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<i>President:</i>	Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett	(Guyana)
<i>Members:</i>	Algeria	Mr. Bendjama
	China	Mr. Zhang Jun
	Ecuador	Mr. De La Gasca
	France	Mr. Séjourné
	Japan	Mr. Tsuji
	Malta	Mrs. Frazier
	Mozambique	Mr. Afonso
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Cho
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Sierra Leone	Mr. Sowa
	Slovenia	Ms. Fajon
	Switzerland	Mr. Cassis
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Lord David Cameron
	United States of America	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield

Agenda

Maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine

The President: I call on the representative of the Russian Federation on a point of order.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to say a few words on a point of order.

We are in a crowded Chamber. And not only is the Chamber crowded, but the list of speakers is also full of non-members of the Security Council who call themselves Ministers for Foreign Affairs of European Union (EU) countries. With rare exceptions, the European Union member States do not have independent foreign policies. Consequently, there are no Ministers for Foreign Affairs, but simply officials pretending to be such. All EU foreign policy is in the hands of Brussels, while in turn Brussels is in the hands of Washington.

And so perhaps, Madam President, you can answer a rhetorical question. What is the added value of statements by officials that were written under dictation, other than an opportunity to show themselves off on the television screens of their countries while expressing their “unconditional and unshakable” support for their Kyiv clients?

There is a representative of the EU to the United Nations here in New York. He could have spoken on behalf of everyone. The EU has a common foreign and security policy. What can they possibly add to that? Perhaps they can tell us about the weapons they are supplying to the criminal Kyiv regime, which it uses not to target military facilities, but instead peaceful civilians in Russian cities.

Let the representative of the United Kingdom tell us how his former Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, dissuaded the Kyiv authorities from concluding a peace agreement with Russia that had already been initialled in April 2022, thereby encouraging Kyiv to continue fighting and condemning to death tens of thousands of unfortunate Ukrainians who were thrown into the front as cannon fodder.

By the way, where were they all yesterday when the Council was discussing the Middle East peace process and the situation in Gaza? Where was the Secretary-General? I would like to remind everyone that not a single European Union country — in fact, not a single Western country — has once put forward an initiative to convene even a single meeting on Gaza, where the number of civilian casualties as a result of flagrant violations of international humanitarian law by Israel for four and a half months, most of whom are women and children, has far exceed the figures in any of the military conflicts in recent years.

This speaks more than eloquently of their hypocrisy and double standards. I want to warn them in advance that I do not intend to listen to ritual mantras of representatives of European States. They can practice their eloquence in front of each other, polluting the airwaves with their hypocritical statements.

The President: I would like to warmly welcome the Secretary-General, the ministers and the other high-level representatives present in the Security Council Chamber. Their presence today underscores the importance of the subject matter under discussion.

In accordance with rule 37 of the Council’s provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Croatia, Germany, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Poland, Portugal and Ukraine to participate in this meeting.

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

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

The Secretary-General: The Charter of the United Nations and international law are our guide to creating a world free from the scourge of war. Yet Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine directly violated both. Two years on, and a decade since Russia’s attempted illegal annexation of Ukraine’s Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, the war in Ukraine remains an open wound at the heart of Europe. It is high time for peace, a just peace, based on the United Nations Charter, international law and General Assembly resolutions.

The Charter is unequivocal. The United Nations is based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its Members. International disputes shall be settled by

peaceful means. And all States shall refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any other State. Mechanisms to settle disputes are set out in Chapter VI of the Charter. They include negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement and resort to regional agencies or arrangements. Those must be the tools we use to settle grievances.

Our world is at a chaotic moment. Following the Cold War and then a period of unipolarity, we are now making a turbulent transition to an as-yet uncertain multipolar world. Power relations are unclear, creating a sense of instability and impunity. All borders are the result of history. Many communities are divided by those borders. Many people living on one side have strong ethnic, cultural or other links to communities on the other side.

Can we afford to address different interpretations of history, which are so widespread around the world, through war? We must pay tribute to the wisdom of African leaders and follow their example. Colonial Powers, including my own country, divided the continent of Africa with the stroke of a pen, as they did in other parts of the world. But post-independence leaders understood that trying to change borders would open a Pandora's box of bloodshed and fuel even greater grievances. In my experience, it is extremely difficult for people to agree on the past. What is more important, and less difficult, is to help them agree on the future. To agree on that future, and on international law and the principles set out in the Charter, including respect for States' territorial integrity and political independence, is fundamental. That is why the Russian invasion of Ukraine is such a dangerous precedent.

In any war, everyone suffers, but the people of Ukraine are suffering appallingly from the war inflicted on them by Russia. More than 10,500 civilian men, women and children have been killed, although the true figure is likely higher. The damage to or destruction of hospitals, schools, health facilities and civilian infrastructure is frequent and intensifying. Ninety education and health-care facilities were damaged or destroyed in January alone. And in the middle of a brutal winter, more than 380 towns and villages across the country were without electricity earlier this month, according to the Ukrainian energy company. The United Nations has documented widespread and disturbing brutality. The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine reported civilians and prisoners

tortured, and more than 200 hundred cases of sexual violence, mostly, but not only, at the hands of the Russian Federation's forces. All perpetrators must be held to account.

Many Ukrainians are experiencing the living nightmare of losing their children. All of the children who have been deported must be reunited with their families. Almost 4 million Ukrainians have been internally displaced, including almost 1 million children, and more than 14.5 million people inside the country are in need of humanitarian assistance. Humanitarian aid programmes run by the United Nations and our partners, particularly our Ukrainian partners, reached 11 million people last year. That aid included the provision of life-saving food, water, health care and shelter, as well as the work of removing the deadly explosives that litter the Ukrainian landscape. Yet access to around 1.5 million people is extremely restricted. That must change. The attacks on humanitarians and civilian infrastructure must stop. And I urge donors to fund in full the \$3.1 billion appeal to put our Ukrainian humanitarian response plan into practice so that we can continue our vital work.

(spoke in French)

The war is also hurting the people of Russia. Thousands of young Russians have died on the front lines. The civilians hit by strikes on Russian cities are also suffering. The danger of the conflict escalating and spreading is very real. The war is deepening geopolitical divides all over the world. It is fanning regional instability, shrinking the space available to address other urgent global issues and undermining the shared norms and values that contribute to our common security. The conflict has precipitated a surge in food prices, economic shocks and a global cost-of-living crisis, severely affecting developing countries that are still recovering from the coronavirus disease. Furthermore, the possibility that the war could lead to a nuclear accident is of blood-chilling concern for the entire world. Both sides in the conflict must take every possible measure at every nuclear power plant in Ukraine to prevent that from happening. The International Atomic Energy Agency will continue to support those efforts. We will also continue to work to ensure free and safe navigation in the Black Sea so that the Ukrainian and Russian food and fertilizers that the world needs so badly can reach the global market without restrictions.

Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine began we have seen two years of fighting and suffering and two years in which global tensions have been exacerbated and global relations strained. We have had enough. Disregard for the Charter has been the root cause of the problem. Honouring it is the solution, which means honouring the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine, within its internationally recognized borders. It is time for us to recommit to the Charter and demonstrate renewed respect for international law. That is the path to peace and security in Ukraine and throughout the world.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

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

I call on the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia.

