two weeks ago, Russia launched one of the heaviest waves of missile and drone attacks on populated areas since the beginning of the military aggression. Those attacks not only claimed civilian lives, but also destroyed

homes and civilian infrastructure. In addition to that are the enormous humanitarian needs and freezing temperatures. As Denise Brown, Humanitarian Coordinator for Ukraine, put it: “for the Ukrainian people, the New Year started with loss, pain and anguish”. One look at Ukraine, and at conflicts around the world, should be enough to convince us of the urgent need to reaffirm one of the fundamental principles of the Geneva Conventions: civilians must not be targeted or subjected to indiscriminate attacks. Switzerland calls on all parties to the conflict to strictly respect international humanitarian law, in all circumstances, everywhere.

The enormous humanitarian needs in Ukraine continue to grow. Solidarity from the international community is needed, and it can make a difference. For example, the support provided last winter, including the donation of generators, made residents and internally displaced people less vulnerable to the cold. Investments in repairs and maintenance have strengthened infrastructure against attacks. Switzerland has contributed, and continues to contribute, to the resilience of Ukraine’s energy infrastructure and the Ukrainian population with its winter aid programme, worth almost \$100 million. On 15 January, the joint launch of the humanitarian and regional response plans for 2024 will take place in Geneva. It is essential that those two plans receive adequate financial resources.

Responding to humanitarian needs is necessary, but it is not a long-term solution. What is really needed is for Russia to finally begin de-escalation. We call on it to cease all combat operations and to withdraw its troops from Ukrainian territory without delay. The recent exchange of prisoners is a positive, albeit insufficient, step. Like the Secretary-General, we hope that further de-escalation initiatives will follow.

Another constructive step was taken last May, with the five principles for protecting the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant and avoiding a nuclear accident. In view of the Russian strikes in the vicinity of the nuclear power plant, we must remind ourselves of those principles. Above all, it is essential that the International Atomic Energy Agency has access to the entire site.

De-escalation is all the more urgent as long as the global consequences of this war persist. Russia’s decision to withdraw from the Black Sea Grain Initiative jeopardizes food security far beyond Ukraine.

After almost two years of war, peace is urgently needed. We therefore look forward to hosting a

discussion as part of the Ukrainian peace formula in Davos on 14 January. By organizing that meeting, Switzerland is helping to support discussions aimed at achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine.

Mr. Yamazaki (Japan): I also thank Ms. DiCarlo and Ms. Wosornu for their briefings and insights.

Japan is gravely concerned about Russia's intensified strikes and hostilities against Ukraine since the end of December. Many civilians have lost their lives or have been injured. These attacks by Russia are leaving hundreds of thousands of people without electricity and water during the severe winter. According to the World Health Organization, at least 10 health-care facilities have been damaged since the end of December.

Winter is worsening the already dire humanitarian situation in Ukraine. It is truly deplorable that Russia is again weaponizing winter. Russia's deliberate attacks on hospitals, schools, power plants and other critical infrastructure threaten the lives and future of the Ukrainian people. Japan condemns Russia's attacks against civilian infrastructure and cities across Ukraine in the strongest terms. We are also deeply concerned about the safety of nuclear facilities in Ukraine under the current threat.

There must be no impunity for war crimes and other atrocities. Justice must be done, and those who are responsible for the undeniable atrocities must be held accountable. Our thoughts are with the people of Ukraine who are enduring this heinous war of aggression. Japan has stood, and will continue to stand, in solidarity with the people of Ukraine for as long as it takes.

Ms. Kamikawa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, visited Ukraine last weekend and highlighted the importance of ensuring the human dignity of the people of Ukraine. During her visit, Japan announced new contributions, handing over five mobile gas turbine generators and providing assistance in transporting seven autotransformers. Those contributions are expected to benefit an additional 5 million Ukrainian people. All innocent civilians, including women and children, must be protected. We will continue to provide our assistance. International humanitarian law provides protection for civilians. We should never forget that there is an unalterable reason that all parties to the conflict must uphold international law. We will

keep our call loud and clear until we see that the rules of war are respected.

As the war persists, it is heart-wrenching to hear stories of many people, including women and children, inside and outside of Ukraine waiting to reunite with their families. Without this tragic and unprovoked war, it should have been a festive season that families could enjoy together. At the same time, Japan is deeply distressed that many children in Ukraine have been unlawfully transferred from their homes, and family separation has been prolonged. We strongly condemn this heinous act by Russia. We urge Russia to immediately repatriate those children back to Ukraine.

We once again reiterate one simple and clear fact: Russia's aggression against Ukraine is a flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations and cannot be justified for any reason. It goes without saying that no support should be given to a State that is violating the Charter. It is unacceptable if support is rendered in violation of existing Security Council resolutions. In that regard, we condemn in the strongest possible terms North Korea's export and Russia's procurement of ballistic missiles from North Korea, as well as Russia's use of North Korean ballistic missiles against Ukraine. In addition, we are deeply concerned about the potential for any proliferation of nuclear or ballistic missile-related technologies from North Korea.

Any arms transfers, including of conventional weapons and of related material and technology, between North Korea and Russia flagrantly violate multiple Security Council resolutions that Russia itself supported and could actually destabilize the region. We call on both North Korea and Russia to abide by their obligations under all relevant Security Council resolutions and immediately cease all activities that violate them. It is a totally outrageous situation that the international community is demanding that a permanent member of the Security Council observe Security Council resolutions.