Ms. Fajon (Slovenia): I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his lucid, frank and insightful briefing, as always.

It has been two years of death and destruction for Ukraine and its people; two years of international humanitarian law violations; two years of human rights violations and two years of aggression. To add to that grim picture, this week also marks 10 years since the illegal annexation of Crimea. While I am aware of the possibility of repetitiveness, I want to seize the opportunity I have today to sit in the Chamber and represent a member of the Security Council in order to condemn once again the Russian aggression against Ukraine, in blatant violation of the Charter of the United Nations and the Helsinki Final Act on the inviolability of borders in Europe. Slovenia fully supports Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. While it has been attacked with artillery shells, drones and ballistic missiles, the rest of the world has been attacked with narratives, particularly on how the war started and why it was inevitable.

Let me provide the Council with our own perspective, that of a country committed to peace and the peaceful settlement of international disputes and of a Security Council member from the region that is being destabilized by the war. My country believes that Russia is demonstrating a complete disregard for the Charter, just as it is demonstrating complete disregard for the vast body of international law and key

agreements that have provided stability and security both in Europe and internationally. The war has resulted in lives lost, families torn apart and infrastructure destroyed. There is no alternative story to be told or additional compelling narrative to be shared— just a story of death and destruction. Despite our geographic location, we did not see the war coming. To be more exact, we refused to believe that it was coming or that a major war on our doorstep was possible, one that would so blatantly violate the borders of a sovereign State, destabilizing the whole region and changing the global geopolitical landscape. But while we are two years into this senseless war, we do not accept it and most definitely do not accept the demands of the occupying Russian forces. We are not tired of calling the aggression out and demanding that it stop. We will spare no effort in pursuing full accountability for its long list of atrocities and other international crimes.

Slovenia applauds the Ukrainian nation for its bravery and its people's resolute defence of their motherland. We share their vision of a just, lasting and sustainable peace, and we join in the collective efforts to that end. That peace is worth believing in and acting on, and we will continue to stand by Ukraine until we reach that goal.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of France.

Mr. Séjourné (France) (*spoke in French*): Russia has been waging a large-scale war of aggression against Ukraine and the Ukrainian people for two years now—an unjust, unjustifiable and illegal war of aggression. In total, it has been 10 years since Russia sought to invade its neighbour and take part of its territory. Neither the false pretexts employed by Russia nor the propaganda and massive disinformation on social networks can withstand that clear and indisputable point. Russia continues to attack its neighbour. Russian troops are present on the territory of Ukraine, a sovereign State.

Russia alone chose war, which it has decided to wage for two years and for which it bears sole responsibility. Russia could choose to put an end to the war and to withdraw its troops from Ukrainian territory, but it is not doing so. On the contrary, it continues to wage a war whose consequences cause many populations, our populations, to suffer. They are the populations of the most vulnerable countries, those which suffer the most from the food and energy crisis.

This war, as I said, is illegal. It is in every way contrary to the Charter of the United Nations and to the rules and principles that underpin the international order that we built at the end of the Second World War. The Council must remain the guarantor of that order, as it must also guarantee respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of States. We cannot, we must not, give up on it. We must uphold and respect the law. I thank the Secretary-General, in that respect, for recalling those principles very clearly in his statement.

Russia is violating the principles of the Charter, as well as the resolutions adopted by the Council. It also uses drones acquired in Iran and missiles supplied by North Korea to carry out its strikes. It is illegally occupying the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant and has not hesitated to mine the area surrounding the plant. That, irresponsibly, increases the risk of a nuclear accident. Russia is hindering the freedom of movement in the Black Sea. It is using energy and food as weapons of war and coercion. It is using disinformation. I cannot allow the representative of the Russian Federation to say that the ministers have not met on the topic of Gaza. I, myself, presided over a weekly ministerial-level meeting on that very topic that was attended by numerous European Union ministers.

Russia's war is illegal, too, because its troops are committing massive human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law. In addition to being illegal, the Russian war is also inhumane. And I wish to reiterate here our strongest condemnation of the massacres of civilians, of the rapes and torture used as weapons of war, and of the deportations of Ukrainian children. Those crimes must not go unpunished. That is the entire purpose behind the two arrest warrants issued by the International Criminal Court last year. Russia would have us forget all of that.

Russia wants to convince us of its inevitable victories and would like us to give up on defending our security, as well as our values. It will fail in that goal, as well as in others. First, Russia has failed from the military standpoint. After two years of immense loss of human life — hundreds of thousands of lives — and at the cost of merciless domestic repression of the voices that speak of the absurdity of this war and an economy in decline despite falsified statistics, Russia is stagnating militarily and is retreating from the Black Sea.

Russia will also fail in discouraging us. On Monday, France will gather the countries that are determined to increase support for Ukraine and to address the threat that Russia poses to their security around the President of the Republic. We stand in solidarity with, and are fully committed to, Ukraine. Ukraine is exercising its legitimate right to self-defence. It is defending its very existence and freedom in the face of the aggressor. And yet Ukraine is the only party seeking peace, proposing initiatives in that vein — the plan of President Zelenskyy. France and Europe will continue, together, to support the peace plan proposed by President Zelenskyy.

The Council must be united around the objective required by the Charter, everywhere and from everyone. In this war, we must seek the victory of the Charter through Russia's defeat.

The President: I now call on Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs of the United Kingdom.

Lord David Cameron (United Kingdom): We meet two years since Vladimir Putin ordered a wholly unprovoked invasion of a sovereign Member of the United Nations. There are air strikes at dawn and tanks rolling across the border. There are preposterous claims that this was not a declaration of war. In many ways the most remarkable thing was the total lack of any justification whatsoever or of any threat from Ukraine. There has been abject disregard for the laws that bind nations and for the principles of the United Nations. We noted the brazenness with which Putin still claimed this was somehow legitimate. Days after 24 February (see A/ES-11/PV.1), the General Assembly declared that the invasion was wrong and that Russia must withdraw immediately. Two years on, that has not changed. And so today I want to pose two questions.

My first question is to the Kremlin. My first visit as Foreign Secretary was to Ukraine. I stood in the wreckage of Odesa's bombed out cathedral. I saw brave Ukrainians kissing loved ones goodbye as they left to defend their homeland. And I know that such scenes are not limited to Ukraine. Russian mothers, too, have had to bid farewell to Russian sons. Russian cities, too, now bear the scars of war. My question to Putin is simple: why? His Government claims this to be a battle between brothers. What twisted form of brotherhood is this for which so many lives must be ruined? How is Russia living up to its responsibilities, as a permanent member of the Security Council, to uphold international peace

and security. And how many ridiculous explanations have we now had for this invasion? Are they criminals or are they fellow Russians? One minute Ukraine is an existential threat and the next we are told it does not exist. Are they fighting stooges of NATO or Nazis? The only people behaving like Nazis are the Putin regime, invading another country and hoping the world will be weak and let them get away with it. That is the simple truth. Putin believes he can take territories, redraw borders, exercise force to build his empire. And we must not let this stand. We know Ukraine's answer. We saw the courage of President Zelenskyy two years ago. And I say to the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation: he is quite capable, and the Ukrainian people are quite capable, of making up their own mind about whether they should surrender part of their country to Russia's illegal invasion.

Today we admire the perseverance of the Ukrainian people day in and day out. They will not falter. Indeed, they are continuing to push Russia back, liberating half the land Putin seized and driving the Russian navy out of its base in Sevastopol. The course of the war may ebb and flow, but the seizure of a small town does not change the reality of Russia's situation. The Russian military is being drained of its modern equipment. It is having to rely on poor quality shells from Pyongyang. And it sent a generation of Russian boys into the meat grinder. What does Russia tell their mothers they died for? Or does it not even bother?

The Kremlin expected Ukraine to fold, but they are standing firm for their freedom. And everyone should know Britain's answer as well. Last month, the Prime Minister was the first foreign leader to address the Rada. We are the first country to have signed a security pact with Ukraine. And yesterday we imposed further sanctions, clamping down on Russia's military industrial complex and those enablers seeking to keep it running. Those sanctions are a reminder that we will not falter. We will stand firm for Ukraine's freedom. The world has also seen Alexei Navalny's answer. He showed incredible courage in returning to Russia. He did not falter and has now suffered terrible consequences for standing firm for Russian democracy.

Today is an opportunity to give the world's answer. All of us abhor needless suffering. None of us have escaped the economic consequences of the war, and yet we all know what is at stake here. In acting so brazenly, Putin is not only trying to seize a chunk of his neighbour's territory. He is not only trying to extinguish

the Ukrainian people's right to self-determination. He is openly trying to upset the international order, replacing it not with some progressive vision of equality of nations but with a return to a nineteenth-century ideology where might, particularly his might, is right. That is why we must all stand up to Putin, not just out of sympathy for Ukraine, but because his actions in Ukraine are so dangerous for everyone else. If we give into the idea that one country can invade another with impunity, we will be left in a dreadful situation where any country could face a similar fate. Respect for sovereignty lies at the heart of the international system, at the heart of the United Nations. Nothing matters more to its members than having our borders treated as inviolable. And that is why nothing should matter more to us than seeing Putin fail. We must not falter. We must stand firm.

The President: I now call on the Federal Councillor and Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland.

Mr. Cassis (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Our Organization was founded on the pursuit of peace. Peace is our *raison d'être*. Today I would like to use the words that the Secretary-General used earlier this month when he addressed the General Assembly (see A/78/PV.54) — "Peace is our *raison d'être*." Switzerland wholeheartedly shares that vision. The slogan for our candidacy for a seat on the Security Council reflected that — A Plus for Peace. That plus sign symbolizes the white cross at the heart of our red flag, embodying our continuing commitment to building and maintaining peace in the world.

Regrettably, over the past two years, the Security Council has not fully assumed its responsibility to guarantee peace and security for Ukraine and its people. Of course, we have constantly called for peace and respect for international humanitarian law, and we have redoubled our efforts to put an end to the conflict. Today the lives lost are in the thousands. The numbers of displaced persons are in the millions and the families that have been torn apart are uncountable. The repercussions, both in Europe and around the world, are now obvious in terms of food, energy, security and so on.

What can we do? Above all, what are we doing? What are we doing to ensure respect for the Charter of the United Nations? What are we doing to ensure that the Geneva Conventions are no longer violated? What are

we doing to ensure that humanity in war is assured and peace is restored? One thing is certain — despite all the frustration caused by this war, indeed by all wars, we must not give into pessimism. We must rather analyse and act based on the facts to find every possible path to peace, in the light of our history as the United Nations.

We in this Chamber are the guardians of peace. Together we therefore bear the responsibility for this ideal, decided three quarters of a century ago. We must succeed in taking a first step on that path because the cause of peace is too great to allow our differences to stop us. In January, on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos, in Switzerland, and at Ukraine's behest, Switzerland expressed its commitment to organizing a high-level conference on peace in Ukraine. We are well aware of the complexity of that mission, of its winding path and uncertain horizon. But we are working tirelessly to create a dynamic that is both pragmatic and inclusive. I firmly believe that we must listen to everyone to understand one another's grammar of peace. The uncertain horizon will become ever more certain through a broad alliance among all the regions of the world. And the winding road will be less winding if we avoid the pitfalls of the rhetoric that fuels the opposition.

I urge everyone here to take that first step, to stand up today and walk together towards peace. Of course, Switzerland is neither the first nor the only country that wants to take action. Other countries are also committed, and I welcome their initiatives. But time is running out. Let us join forces to start a process before the summer. Switzerland is prepared to put all its energy into it, even if the request comes from only one party, Ukraine. Although my country condemns the Russian military aggression, what we are asking for today is a collective effort.

In this Chamber, peace is our *raison d'être*. A high-level conference on peace in Ukraine is a first step — insufficient on its own but indispensable as a starting point. I am sure that other nations will be able to take up the baton. Now we need to start with pragmatism and realism — pragmatism, so that we can find a common denominator for our nations; realism, so that we can find a way to ultimately bring Ukraine and Russia on board. To prepare for peace tomorrow, I hope that I can count on the Council today. Our *raison d'être* depends on it.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Cho (Republic of Korea): I would like to thank Guyana for convening this meeting and to express my appreciation to Secretary-General Guterres for his insightful yet sadly troubling briefing.

Indeed, it feels almost surreal to be in the very Chamber that bears the primary responsibility for international peace and security in order to address the unlawful aggression of one of its permanent members. Two years after Russian tanks crossed into Ukraine, violating the most sacrosanct tenet of the Charter of the United Nations, we see no signs of Russia's unlawful actions abating. Sadly, we see a humanitarian disaster unfolding. The conflict is claiming the lives of tens of thousands of civilians, upending livelihoods and inflicting long-lasting trauma, especially on children. A generation of young Ukrainians and Russians is perishing because of an ill-begotten war. Russia's war on Ukraine is not only tearing at the fabric of the United Nations, it has shattered the sense of security, not only for the people of Ukraine but also for its neighbours.

The impact of the war has also been reverberating around the world, disrupting energy supplies and food security and exacerbating economic and social crises in other parts of the world. The flagrant violation of international norms and obligations denying Ukrainian independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity must cease immediately. International humanitarian law, which clearly prohibits attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, must be adhered to at all times and by all parties.

As a nation that knows all too well what it means to suffer from military aggression, Korea firmly believes that aggression must not go unanswered. As a nation all too familiar with the agonizing consequences of armed conflict, Korea has a profound sense of empathy with the plight of the Ukrainian people. That is why President Yoon Suk Yeol visited Ukraine last July and launched the Ukraine Peace and Solidarity Initiative. Under that initiative, Korea has provided \$140 million in humanitarian assistance to Ukraine, including demining equipment and emergency medical vehicles. Starting this year, we will provide a comprehensive aid package of \$2.3 billion, spread out over several years, to help to alleviate the suffering of the Ukrainian people and to rebuild their nation. We are also collaborating with international partners through the Multi-agency

Donor Coordination Platform for Ukraine to ensure that our collective assistance is both effective and well-coordinated.