No matter how much Russia tries to justify its actions, it is so obvious that civilians would not be suffering had it not been for the war of aggression in the first place. Therefore, once again, we strongly urge Russia to withdraw immediately and unconditionally from the internationally recognized borders of Ukraine.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): For the record, we would like to state our principled rejection of the approach adopted by the

French presidency despite our objections, including the invitation to this meeting of delegations under rule 37 and rule 39. Their number, including Ukraine, is six: the European Union (EU), Italy, Poland, Estonia, Germany and Ukraine. Also, Denmark, Greece and Romania will be providing written comments. That is far too many delegations for the briefing format, which, unlike an open debate where wider United Nations membership can take part, suggests a more focused discussion.

Aside from that, all the aforementioned States, with the exception of Ukraine, are members of the EU. In addition, we have the EU delegation here as well. As we have seen on numerous occasions, there is no added value derived from those additional statements in the Security Council. They are carbon copies of the same assertions that are in line with the common position of the EU and NATO. The only aim of those delegations' participation in the Security Council is to rattle off their statements for domestic consumption, and we believe that that undermines the Council's credibility.

We regret the fact that the French presidency, which claims to painstakingly observe the rules of procedure of the Security Council, is undermining its established working practice. It is an open secret that today's meeting was convened by Western colleagues as a box-ticking exercise so that they can cynically execute their monthly Security Council plan on Ukraine in order to rattle off, yet again, those same anti-Russian propaganda assertions, while at the same time proclaiming their commitment to international humanitarian law and theatrically lamenting the loss of civilian lives.

And yet not all ordinary civilians are granted such compassion, even if it is of the hypocritical kind. The West impassively distinguishes between important civilians, the loss of whose lives can be used to sling mud at geopolitical opponents, and so-called unimportant civilians, whose lives are deemed collateral damage — at times, they are practically referred to as just victims of the actions of unwelcome governments. That is a staggeringly cynical approach. At its core, it is purely colonial, and we have seen it many times, in Africa, in the Middle East, in Eastern Europe — civilian Gazans, Syrians, Libyans, Iraqis, Afghans, not to mention Russians and Ukrainians, amounting to nothing more than faceless statistics in a tally of lives lost.

On 30 December, in a fit of impotent rage, the regime in Kyiv, egged on by British and American

consultants, shelled residential neighbourhoods in the Russian city of Belgorod using cluster munitions and multiple rocket launchers. The main strike hit a Christmas market, where children and their parents were present. As a result, 25 people perished, including five children, and more than 100 injured. There were no military objects nearby. That is what Kyiv was aiming for. That was a planned war crime meant to strike horror into the hearts of Russians. And yet, we did not hear any words of condolence from our Western colleagues. On the contrary, some of them justified that attack. That is what the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of France did — France holds the presidency of the Security Council. It said that Kyiv's terrorist attack on Belgorod is an exercise of Ukraine's right to self-defence under Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations. It is regrettable that French diplomacy, much like Anglo-Saxon diplomacy, has sunk so low. Do they understand that this means that they bear responsibility for those crimes?

Targeted attacks on residential neighbourhoods of the Russian cities of Donetsk, Belgorod and Kursk are ongoing. What did Russia say in response? President Putin, stated that Russia will not strike areas where mothers stroll with prams. He said that Russia will

“strike with high-precision weapons at locations where they make decisions, where military personnel and mercenaries gather, at other similar centres, and at military facilities”.

Russia is striking and will continue to strike Ukrainian military targets and infrastructure, which underpin Kyiv's military capacity. What is very telling is Czechia's behaviour. It sought to dodge responsibility for its participation in the Belgorod strike by providing ammunition, too afraid to show up to the Security Council meeting on 30 December (see S/PV.9524). That is not surprising. After all, it is much harder to answer for the deaths of civilians in front of the global community than to hide behind the backs of senior NATO partners.

International organizations are behaving no better than so-called civilized democracies. Those international organizations are shamefully silent when we are talking about the need to condemn Kyiv's flagrant crimes. We have not heard any clear responses, save for some general remarks in response to the Belgorod terrorist attacks from the Secretariat.

Against that backdrop, what looks particularly cynical and hypocritical is Kyiv's attempts to promote the so-called peace formula and convening of another meeting in Davos, Switzerland. We would like to underscore that that pseudo-peacekeeping initiative, which is essentially an ultimatum to Russia, has nothing to do with resolving the situation in Ukraine. Any discussion of the conflict without our participation is obviously bound to fail. For our part, we have been refused to participate in negotiations, but we cannot accept the language of ultimatums. We also demand that the United Nations Secretariat, while playing along with dubious formats, recall that it must act in keeping with Article 100 of the Charter of the United Nations.

The counteroffensive of the Armed Forces of Ukraine has failed — that has been recognized by the ruling elites in Ukraine and by the Western political establishment. Ukrainian servicemen left on the frontlines have also stated that clearly. They have stated in interviews that in an attempt to show the West “at least some progress”, Ukrainian leadership has thrown them “like a piece of meat to the wolves”, and they are “bearing heavy losses”. The monstrous cynicism of the backers of the Kyiv regime can be seen in the fact that, in order to achieve their cherished goal of ensuring Russia's strategic defeat, they are prepared to justify any crimes and annihilate countless Ukrainian soldiers. That is deplorable. They do not care about civilian losses either.

In recent days, the head of European diplomacy, Josep Borrell Fontelles, and the Polish Ministry for Foreign Affairs said that it is necessary to broaden military assistance to Kyiv and supply long-range missiles. The United States Administration is fighting to continue providing military assistance to Kyiv, battling it out with the Congress and with their own people. Yet it has been cynically stated that the Ukrainian Armed Forces are choosing their own targets. Americans and Europeans should know that those weapons are being used to hit Christmas markets, residential buildings, women, the elderly and children.