My Government is deeply troubled by the emerging military cooperation between Russia and North Korea. North Korean munitions and missiles have been sighted in Ukraine, which not only aggravates the human suffering, but also risks further escalating and prolonging the war in Ukraine. If and when it turns out to be the case that North Korea receives in return advanced military technology or oil shipments exceeding limits under Security Council resolutions, that would redound to North Korea's ability to threaten security on the Korean peninsula and beyond. Both dimensions of that nexus constitute unequivocal violations of multiple Security Council resolutions and undermine the global non-proliferation regime. We strongly urge Russia and North Korea to comply with the relevant Security Council resolutions, all of which were unanimously adopted in this Chamber.

The ongoing conflict in Ukraine is heightening geopolitical tensions worldwide, presenting us with challenges of unprecedented magnitude. Therefore, it is imperative that the Security Council devise effective strategies to navigate those complexities, notwithstanding inherent shortcomings and current constraints, to fulfil its fundamental duty of maintaining international peace and security. I wish to reaffirm Korea's commitment, as a member of the Security Council, to actively contribute to realizing that goal.

The President: I now call on the Permanent Representative of the United States and member of President Biden's Cabinet.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): I thank Secretary-General Guterres for his briefing and thank Guyana for calling this important meeting. I welcome the many Foreign Ministers joining us today. Their presence reflects the importance that we accord this issue.

Two years ago, on a cold February evening, I gathered with many Council members in this Chamber. The United States and Albania had called a late-night emergency meeting (see S/PV.8974) because they feared Russia's invasion of Ukraine was imminent, and they were right.

We had been sounding the alarm for weeks. I had informed the Council in no uncertain terms about the build-up of troops along the border with Ukraine.

Secretary Blinken had come to the Security Council (see S/PV.8968), laying out in exacting detail our concerns that Russia would soon invade its sovereign neighbour. And then, on 24 February, it did. While I and other members of the Council called for diplomacy and de-escalation, President Putin openly chose war. Even as the Russian representative who was sitting in the President's chair denied it in this Chamber, we could see the reality of Russia's brutal aggression unfolding in real time. The world could see that choice between violence and diplomacy, war and peace unfolding in real time.

Today, despite Putin's best efforts, the world continues to bear witness to Russian brutality, Russian hypocrisy and Russian cruelty. Thanks to the unrelenting work of Ukrainian investigators and aid workers, fearless journalists and numerous United Nations bodies, including the Security Council, we have seen through the Kremlin lies. We have seen through the lie that it was not Russian troops who illegally seized Crimea 10 years ago — a falsehood that, when it suited him, Putin eventually admitted to — and the lie that the transnational criminal organization Wagner Group had no affiliation with the Kremlin. Of course, the widespread deployment of Wagner Group forces, as well as Putin's own admission that the Kremlin financed its work, proved otherwise. And of course, we saw through the lie that, in the months leading up to Russia's invasion two years ago, Russia had no intention to further invade Ukraine, that the nearly 200,000 troops that assembled near the border were simply a military exercise. Through those lies, Putin has tried to rewrite history, to justify the unjustifiable, to break the will of the Ukrainian people and to break the will of the international community as we stand up for the Charter of the United Nations and its foundational principles of sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

We cannot let that happen — not when Russia continues to bomb grain silos, last destroying more than 300,000 tons of grain in a matter of months last year; not when the Kremlin continues to detain political activists, journalists, opposition leaders and people like Alexei Navalny, who was killed for speaking truth to power about the authoritarian rot at the heart of Russia's Government; not when Russian forces have committed war crimes and crimes against humanity in Ukraine, including summary executions, torture and sexual violence; and not when hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian civilians have been deported to Russia or

forcibly transferred within Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine, babies as young as a few months old whose Ukrainian identities Russia has stripped and whose futures it has permanently changed.

The list of Russian violations and abuse abuses could, unfortunately, go on and on. That senseless war has worsened a global food insecurity crisis, roiled the global energy market, caused incalculable damages to our environment and undermined the global non-proliferation regime. For two years, President Putin has been hell bent on beating Ukrainians into submission. And yet, in the face of so much cruelty, so much trauma, so much death and destruction, the Ukrainian people have not been cowed. They have fought back, and they have done so effectively. Vastly outnumbered, they have not only defended their land, but their freedoms, their democracy and their identity. And they have shown the world that community is a form of resistance.

I think about the people setting up makeshift schools and bomb shelters, the medical professionals nursing orphans back to health and then hiding those babies from Russians hoping to take them, and the workers I met at a grain processing facility in Kyiv, people who risk their lives to feed the hungriest among us. For two years, Ukrainians have stopped Putin's quest to conquer their country, strip it of its independence and absorb it into Russia, while fighting to keep the world fed and warm.

Therefore, as a global community, we must support Ukraine to help it to fight not only for peace, but also for a just lasting peace, rooted in the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations of sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence, a peace which time and time again Russia has rejected in favour of violence, destruction and unlawfulness, because — let us be exceedingly clear here — if Russia put down its weapons today, the war would end; if Ukraine put down its weapons, Ukraine would be over. Only one party is the aggressor in this war, and only one party can end it. That was true two years ago when this body gathered on that cold February night as the world turned upside down, and it is true today.

Therefore, amid so many bald-faced lies hurled at us from this Chamber and from Moscow, we continue to stand with the people of Ukraine. And we continue to demand that Russia put an end to its campaign of cruelty; that it withdraw its troops from

Ukraine's internationally recognized border and return the children taken from their homes; that it cease its unlawful procurement of ballistic missiles, launchers and other arms from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in violation of Security Council resolutions; and that it meet its responsibility as a member of the Council and uphold the Charter of the United Nations we have all sworn to protect.

Today President Biden announced new sanctions against Russia for its ongoing war of aggression in Ukraine and for the death of Alexei Navalny. We need to hold Russia accountable so that we need not mark any more tragic milestones like the one today, so that the brave, resilient people of Ukraine can finally see a just and lasting peace.

Mr. Tsuji (Japan): I thank Secretary-General Guterres for his briefing.

Two years ago, Russia started its brutal aggression against Ukraine, and I join the Council today to strongly condemn Russia for continuing that aggression and hostility right up until the present day. We condemn in the strongest terms Russia's aggression against Ukraine. That blatant violation of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, cannot be justified. The sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine must be respected. This is not only a European issue, or is it just a so-called issue pitting Russia against the West. Any attempt to unilaterally change the status quo by force must not be tolerated anywhere in the world.

Many civilians have lost their lives or been injured, and Russia's attacks on hospitals, schools, power plants and other critical infrastructure are not just destroying the present lives of the Ukrainian people, but also threatening their future. International law, including international humanitarian law, must be upheld. All perpetrators of this atrocity must be held accountable.

Russia's procurement of ballistic missiles from North Korea and their use against Ukraine are absolutely unacceptable. Any transfer of weapons or related equipment and technology — low-quality, by the way, if I may add — between Russia and North Korea is a clear violation of relevant Security Council resolutions. We are also deeply concerned about any possible transfer of nuclear and ballistic missile-related technology to North Korea. Russia's threat to use nuclear weapons is a serious and unacceptable menace to the peace and security of the international community.

We respect the efforts of many countries to seek peace. However, it is inappropriate to equate the aggressor with the victim and to demand diplomatic efforts on both sides as if both sides are at fault. Japan reiterates that peace must be based on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. In that regard, Japan supports President Zelenskyy's efforts to promote his peace formula. We must achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine, which overwhelming majorities in the General Assembly and the Security Council have been calling for. We must uphold the international order based on the rule of law.

Since my visit to Kyiv last November, I have been working hard to help the recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine materialize. And on 19 February, Japan invited Prime Minister Shmyhal to Tokyo for the Japan-Ukraine Conference for Promotion of Economic Growth and Reconstruction. At the conference, we confirmed our intention to promote close public-private cooperation and agreed on the importance of medium- to long-term support, with consideration of women and children. Our public and private sectors will further support Ukraine, taking into account the country's needs.

We once again strongly urge Russia to cease its aggression and withdraw immediately and unconditionally from all the internationally recognized territories of Ukraine. This is a matter of principle. It is beyond politics. Therefore, with its allies and partners, Japan will continue to stand by Ukraine for as long as it takes.

Mrs. Frazier (Malta): I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

We have convened to mark two years since the Russian Federation launched its unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine. This war and its continuation is an affront to the Charter of the United Nations, the work of the Security Council and the international peace and security architecture. As members of the Council, we all have a collective responsibility to uphold the Charter of the United Nations. It is up to us to further advance the implementation of the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly during its emergency special session on Ukraine. We must honour the calls of the Secretary-General for diplomatic solutions. All those elements are critical to restoring international peace and security.

The number of civilian casualties in Ukraine significantly increased in December and January as compared with previous months. The Office of the

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has verified that 158 civilians were killed and 483 were injured in January alone. Since the beginning of this war, there have been more than 30,000 civilian casualties and more than 14 million people in need of humanitarian assistance in Ukraine. The deportation and forced transfer of children is of particular concern. According to the Ukrainian National Information Bureau, more than 19,000 children have been deported or forcibly displaced. In that regard, Malta recalls the International Independent Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine established by the Human Rights Council, as well as the Secretary-General's annual report on children in armed conflict (S/2023/363) which shed a light on Russia's violations against children.

The consequences of this conflict have also affected women and girls. They have been disproportionately affected since they are at a far greater risk of gender-based and conflict-related sexual abuse. Despite the horror and trauma that many have experienced over the past 24 months, Ukrainian women and girls have shown remarkable courage and resilience. Millions of them are playing a crucial role in providing humanitarian aid.

Malta is firmly committed to international law and the Charter of the United Nations. We therefore reaffirm our strong support for all ongoing accountability processes. They include the important work of the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court. Those responsible for the crimes committed in Ukraine must be held accountable. There can be no lasting peace without justice. We must also not forget that, by terminating the Black Sea Grain Initiative, Russia has also taken the world's population hostage by blocking Ukrainian grain exports, all the while stealing grain from occupied Ukrainian territories and destroying Ukrainian grain facilities.

In the face of this unilateral blockade, the European Union (EU) has strengthened its support of Ukraine and of global food security. The EU will continue investing in the Solidarity Lanes Action Plan, which has allowed Ukraine to export 67 million tons of grain, oilseeds and related products since May 2022.

In conclusion, Malta will continue to support all efforts to address the consequences of Russia's aggression. We also reiterate that the only step towards a just and lasting peace would be for Russia to immediately cease all hostilities and to unconditionally

and completely withdraw all its forces and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Today's meeting, convened at the initiative of a number of Western delegations, evokes a sense of déjà vu. A year ago, in this same Chamber, the Maltese presidency put together a similar spectacle to mark the first-year anniversary of the start of our special military operation (see S/PV.9269). European ministers flocked to that meeting to read out carbon copies of a scripted anti-Russian statement.

A year ago, it was fashionable for the Western bloc to promote its pseudo-peaceful initiatives that essentially boil down to Orwell's cunning oxymoron "war is peace". At the same time, the West openly persuaded Zelenskyy, who is clearly deficient in strategic thinking, with the dangerous and absurd illusion that with Western support he would be able to defeat Russia on the battlefield. A certain gentleman from a beautiful garden who considers everyone who is not a member of the golden billion to be a weed in that garden tried particularly hard to convince Zelenskyy. In similarly Orwellian fashion, the European Union (EU) supplied weapons to the Kyiv regime with money from the Peace Fund.

Another year has passed since then. Ukraine's much-publicized counter-offensive has failed utterly, but the West has continued to pump weapons into the Kyiv regime anyway, encouraging it to throw ever more Ukrainian lives into the flames of a conflict that the United States, abandoning all decency, now calls a profitable business venture — that is how profitable it has turned out to be for the military-industrial complex. At the same time, a stubborn attempt has continued to promote a process of discussing a completely dead-end pseudo-peace formula, with all sorts of tricks used to badger countries of the global South and East to participate in various meetings within its framework whether in Copenhagen or Davos, in order to pass that off as broad international support. However, it is clear that the countries of the global majority understand the real reasons for those intrigues and definitely have no burning desire to play the role of extras in them, just as they acknowledge that discussing anything without involving Russia is pointless.

What has this year brought Ukraine? The answer is yet more hundreds of thousands of senseless deaths, the impending collapse of its economy and a deep crisis

of governance, since the ineffectiveness and lack of independence of the leadership in Kyiv is becoming ever more obvious to the Ukrainian people. The Government is up to its ears in corruption. It cannot meet even basic social obligations and has resorted to begging, albeit unsuccessfully, Western donors for the money to pay its citizens' pensions. The members of the younger generation, and now even the not-so-young generation, are being rounded up like cattle on the streets to be thrown into the meat grinder in order to show Western donors that they are earning back their investments.

We have heard many bombastic statements today and will hear a lot more. However, in reality the West has no interest whatever in helping Ukraine. The essence of Western policy towards Ukraine was recently summarized frankly by Zanny Minton Beddoes, editor-in-chief of the British publication *The Economist*, who declared in an interview that

"[G]iving the money to Ukraine is the cheapest possible way for the United States to enhance its security. The fighting is being done by the Ukrainians. They are the people who are being killed. The United States and Europe are supplying them with weapons, and in doing so, we are pushing back against Putin."

In the best of its neocolonial traditions, the West, led by the United States, is trying to solve its geopolitical problems, ensure that Washington does not lose its self-appointed role of world hegemon and prevent the emergence of other powerful and self-sufficient poles in the world by paying to advance its interests with the lives of Ukrainians whom it sees as the indigenous peoples of today. Whatever happens, it has already become clear that in this proxy war against Russia of the United States, the EU and NATO, fought by Ukrainians, it is Ukraine that is losing. What is no less important, and no matter how hard it may be for our European colleagues to accept this conclusion, Ukraine is not the only loser in this conflict. Indeed, what is most likely is that the European Union itself will be the main loser.