Today Western members of the Security Council have read out copy-pasted statements about the Russian military using ammunition from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in its special military operation in Ukraine. As is often the case, the instructions came from Washington. On Friday, White House spokesperson John Kirby spread another falsehood on this topic when talking live to reporters. Another interesting fact is

that, on the same day, the spokesperson of Ukraine's Air Force, Yuriy Ihnat, denied this information. He said that Kyiv did not have any evidence of that. Therefore, the United States seems to be knowingly spreading erroneous information without even bothering to give a heads-up to its direct subjects.

Turning now to the humanitarian situation, we cannot but mention the efforts that France and Ecuador have undertaken to remain in their formal role as co-penholders on the Ukrainian humanitarian dossier in the Security Council. There is reason to believe that, against the backdrop of the escalation of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, where attempts are being made to wipe out the entire population of the Gaza Strip from the face of the Earth, with the United States providing cover, today's meeting should lend moral succour to the regime in Kyiv, whose worsening problems on the frontline are steadily fading into the background.

We yet again heard mantras from Western delegations about the grave humanitarian situation in Ukraine and about the problems with power as temperatures drop. Indeed, Ukraine has fallen on hard times. We genuinely empathize with the brotherly Ukrainian people, who are having to endure many deprivations due to the sell-out leadership of their country, which is prepared to sacrifice Ukraine's national interests and the lives of ordinary Ukrainians in order to follow directives from their Western sponsors. The West's support is the only reason the junta in Kyiv remains in power. The junta fell for generous, but empty, promises given by their transatlantic friends. As a result, the junta has led Ukraine into economic and political collapse, turning it into a failed State, the political system of which increasingly bears clear hallmarks of totalitarianism.

Since the conflict in Donbas began in 2014, the Ukrainian military has launched attacks that specifically target critical civilian infrastructure, particularly those providing water and heat. Moreover, medical and educational facilities are being destroyed. Over the course of eight years in the Donbas republics, at least 50,000 civilian infrastructure sites have been destroyed or damaged. Since February 2022, more than 16,000 residential buildings and almost 3,500 civilian infrastructure objects, including 700 educational facilities, more than 180 medical facilities and 1,100 electrical, water, heat and gas supply facilities, have been damaged or destroyed. But those figures never make it into United Nations reports because the United Nations Secretariat is biased.

Today we heard a lot said about solidarity with Ukraine, which Western sponsors are supposedly prepared to continue supporting. And yet it would appear that ongoing support long ago became a way of subjugating the Ukrainian economy and as a consequence, Ukraine's population. Ukraine's external debt grew to a record-breaking \$132 billion since 2022 — that is 89 per cent of its gross domestic product. Staggering amounts being given to Ukraine by the International Monetary Fund, the European Union and Washington are pushing the country into a debt trap for decades to come. There is a company that wants to turn a profit in Ukraine: the United States financial company, BlackRock. In fact, Kyiv signed an agreement with BlackRock launching a Ukrainian development fund. Under the guise of attracting private investment to the Ukrainian economy, what we are seeing is a transfer of State sovereignty to external corporate control by the world's largest investment fund. It is also worth noting that over the last decade, the amount of arable land that was transferred to agribusiness corporations — primarily American ones — exceeded four million hectares. We hope that Ukrainians will at last understand that, over the last two years, they have been but a pawn in the confrontation between the West and Russia.

Mr. Kanu (Sierra Leone): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting. Let me also thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo, and Director Edem Wosornu, for their important briefings, which are most useful.

Sierra Leone first expressed its principled view on the conflict in Ukraine in the explanation of vote after the voting on resolution General Assembly ES-11/1 (see A/ES-11/PV.5) under agenda item 5 during the eleventh emergency special session of the Assembly, convened under the Uniting for Peace resolution (resolution (377 A (V)) on 28 February 2022.

Sierra Leone expressed grave concern about the regrettable serious situation created in Ukraine, with ramifications for international peace and security. Sierra Leone voted and acted based on our fundamental belief in the sanctity of the Charter of the United Nations, its principles and the purposes of the Organization. We underscored that our action was not an endorsement of a selective application of our fundamental belief in the principles of the sovereign equality of all United Nations Member States, the territorial integrity or political independence of Member States, non-interference and

the peaceful settlement of disputes. It was not meant to absolve the action or inaction of the United Nations, particularly with regard to addressing questions of peace and security in Africa. We expressed the firm belief that there must be consistency in the application of the United Nations Charter in pursuit of its purposes, and that resorting to the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity of any Member State in a manner that is inconsistent with the Charter cannot be accepted. Sierra Leone accordingly called for full respect for the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. We also called for the immediate cessation of the hostilities and urged for good-faith diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict.

It has been 23 months since the start of the conflict, which has witnessed massive civilian casualties, the displacement of millions of civilians and vulnerable groups, including children. The Security Council has been unable to act on this conflict because of the use of the veto, a scenario which, in our view, implicates Article 27, paragraph 3, of the United Nations Charter. It also validates the prevalent view on the use of the veto to further interests instead of the collective responsibility to maintain international peace and security. Sierra Leone has been consistent in expressing commitment to the Charter of the United Nations and respect for its principles and international law, including the principles of the sovereign equality of all United Nations Member States, the territorial integrity or political independence of Member States, non-interference and the peaceful settlement of disputes. It is against that background that we express serious concern about the deteriorating security situation in Ukraine, which is a threat to the life, peace, stability and prosperity of not only the Ukrainian and Russian peoples, who are directly affected, but also the entire region.

We are also seriously concerned about the humanitarian crisis, which continues to inflict widespread devastation and hardship on the Ukrainian population in particular. As we have heard from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and as I have stated in this Chamber, over 14.6 million people — about 40 per cent of the Ukrainian population living in Ukraine — will need humanitarian assistance in 2024.

Sierra Leone is further deeply concerned that in the absence of due compliance with international humanitarian law, the prevailing concerning

humanitarian situation could further deteriorate if attacks on energy and other critical infrastructure increase during the winter. The prolonged effects of the war will continue to exacerbate the already dire and fragile humanitarian conditions of vulnerable people, who will require sustained support to ensure they can meet their vital needs. Women and children, as it is with most conflicts, continue to be affected owing to loss of income, family separation and disruption in the provision of essential services, including education.

In the light of the aforementioned, Sierra Leone calls on the parties to the conflict to, first, avoid the use of air missiles and drones targeting civilians and civilian objects, especially objects that supply essential services like hospitals, water and electricity. They must ensure that civilians, including women and children, and civilian objects are protected from harm and grave violations, which is a fundamental principle under international law, in particular international humanitarian law.

Secondly, we call for the sustained efforts of regional and international partners to scale up critical aid needed to cover the basic needs of the affected population across Ukraine.

Thirdly, we would like to emphasize that conflict only breeds destruction, suffering and the loss of lives. To minimize that, we urge all parties to the conflict to resolve this matter through a political and diplomatic engagement that will lead to durable peace in the region.

Finally, and now in the Security Council, Sierra Leone reiterates its call for the full respect of the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders, and for the immediate cessation of the conflict and hostilities. We urge for good-faith diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict, which includes giving consideration to the legitimate concerns of all involved parties.

Let me conclude by emphasizing the importance of addressing the urgent humanitarian crisis, defending the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and emphasizing the importance of equality, equity and consistency in the application of international law.

Mrs. Frazier (Malta): I also thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo and Ms. Wosornu for their sobering and informative briefings.

The Russian Federation ended last year and started the new one by shooting over 100 missiles and

drones at densely populated areas in Kyiv and other major cities across Ukraine. It has killed civilians and destroyed civilian infrastructure, including residential buildings, schools, medical facilities and life-supporting infrastructure.

Over 440 towns and villages were left without electricity and water supplies. Such attacks have not only brought loss, pain and anguish for thousands of Ukrainians during one of the coldest months of winter, but also constitute violations of international law.

Since the massive wave of attacks by Russia against Ukraine since December, the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine has recorded the deaths of 90 civilians, including two children. More than 421 civilians have been injured. Those heinous attacks were conducted, in part, using ballistic missiles and launchers procured from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We condemn those violations in the strongest terms and call for all parties to fully abide to with all Security Council resolutions.

We once again call on Russia to abide by international humanitarian law and to refrain from using weapons with wide-area effects. We reiterate our resolute condemnation of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, which constitutes a manifest violation of the Charter of the United Nations. We also reaffirm our long-standing and unwavering support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

The humanitarian situation in Ukraine continues to drastically deteriorate. The cost already paid by the Ukrainian people, as we have stated in the Council before, is unbearable. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, since the start of Russia's aggression there have been more than 29,000 civilian casualties.

Russia's ongoing campaign of systematic air strikes against civilians and critical infrastructure in Ukraine must stop at once. Those relentless and inhumane attacks aim only to increase human suffering and deprive Ukrainians of electricity, heating, food and medical care — jeopardizing food security all over the globe. We stress once again the importance of security and stability in the Black Sea.

Moreover, Russia has hindered humanitarian access to territories under their temporary control. Health care and other critical services for survivors of

gender-based-violence, sexual exploitation and abuse remain out of reach for many. That has prevented the delivery of much-needed humanitarian assistance to families and children in those areas.

The constant shelling and destruction are exposing millions of Ukrainians — not only to the risk of death or injury, but also to other serious protection risks, including psychological distress and loss or damage of documentation, particularly affecting the most vulnerable and people from marginalized groups. Russia and its leadership must be held fully accountable for waging a war of aggression and for other most serious crimes under international law, as well as for the massive damage caused by its war.

On this occasion, we also salute the brave Russian women who, since November, facing intimidation and harassment, have energized a grass-roots movement in various cities, demanding that mobilized soldiers return home.

In conclusion, today's meeting illustrates, once again, the far-reaching consequences of this war. It was another stark reminder of its devastating repercussions on not just the region, but the rest of the world.

Most importantly, Russia must unconditionally and completely withdraw all its forces and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett (Guyana): I thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo and Ms. Edem Wosornu, Director for Operations and Advocacy for the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, for their briefings, and recognize the presence of the representatives of Ukraine, Estonia, Germany, Italy, Poland and the European Union.

Guyana joins the international community in reaffirming the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and in calling for full respect for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We deplore the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State.

We note with growing concern the devastating impact of the ongoing conflict on innocent civilians and critical infrastructure. International law and international humanitarian law are unambiguous when it comes to the protection of civilians and civilian objects. Guyana therefore condemns all attacks on hospitals,

electricity transmission systems, food ports, gas and water supplies and the killing of innocent civilians.

The devastating accounts heard today of unrelenting violence, death and destruction are cause for the gravest of concern. We share the briefers' dismay at the increasingly dire humanitarian situation in the country and the continued denial of access to people in desperate need of humanitarian assistance. We urge the parties to comply with their obligations under international law and international humanitarian law and call for full, unhindered humanitarian access, including to occupied areas.