I would like to take this opportunity to address the representatives of the EU countries. They have been building the European project for so long, proud that they have managed to form a common foreign and security policy. We remember the times when the EU nurtured plans for its own geopolitical role and had its own opinions on an entire range of key international

issues. It is striking how easily they have abandoned all those ambitions, returning to the ranks of obedient satellites of the United States. The conflict in Ukraine, which they are so diligently fuelling with the remaining scraps of European arsenals, is only exacerbating migration problems in their countries and undermining their energy sector. As we learned this week, the direct losses of Germany alone, considered the engine of the EU, owing to the United States-imposed anti-Russian sanctions, have amounted to at least \$200 billion.

Where are Europe's interests in this? It is a pity that they have forgotten that the United States and Great Britain have always been the main beneficiaries of any conflict in continental Europe and that they have intentionally stoked conflicts in the region in order to prevent the emergence of another geopolitical competitor, that is, a united Europe living in peace and cooperation with its neighbour Russia. The newer European members who are promoting American interests have consistently been injecting them with the poison of Russophobia, and the result is that they have poisoned everything. Today, instead of seeing strategic partnerships and mutually beneficial economic projects, they depict Russia as an enemy and are shooting themselves in the foot by supposedly freeing themselves from their energy dependence on our country while becoming even more painfully energy-dependent on the United States.

Moreover, it is now not just Ukraine but the whole of Europe that is at risk of once again becoming a springboard for a military confrontation that it is consistently being dragged into from across the ocean. Do the people of Europe need that? I would like to think that they do not. Opinion polls conducted in January in 12 European countries show that only 10 per cent of Europeans believe that Ukraine can defeat Russia. European farmers are rebelling, because they do not want to lose their agricultural markets to dumping by Ukrainian exporters. The uproar on the Polish-Ukrainian border has been widely broadcast as Polish border guards have refused to let Ukrainian trucks carrying grain through. It is clear that there will be no shining European future for the former breadbasket of the Soviet Union that its puppet leadership has turned into corrupt, criminal Ukraine, with an impoverished population.

After all, ever since it became formally independent, Ukraine's unenviable role has been that of an anti-Russian bridgehead. It was in fact in 2004

that the first anti-constitutional coup d'état organized by the West took place in Ukraine, and in the end it was not supported by the people. Then the West began to prepare for a coup in such a way that there would be no more misfires and in order to destroy the patriotically oriented opposition once and for all. That is precisely what has been happening ever since the 2014 Maidan coup.

The rise to power of the Western Russophobe-sponsored nationalists and neo-Nazis in 2014 was a watershed moment in Ukraine's recent history. The unconstitutional coup d'état, which marked its 10-year anniversary recently, was made possible by blatant interference in the country's internal affairs. That was how Kyiv began to be dragged into adventurist projects aimed at inflicting a strategic defeat on Russia, putting it on course for ignoring the interests and trampling on the rights of the inhabitants of south-eastern Ukraine. A cruel and inhumane so-called anti-terrorist operation was unleashed against people seeking to preserve their identity and their historical and cultural roots, in which the army and nationalist battalions were deployed, in violation of the Constitution of Ukraine. There were no terrorists in Donbas, as the recent decision of the International Court of Justice confirmed. All of that has led to the degradation of Ukrainian statehood, further radicalization, the growth of nationalism and multiple civilian casualties.

The representative of the British puppetmasters of the Kyiv regime asked in this Chamber whether we regret sending our sons to fight in Ukraine. Of course we regret that very much. We also pity the unfortunate Ukrainians who are being sent to die for the geopolitical interests of the West.

However, the representative of the United Kingdom, in the traditional hypocritical manner of the West, neglected to mention the fact that we did the same thing two years ago — not to start a war, but in order to finish one. We did so to put a stop to the war waged by a regime, supported by the United Kingdom, for eight years against the civilian population of Donbas. At that time, more than 14,000 people had already fallen victim to that war, and that was the main reason for the start of the special military operation.

As for the question of who we are fighting in Ukraine, the answer is quite simple if one only recalls who the Kyiv regime reveres as heroes. They include, for example, Stepan Bandera and Roman Shukhevych,

whose troops — together with the Nazis — killed hundreds of thousands of Jews, Poles, Russians and Ukrainians. Ask Mr. Sikorski, who will speak later today, and he will tell you about the Volyn massacre committed by the Ukrainian Insurgent Army and how it is remembered in Poland. We believe that, if the leaders of a country glorify Nazis, speak like Nazis and allow Nazi symbols to be openly displayed, then they themselves are Nazis. The West is simply too cowardly and selectively myopic to acknowledge that.

Once again, taking advantage of the presence of Mr. Séjourné and Mr. Cameron at today's meeting — although unfortunately neither of them is currently in the Chamber — I wish to raise another topic that has been extremely uncomfortable for our Western colleagues for some time now, namely, the Minsk agreements.

About a year ago, we all heard Petro Poroshenko, François Hollande, Angela Merkel and Boris Johnson admit that neither France, nor Germany, nor even the United Kingdom ever took those agreements seriously. They never intended to push the Ukrainian authorities to implement them and used them only to stall and give Kyiv time to prepare for war with Russia. That was, in essence, an admission of guilt by the leaders of those States, who openly and even proudly acknowledged that deliberate violation of resolution 2202 (2015), which endorsed the Minsk agreements.

But that does not prevent the representatives of those same States, as though none of that had happened, from speaking in the Council, lecturing other members, stating the importance of complying with international law and accusing other countries of failing to comply with Security Council resolutions. More precisely, they call for adherence to a rules-based international order — rules that were invented by them and for their own benefit.

In the years since the signing of the Minsk agreements, the Kyiv regime has continued its military preparations, strengthened the combat potential of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and intensified its military-technical cooperation with foreign States. Only after all attempts to convince the Ukrainian side, as well as its Western sponsors, to implement fully and in good faith the package of measures for the implementation of the Minsk agreements — the fundamental document for resolving the internal crisis in Ukraine — turned out to be in vain was the decision taken to launch a special

military operation to protect the lives of residents of Donbas in accordance with Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations.

Today my American colleague, while trying to find new reasons to attack Russia, mentioned that Alexei Navalny, who was convicted of a real criminal offence, died in prison of natural causes. Can the representative of the United States tell me why, then, did the Kyiv regime torture the American journalist Gonzalo Lira to death, and why neither she nor her Government did anything to save him? She has been bashfully silent about that and other crimes committed by the Kyiv regime and prefers to lay the blame at someone else's doorstep.

All conflicts come to an end sooner or later. There is no doubt that the conflict in Ukraine, too, will come to an end. Of course, the longer it drags on due to sustained Western support for Kyiv, the more unfavourable conditions for peace will be in Ukraine. In the long run, the conclusions that the Western bloc draws for itself will become of fundamental importance. Will it continue on its suicide mission, stubbornly imposing its one-sided rules-based order on the rest of the world, attempting to divide the world into satellites and enemies? Or it will still engage in meaningful dialogue to find ways to build a truly just world order, where the interests of all States will be guaranteed?

For now, we must note with regret that Europe is gripped by strategic blindness. It sees the Euro-Atlantic security architecture through a rifle scope, stoking its own fears of the Russian threat from which it needs to defend itself, while denying Russia its own legitimate defensive interests. That is a futile and flawed approach that undermines the basic principles of the indivisibility of security.