This war has wrought untold suffering, particularly on the Ukrainian people. From the mass destruction of cities to prolonged economic, social and psychological impacts, the trauma and residual effects of the war will be acutely felt for years to come. Guyana is especially alarmed about the violations committed against children, who have paid a particularly high price in life and limb on account of the violence meted out, especially in attacks against schools and hospitals. We maintain that every boy and girl has the right to a life without fear or want. Guyana calls for an end to attacks on infrastructure that are critical for children's well-being, including schools, hospitals, energy, water and sanitation systems.

In its latest report on the human rights situation in Ukraine, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) documented cases of arbitrary detention, torture, summary executions, sexual violence, transfers and deportations of children and cases of forced conscription of protected persons.

Guyana demands that the parties respect humanitarian principles and adhere to international humanitarian law and international human rights law, including by ending and preventing all grave violations against children and ensuring their safe return. We welcome the efforts that led to the exchange of prisoners of war last week. We hope that those positive efforts can continue and that independent monitors, including from OHCHR, will have regular, unimpeded and confidential access to all detained persons.

The prolongation of this war poses increasingly grave risks and consequences for all concerned and for international peace and security. It has brought nothing but unimaginable suffering and trauma for generations of Ukrainian and Russian citizens, not to

mention its regional and international ramifications. We call for an immediate end to the hostilities and the complete withdrawal of Russian military forces from the territory of Ukraine. We urge the parties to commit to a serious political and diplomatic process towards ending the conflict and the continued engagement of the international community to that end. We further call for continued international support for the victims of the war. That includes medical, psychological and legal support, with particular attention to children and survivors of sexual violence.

We commend the efforts of United Nations agencies, bilateral partners and international, regional and local organizations in responding to the humanitarian needs of the Ukrainian people and urge the international community to scale up humanitarian support to Ukraine.

In conclusion, I would like to stress the urgency of resolving this conflict through peaceful means. Guyana will continue to lend its support to all efforts of the Secretary-General and other willing partners who have been working diligently towards peace and an end to the scourge of war.

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

I thank Ms. DiCarlo and Ms. Wosornu for their briefings.

The Ukrainian people began the year 2024 under a continuous barrage of more than 500 Russian missiles and drones. Residential buildings, shops, churches, maternity wards, railway stations, metro stations and energy infrastructure — those are the targets of the Russian army in Ukraine. France condemns those massive strikes. By deliberately targeting civilian infrastructure, Russia will not convince us into believing that it is pursuing military objectives. It is targeting civilians, in violation of all the rules of international humanitarian law. It refuses access for humanitarian actors into areas under its control. It seeks to break the spirit of a nation whose identity it denies. It seeks to subjugate by force a country whose sovereignty and territorial integrity it has violated for 10 years, doing so by purchasing weapons from Iran and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, in violation of the resolutions of the Security Council.

Russia continues to forge ahead in Ukraine with no justification other than to revive a mythologized imperial past. As the war enters its third year, let us state the obvious: if Russia stops its aggression, the war will stop, without prejudice to Russia's own security. If Ukraine stops defending itself, it will lose its freedom. What is happening in Ukraine concerns us all. How we respond to Russia's aggression against Ukraine will determine our collective security. Russia must heed the calls of the General Assembly which, by an overwhelming majority, has affirmed and reaffirmed its commitment to ensuring Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

France will continue to provide its unwavering support to the Ukrainian nation, in all areas, to enable it to exercise its right to self-defence in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. We will also continue to support the Ukrainian courts and the International Criminal Court in combating impunity for crimes committed by Russia. We will continue to provide economic and humanitarian support to Ukraine and its people. We will continue to engage in mitigating the consequences of Russia's aggression on populations across the world, especially in terms of food security.

Finally, France supports Ukraine's vision of a just and lasting peace that respects the fundamental principles of the Charter.

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 representative of Putin's criminal regime in the permanent seat of the Soviet Union. Her boss has covertly extracted himself from Chamber, but there is obviously no added value in his presence other than for keeping the record of his statements and testimonies for the purposes of the future tribunal on Russia's war crimes.

Russia persists in terrorizing Ukraine with regular missile and drone strikes. On 8 January, another massive attack took place — the third in less than two weeks. According to information from Ukraine's defence forces, the Russian Federation launched at least 59 units of weapons, including eight Shahed drones; seven S-300 and S-400 ballistic missiles; four Kinzhal air-ballistic missiles, fired by MiG-31K fighter jets from Ryazan and Tambov; 24 Kh-101, Kh-555 and Kh-55 cruise missiles, fired by 11 Tu-95MS bombers

from Engels; eight Kh-22 and Kh-32 cruise missiles, shelled by Tu-22M3 bombers; six Iskander and ballistic missiles, launched from occupied Crimea; and two Kh-31P guided anti-radar missiles, shelled by tactical aviation in the Belgorod region.

On that morning, Russia attacked critical infrastructure and civilian and industrial facilities across various regions of Ukraine. In particular, ballistic missiles targeted the Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhya and Khmelnytskyi regions. At least four people were killed and 45 others wounded as a result of those strikes. Those wounded following the Russian strikes received the necessary treatment, despite the Russian forces continuing to deliberately target medical facilities. According to the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, 1,501 medical facilities have been damaged and 195 completely destroyed since February 2022. Currently, 474 of those facilities have already been fully restored, while efforts to rebuild the other 383 are under way.

In telling the Security Council about these waves of Russian missile terror, I do not mean to imply that there are calm and safe periods for Ukrainian civilians in between. Attacks occur daily, and even though they may be smaller in scope, they significantly increase the number of casualties and the amount of destruction. The delegation of Ukraine has already informed the Council, in its letter circulated on 6 January, of a horrendous crime committed by the Russian armed forces in the city of Pokrovsk, in Donetsk region, and its outskirts. There, a strike of S-300 missiles targeted private residential buildings and resulted in the deaths of 11 local residents, including five children.

It is a matter of alarm that, among other things, Russia maintains its capacity to harm Ukrainians from a safe distance, beyond the reach of our defensive means, due to the ongoing supply of weapons and munitions from rogue States. For more than a year, we have consistently drawn the Council's attention to the transfer of Iranian drones to Russia in violation of the Security Council decisions. We also condemn in the strongest possible terms the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's export and Russia's procurement of ballistic missiles from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, as well as Russia's use of those missiles against Ukraine. As a country that has joined the joint statement on Democratic People's Republic of Korea-Russia ballistic missile transfers, already referred to today by a number of delegations, Ukraine

reiterates that those transfers are in contravention of multiple Council resolutions.

According to a report from the Kharkiv Prosecutor's Office released on 6 January, one ballistic missile from the barrage that hit the city of Kharkiv on 2 January was visually and technically distinct from Russian models. During the presentation of the remnants to the media, the Prosecutor's Office spokesperson noted deviations from standard Iskander missiles. Specifically, the missile had a slightly larger diameter than the Russian Iskander missile, and its nozzle, internal electrical windings and rear parts also differed. As the spokesperson said, the missile is similar to one of the North Korean missiles. The examination of the remnants aimed at establishing and verifying the origin of that missile is under way.

Every day, Mr. President, you and other participants in the Council's meetings come to listen to the language of war. It is the language in which the invaders received their order to launch their full-scale aggression against Ukraine. It is the language that the victims hear when they are raped in front of their families. It is the language that many Ukrainian civilians hear before they are executed. As we well know, including from the writings of Leo Tolstoy, before the Bolshevik putsch, the educated nobility in the Russian Empire used French rather than Russian as their household language. It was the language of Russian diplomacy before the adherence to Bolshevism — which keeps its grip on the Kremlin today — came to power. I invite Moscow's envoy to avail himself — herself, in fact — of the interpretation and to keep the earphones on, since the next part of my intervention will be in French, in recognition of the contribution that France, Switzerland and many other peace-loving countries have made to peace and security.

(spoke in French)

As Russia continues to kill Ukrainian children throughout the country with its weapons, young Ukrainians who have been illegally transferred by Russia from the occupied territories are being subjected to another blatant human rights violation by Russia. On 4 January 2024, Putin signed a decree defining certain categories of foreign citizens and stateless persons with the right to apply for citizenship of the Russian Federation. The document states that orphans and children without parental protection who are citizens of Ukraine can obtain Russian citizenship by personal decision of the President of the Russian Federation,

regardless of the general or specific requirements of federal legislation. Requests to obtain citizenship can be submitted by the leaders of the Russian organizations under whose supervision the child is placed. That other normative legal act, in addition to its goal of covering the demographic needs of the aggressor country at the expense of migrants in order to be able to continue its aggression against Ukraine, also violates Ukrainian legislation, norms of international law and the rights of children — Ukrainian citizens who have been forcibly transferred to Russian territory by the aggressor State.

We reaffirm that all Ukrainian children who have been forcibly transferred to Russian territory under the pretext of humanitarian protection remain Ukrainian citizens. We call on the International Criminal Court (ICC) to take into account those actions by the Russian leadership aimed at transferring Ukrainian children from one national group to another, in particular by forcibly granting them Russian citizenship, which is one of the manifestations of genocide. We call on the international community to execute the arrest warrant issued by the ICC against Vladimir Putin as quickly as possible.

According to estimates by military and economic experts, the cost of the Russian air attacks against Ukraine on 30 December and 2 January amounted to at least \$1.25 billion and \$620 million, respectively. It is logical to assume that Monday's attack also cost Russia several million dollars. At the same time as Russia is spending billions to destroy Ukrainian civilian facilities, its own critical infrastructure is falling into disrepair or collapsing entirely. Tens of thousands of residents in towns surrounding Moscow such as Podolsk, Kolomna and Balashikha have been left stranded without heating, freezing inside their own homes in sub-zero temperatures.

Given that Putin's envoy in this Chamber claims to be aware of the content circulating on Ukrainian social networks, I recommend that he take a look, from his warm and comfortable Manhattan perch, at the messages written by the inhabitants of his own capital and its suburbs, who are now living in apartments literally covered in a layer of ice and who must burn wood in the streets to survive.

Experts have warned of the possible domino effects of Russia's weakening infrastructure. Nonetheless, the Kremlin regime has shown little interest in resolving the problems of its own citizens. It remains obsessed

with a senseless, suicidal war, trying to kill as many Ukrainians as possible until its inevitable collapse. Indeed, let us not forget that the Kremlin is killing not only Ukrainians, but also Russians. Hundreds of thousands of Russian citizens have already paid with their lives for Putin's maniacal fantasies. It is not only the present generations of Russians but also those in the future who will bear the brunt of those decisions.

In reality, if Putin can win anything, it is in a competition of Russophobes, because no one has compromised the prospect of the existence of Russia and the Russian people as much as he has. Together with Hitler and Stalin, he is the person most responsible for the thousands of lives being lost on a daily basis in Russia, whether on the battlefields in his insane war or to the continuous and dramatic deterioration of living standards or the spread of diseases, alcoholism and drug addiction.

According to the conclusions of Yale University researchers on the sanctions against Russia:

"Russia is no longer remotely an economic Power and has suppressed the minimum reporting of transparent national income statistics that is required to retain International Monetary Fund membership [...] Putin's Russia survives merely by seizing assets. The increasingly State-dominated economy is cannibalizing its own companies to maintain Putin's war machine."