Those fears about Russia's supposed impending aggression against European countries are laughable. Perhaps it has been forgotten that it was European States across various eras — Poland, Sweden, France, Germany and a whole range of its satellites and almost all of Europe during the Second World War — that attacked the Russian State with remarkable tenacity, trying to defeat it and invariably failing. The United States tried to do the same during the Cold War. We all know well the disreputable role of the United Kingdom, whose diplomacy has consisted of subtly pitting countries and peoples against each other for centuries and who continues to do so to this day.

Russian statehood was shaped in conditions of constant external threat. Our peace-loving Western colleagues really do not like to recall the fact that it was Russia that has always had to repel Western aggression. But our people remember that very well. We know that anti-Russian propaganda about the mythical Russian threat is becoming less and less believable to the general public in Western countries. That is why they are being bundled in webs of lies in an attempt to prevent them seeing the truth. Yet the truth is breaking through those lies thanks to the efforts of those who understand what the entire world risks due to the prolongation and aggravation of the current confrontation. One such information breakthrough arose thanks to the American journalist Tucker Carlson, whose interview with the Russian President opened the eyes of millions of people around the world.

Beyond the horizon of the current moment, discussions on a fair and indivisible Euro-Atlantic security system are becoming increasingly important. In its current distorted form, it is in the interests only of the United States and its NATO allies, who have afforded themselves the right to interfere in international issues and the internal affairs of other States. Their bases are located on our borders, in violation of key provisions that helped bring about an end to the Cold War. Western leaders deceived us then and want to continue to deceive us now, rendering absolute NATO's right to expand uncontrollably and transforming almost any corner of the world into the alliance's zone of responsibility.

I would like to recall that Russia proposed a substantive dialogue on security guarantees at the end of 2021, putting forward concrete proposals to NATO and the United States that were then arrogantly rejected. The result was a new hot conflict in Europe. The West simply left us no choice. We were simply forced to protect our people and our future. At the same time, we have never refused negotiations — it was the Kyiv regime that rebuffed them.

I wish to emphasize that it is still possible to preserve Ukraine in some form. But it must be a peaceful, neutral Ukraine, in which there is no discrimination or Russophobia, in which Nazi criminals are not glorified and from which there is no threat to Russia. That is the goal of our special military operation. It is therefore up to the collective West's decision whether we will need to fight to the end — as we are capable of doing — or

whether common sense will yet prevail in Washington, London and Brussels and they will try to save at least something from Ukraine.

Mr. Zhang Jun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Secretary-General Guterres for his briefing.

The ongoing crisis in Ukraine is threatening to become a protracted, compounded and wider crisis. This tragedy, which could have been avoided, has become what it is today. That is both distressing and worthy of deep reflection. The international community should pull together in search of a just and sensible solution to settle the crisis politically and to let peace prevail as soon as possible.

First, efforts should remain focused on a political settlement. The crisis in Ukraine has caused incalculable damage. The most pressing priority of the hour is to stop hostilities, launch peace talks and restore peace. Peace is in the interest of all parties. The sooner peace talks begin, the less damage will be done. Any action that is conducive to peace and greater trust, however small it may seem, is worth our bona fide efforts, as long as there is a glimmer of hope. We call upon the parties concerned to show a sense of responsibility and to make constructive diplomatic efforts to promote de-escalation and détente. They should be creating favourable conditions for the resumption of negotiations, not human-made obstacles making peace harder to achieve, and much less supplying weapons, stoking the fire and pouring oil on it and profiting from the prolonged crisis. We look forward to greater efforts by the United Nations to promote peace talks and alleviate the humanitarian situation.

Secondly, we must stay the course towards common security, which is our overarching goal. In the face of complexities and challenges, we must be firmly committed to the vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security. We must respect the legitimate security concerns of all countries and never lose sight of the fact that security is indivisible, that one country's security cannot be compromised at the expense of another country's security and that regional security cannot be guaranteed by strengthening or even expanding a military bloc. The legitimate security interests and concerns of all countries should be taken seriously and addressed properly. It must be pointed out that the situation that Europe is facing today is closely related to the repeated eastward expansion of NATO since the end of the Cold War. We encourage NATO

to do some soul-searching, come out of the cage of Cold War mentality and refrain from acting as an agent of troubles instigating bloc confrontations. We urge NATO leaders to look at the world through an objective lens, to stop sabre-rattling and to do what is genuinely conducive to world peace.

Thirdly, the spillover effects of the crisis must be proactively managed. The world is in enough turmoil as it is; it cannot afford to be hit by more crises that are bigger than those we already have. Attempting to solve problems by creating more problems does not work. Certain countries, using the Ukrainian crisis as a pretext, have indiscriminately imposed unilateral sanctions and long-arm jurisdiction and have exerted unjustified pressure on the businesses of other countries, which has adversely affected the global industrial supply chain and disrupted the order of global trade. The world economy is interdependent, and it is wrong to instrumentalize or weaponize the world economy. China firmly opposes the unlawful sanctions imposed on Chinese companies by the United States, the United Kingdom and the European Union using the Ukraine issue as an excuse. China will continue to take the necessary measures to safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese enterprises and citizens.

Fourthly, we must actively advocate the equitable and orderly multipolarization of the world. The Cold War ended more than 30 years ago. Since then, the international landscape has undergone profound adjustments, and the multipolarization of the world has picked up pace. That is the trend of our times; the tide of history. Humankind is a community with a shared future. All countries, large and small, are equal members of the global community when it comes to international relations and are entitled to a place in the international arena. All countries should jointly abide by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, adhere to the universally accepted basic norms governing international relations and practise genuine multilateralism without selective application or double standards. It is not an option for the world to slide back to the colonial age. International affairs should not be monopolized by a minority of countries. Trying to obstruct other countries' progress through hegemony and bullying is not right and will not work. On the other hand, major countries have a particular responsibility for world peace and security and must conduct their relations responsibly and manage their differences properly in pursuit of win-win cooperation.

China played no part in bringing about the crisis in Ukraine, and neither is China a party to the crisis itself. We have not been watching the inferno from across the river, much less cashing in on the crisis. On the question of Ukraine, China has always maintained that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries should be respected, the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations observed, the legitimate security concerns of all countries given due consideration and all efforts conducive to the peaceful resolution of the crisis supported. China's constructive role in and unrelenting efforts towards the political settlement of the Ukraine issue will continue.

Mr. De La Gasca (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin by thanking the Secretary-General for his statement and his tireless efforts for peace. I also recognize the presence in the Chamber of the high-level officials.

Exactly 729 days have passed since the Russian military aggression began in Ukraine, in clear violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. Ecuador recalls, with regret, the emergency meeting held by the Security Council on the night of 23 February 2022 (see S/PV.8974), because, at that meeting, we received confirmation of the unjustifiable actions carried out against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

Over the past two years, we have witnessed the devastation that the conflict has inflicted on the Ukrainian people, along with its negative repercussions globally. It has disrupted economies, compromised energy security and worsened food insecurity worldwide. The fertile soil that, for centuries, fed millions of people around the world is now ravaged by contamination, shelling and mines. This war has unleashed an unfathomable humanitarian crisis, with thousands of lost lives, including hundreds of children, as well as millions of displaced persons. In addition, there is the devastating damage to critical, energy, residential, health-care, educational, productive, religious and cultural infrastructure in Ukraine.