It is therefore in the world's interest to end that criminal regime and ensure a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in Ukraine. We encourage all peace-loving States to engage in a meaningful process aimed at implementing the peace formula plan and, in particular, to participate in the fourth meeting of national security advisors on Ukraine's peace formula, scheduled to be held on 14 January 2024 in Davos, Switzerland. The peace formula has become a platform and structure for international peace and for the restoration of international law and the multilateral security architecture.

A just and lasting peace is possible only when we work together and when our work is based on the unifying foundations of the Charter of the United Nations.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Poland.

Mr. Szczerski (Poland): I will be brief.

At the turn of the year, towards the end of the second year of the war, Ukraine experienced the largest wave of Russian missile attacks on its civilian infrastructure since the beginning of the aggression. Those barbaric and cynical assaults, as well as attempts to impose a naval blockade on Ukraine, clearly demonstrate Russia's resolve to plod along the path of terror and destruction. Moscow seems to be convinced that it can outlast the Ukrainian resistance and resilience in defending its people and its territory.

Therefore, it is our primary task to prove the Russian aggressors wrong by continuing our support to Ukraine for as long as it takes. Poland has done so since the very beginning of the war and will continue on that path, as was duly reconfirmed during a telephone conversation yesterday between the Presidents of Poland and Ukraine, as well as by the Polish Minister for Foreign Affairs during his very first visit abroad in office to Kyiv just a few days ago. The Minister's choice of destination was a symbolic emphasis on the priority role that Ukraine plays in Polish foreign policy, as well as Poland's readiness to further actively support Ukraine's European and Euro-Atlantic aspirations.

The representatives of the free world cannot afford to be fatigued by the war in Ukraine. As Minister Sikorski stressed, the only country that could feel exhausted after 23 months of constant oppression is Ukraine itself. But instead, it bravely stands against the unrelenting forays of Russian imperialism — and so must we. As long as Russia remains committed to further destabilizing the global security architecture, we should continue to exert pressure on the aggressor while supporting the victim. Not only must we maintain the current levels of military and financial support to Ukraine, but we also actually need to do our best to increase it. Poland is currently discussing new forms of such support with Ukraine.

Let us not forget that, should Ukraine falter, the risk of Russia's next aggression against other countries would rise dramatically. Should Ukraine prevail, peace and United Nations values will be restored.

Therefore, the stakes of the war in Ukraine are very high. Let us not forget that Russia openly admits that the war is not only about Ukraine; it is about imposing a new world order that, in fact, disregards the very core principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, namely, sovereignty, territorial integrity and international humanitarian law. Without a just peace in

Ukraine, there will be no chance for a lasting peace based on international law, to which all Members of the Organization should adhere.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Germany.

Ms. Leendertse (Germany): Let me start by congratulating the new members of the Security Council — Algeria, Guyana, the Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone and Slovenia. We appreciate their commitment to contribute to strengthening international peace and security.

As we are all witnessing, Russia is continuing its illegal war of aggression at full force. The recent massive bombardments have directly targeted civilians, even far from the front line. Besides drones from Iran, for the first time, Russia fired ballistic missiles produced by North Korea. The transfer of those weapons constitutes a direct violation of binding Security Council resolutions that Russia itself voted for. In order to exercise its legitimate right of self-defence under Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, Ukraine relies on international support. We have taken a leading role in the supply of air defence systems. They directly contribute to saving lives. At the same time, the humanitarian situation in Ukraine remains dire, and Germany has contributed more than €403 million in humanitarian assistance. Besides the delivery of basic goods, we focus on the provision of mental health services, winterization and demining activities.

Russia's unjustifiable war affects us all. We must not allow attacks on sovereign countries and neocolonial attempts to grab their land. An aggressor must never prevail. Nevertheless, what can the international community do to end the tragedy?

First, we must press the aggressor to cease its unlawful invasion. The General Assembly's resolutions and the provisional measures of the International Court of Justice must be implemented.

Secondly, we must support Ukraine in defending itself for as long as the aggression continues.

Thirdly, we must create a foundation for a just and lasting peace. President Zelenskyy's peace formula clearly outlines a viable way forward.

Lastly, the perpetrators of war crimes must be held accountable.

In conclusion, we once again call on Russia to immediately and unconditionally cease all its military operations and withdraw its troops from Ukraine.

The President: I now give the floor to Mrs. Samson.

Mrs. Samson (*spoke in French*): Allow me first to congratulate France on its presidency of the Security Council for this month and wish you, Sir, every success. (*spoke in English*)

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, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Georgia, as well as Andorra, Monaco and San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

For the people of Ukraine, the year 2023 ended, and 2024 began, with massive Russian missile and drone attacks on civilians and critical infrastructure in the middle of winter. As it unsuccessfully attempted last winter, Russia aims to destroy the morale and resilience of the Ukrainian people. In late December 2023 and early January, it carried out the largest strikes since the start of its aggression. The EU condemns the intensification of Russia's campaign of systematic air strikes against civilian targets and critical infrastructure in Ukraine. We reiterate the need to protect civilians — an obligation of all United Nations States Members. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has confirmed that more than 10,000 civilians have been killed in Ukraine, and more than 18,500 injured, since Russia launched its full-scale invasion. The true toll is probably substantially higher.

In that regard, we also condemn the continued military support for Russia's war of aggression provided by Iran, Belarus and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and we continue to urge all countries not to provide weapons and military equipment, including missiles and drones, or other support, for Russia's war of aggression. We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Russia to abide by the successive Security Council resolutions that clearly prohibit any arms exports or imports involving the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

We also remain very concerned about the situation at the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant and Russia's refusal to grant monitors from the International Atomic Energy Agency access to the plant's reactors. Russia must urgently withdraw from the Zaporizhzhya

nuclear power plant and return control to its legitimate owner, Ukraine.

Humanitarian access remains critical, and we call on Russia to ensure safe and unimpeded humanitarian access to all areas under its temporary military control.

The negative consequences of Russia's aggression are not limited to Ukraine. Russia's deliberate attacks on Ukraine's grain storage and export facilities, as well as its actions to hinder the freedom of navigation in the Black Sea, show that it continues to weaponize food and deliberately undermines global food security. I stress the importance of security and stability in the Black Sea, which is vital for sustainable food exports to global markets, and particularly to countries most in need.

There can be no impunity. Russia and its leadership must be held fully accountable for waging a war of aggression against Ukraine and for other most serious crimes under international law, as well as for the massive damage caused by its war. The EU encourages further efforts to establish a tribunal for the prosecution of the crime of aggression against Ukraine that would enjoy the broadest cross-regional support and legitimacy, along with a future compensation mechanism. We reiterate our support for the work of the International Criminal Court and condemn Russia's continued attempts to undermine its independence, international mandate and functioning. We also recall the legally binding order of the International Court of Justice of March 2022 for Russia to immediately suspend its military operations in Ukraine.

Finally, the EU supports all meaningful efforts to bring an end to Russia's war. The path to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace is for the aggressor to immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraw all its troops and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine and respect its sovereignty and territorial integrity. The General Assembly has stated that very clearly in successive resolutions. The EU will continue its global outreach 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 a global peace summit, with the broadest possible participation. The meeting of national security advisers in Davos, to be held in a few days, is the next important step. The recent large-scale prisoner exchange demonstrates the scope for confidence-building measures, and we

welcome the facilitating role played by the United Arab Emirates.

I reaffirm the EU's unwavering support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, within its internationally recognized borders, as well as its inherent right of self-defence. We will continue to support Ukraine and its people for as long as it takes.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Estonia.

Mr. Varem (Estonia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the three Baltic countries — Latvia, Lithuania and my own country, Estonia. We also align ourselves with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union.

I thank you, Sir, for convening this briefing. I also thank the briefers and also warmly welcome all new members of the Security Council.

As many others have said, Russia has started the year 2024 where it left off last year: by unleashing death and destruction in Ukraine. Since 29 December 2023, Russia initiated what could be considered the most extensive missile and drone strikes against Ukraine since the onset of the large-scale war, deploying a total of 500 missiles and drones specifically intended to target high-density residential areas and critical infrastructure, including homes, schools, water systems, power plants and hospitals. Since the beginning of the war, more than 1,300 attacks on health-care facilities have been reported by the World Health Organization in Ukraine. The Russian representative has tried very hard to come up with absurd claims by stating that the damage is caused by the Ukrainian air defence systems. At the same time, he has repeatedly failed to address why Russia even launches missiles that threaten the lives of the innocent civilians of another sovereign country in the first place.

We also condemn Iran and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which are providing weapons and ammunition to Russia in its indiscriminate war against Ukraine. We once again reiterate our call for a United Nations investigation on weapons transfers and a report to the Security Council. Our countries have joined the joint statement, which was mentioned before.

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have, altogether, contributed more than \$100 million of humanitarian aid to the people of Ukraine, and we will continue to

support Ukraine until the aggressor is defeated. I would also like to acknowledge the efforts of the Humanitarian Coordinator for Ukraine, Ms. Denise Brown, and her leadership on the winter response plan.

In conclusion, the sharp increase of Russia's attacks demonstrate that its criminal goals have not changed. We call upon Russia to respect the calls of the international community, voiced in relevant General Assembly resolutions calling for the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of Russian military forces from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

In the interests of time, we will share our full statement after the meeting.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Italy.

Mr. Massari (Italy): Italy fully aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of the European Union and would like to add some considerations in its national capacity.

Today, almost two years after Russia's full-scale, unprovoked, unjustifiable and illegal invasion of Ukraine, we stand together with the Ukrainian people, more united than ever, to reaffirm our unwavering commitment to our shared values based on the rules-based multilateral order, as recognized in the Charter of the United Nations.

Italy condemns in the strongest possible way Russia's continuous brutal attacks targeting civilian infrastructure in cities across Ukraine and its complete disregard for the call rising from the entire membership to put an end to its invasion of Ukraine. Russia will have to be accountable for the war crimes and the heavy damage caused by its war of aggression. Assistance to Ukraine has been a priority for Italy since the beginning of the conflict and throughout 2023. Our country has provided more than €2 billion in aid, including humanitarian support and reception measures for refugees from Ukraine. Italy fully supports the humanitarian actors who are working tirelessly to ensure the protection of the population. Rapid, safe and unhindered access to humanitarian assistance for those in need in Ukraine must be guaranteed. As the current Chair of the Mine Action Support Group, Italy is particularly proud of the broad engagement of the international community, together with the United Nations, to support the swift demining of the territory in order to prevent further

humanitarian impacts, especially on children, and to sustain Ukrainian agriculture to the benefit of global food security.

We are committed to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. Political, military and economic support for Ukraine is one of the key priorities of our Group of Seven presidency, and we are determined to maintain that priority for as long as is necessary to reach a just, comprehensive and lasting peace.

In conclusion, Italy intends to play an active role in the reconstruction and social and economic recovery of Ukraine. A bilateral conference on the reconstruction of Ukraine was organized in Rome in April 2023, while, in 2025, we will host the Ukraine Recovery Conference. Together, we will lay the foundations for a prosperous, independent Ukraine within our common European family.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.