Attacks on populated areas represent one of the most tragic and condemnable aspects of the conflict. They have caused indiscriminate death and suffering among civilians. The psychological impact and the trauma of living under constant threat will negatively affect many generations. We recognize the tireless efforts of the humanitarian organizations that are working to alleviate

the suffering of the civilian population. However, the magnitude of the crisis requires a broader response that ensures immediate humanitarian assistance and that also takes into account the need to rebuild the country.

Ecuador is concerned about the danger posed by attacks in the vicinity of nuclear installations. I therefore reiterate the need to comply with the seven pillars of nuclear security, and I reaffirm my country's support for the work carried out by the International Atomic Energy Agency and compliance with the five key principles to guarantee security in the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant. I wonder how many Security Council meetings it will take to ensure compliance with the obligations of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, including international humanitarian law.

Despite the United Nations system's considerable mobilization efforts, multilateralism has been subjected to a litmus test, forcing us to reflect on the effectiveness of our tools and mechanisms in preventing and responding to crises. While a veto on 25 February 2022 kept the Council from taking decisive action (see S/PV.8979), it could not stop the General Assembly from speaking out firmly. The Assembly has adopted six resolutions during its eleventh emergency special session. Among other things, they have reaffirmed the Assembly's commitment to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, called for a cessation of hostilities and reiterated the need for the Russian Federation to withdraw its military forces from Ukrainian territory immediately, completely and unconditionally. Similarly, with the presidential statement of 6 May 2022 (S/PRST/2022/3), the Council acted as one in expressing its great concern about peace and security in Ukraine and recognized that all Member States should settle their international disputes by peaceful means, in accordance with the Charter.

The Secretary-General's appeal that we give peace a chance echoes our common desire. After two years of the invasion and many more of devastation and suffering for the people of eastern Ukraine, it is time to return to the negotiating table. We urge all the parties involved to consider in good faith every option conducive to a peaceful settlement of the dispute. We are living in uncertain times, in which geopolitical tensions are worsening in various parts of the globe. The possibility of an escalation towards a global conflict is the most serious threat to our existence. Far from coming to an end, the arms race is accelerating.

The military aggression against Ukraine is a tragedy for the people of Russia and Ukraine. It must therefore end, and it must end now. Ecuador, faithful to its historic principles, reiterates its solidarity with the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, and we continue to call on the Russian Federation to suspend its military operations, as ordered by the International Court of Justice on 16 March 2022 (*Allegations of Genocide under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Ukraine v. Russian Federation), Provisional Measures, Order of 16 March 2022*, p. 211), so that immediate progress can be made towards just and lasting peace, based on international law and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Afonso (Mozambique): Mozambique thanks the presidency of Guyana for convening this meeting. We are grateful to the Secretary-General for his insightful statement and highly commend his devotion to promoting peace and security worldwide and urging all Member States to uphold the purposes and principles of the Charter of the Organization and the tenets of international law.

As we mark the two-year milestone since February 2022, when the conflict between Russia and Ukraine intensified into a larger-scale war, the ensuing global distress and instability have had a profound and far-reaching impact that cannot be overstated. The conflict has injected a profound sense of uncertainty and turmoil into the heart of Europe. It has severely strained an international system that was already grappling with numerous fault lines and challenges on every continent. Despite the substantial resources that the Security Council has allocated to the issue, the conflict appears to be heading in a gloomy direction, with the severity of its consequences escalating ominously. In the light of the conflict's severe humanitarian, political and economic consequences, coupled with the genuine risk of a nuclear conflagration by accident, miscalculation or otherwise, we believe a significant course adjustment is necessary, with diplomacy assuming a central role.

It is our understanding that for diplomacy to bear fruit, all parties must acknowledge the limitations of the current approach, which is based solely on confrontation and the use of force. In that context, it is our collective duty, as representatives of our States, to strongly encourage a negotiated settlement of the conflict, in accordance with the Charter that guides our Organization. As we navigate through bloody conflicts

in Africa, the Middle East and Asia, it is crucial that we bear in mind the interconnected nature of global peace and security. We believe that peace and security are indivisible and of interest to all humankind.

We have consistently maintained and still firmly believe that responsible and genuine dialogue is the only viable means to resolve this conflict. Against that background, Mozambique firmly advocates a political and negotiated solution as the most effective way to end it. That is the sole path to a lasting and sustainable peace between the two sister and neighbouring countries. To achieve it, we urge the parties to cease hostilities without delay, resume direct negotiations without preconditions and engage in dialogue in good faith. The cause of peace compels us to encourage the parties to return to the negotiating table and to embrace the imperfections of a compromise in the name of peace and security in Ukraine, Europe and the world. Mozambique will always support every effort to silence the guns in Ukraine.

Mr. Bendjama (Algeria): I thank you, Madam President, for convening this meeting. My thanks also go to Secretary-General António Guterres for his insightful briefing.

Two years have passed since the crisis in Ukraine started, and hope for reaching sustained peace remain unattainable. The continued deterioration of the humanitarian situation and the impact of the ongoing hostilities on civilians are a source of serious concern for Algeria, which has had very friendly relations with both countries. The loss of civilian lives and the suffering of refugees and internally displaced persons caused by the conflict are profoundly worrisome. Critical infrastructure, such as energy facilities and agrifood systems, have been heavily impacted, with significant consequences felt worldwide, notably in Africa and developing countries.

In the face of those challenges, the Security Council, the primary responsibility of which is the maintenance of international peace and security, has failed to pave the way for any consensual way out of the crisis. From day one, within the Council, we have repeatedly expressed our concern about all violations of international law, including international humanitarian law. We have often stressed that the continued escalation is neither beneficial for, nor will lead to, peace for either of the parties. The polarization is only exacerbating tensions and jeopardizing prospects for sustainable peace.

I would like today to focus on what we have not witnessed over the past two years, or I should say, what we would like to see in the very near future.

First, it is high time to deploy the necessary diplomatic efforts to achieve the de-escalation of tensions between the parties so that we can put an end to the loss of life and people's suffering as soon as possible.

Secondly, the parties concerned must show their willingness and readiness to engage in an inclusive and constructive dialogue. The two parties need to be guided, in a spirit of good faith and without preconditions, towards a peaceful settlement of the dispute under international law and international humanitarian law.

Thirdly, we urge the parties to agree on a just and lasting peace, based on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and their legitimate security concerns.

Fourthly, we emphasize the need to ensure more coordinated and harmonized diplomatic action among members of the international community. The noble objective will be to bring together the parties concerned and guarantee a more efficient and comprehensive diplomatic process to end the crisis.

Obviously, political will is key to achieve tangible progress and a mutually acceptable solution. Equally important is the consistency of the Council in upholding its responsibility for the protection of civilians, implementing international humanitarian law and the purposes and principles — all the pillars — of the Charter. For its part, Algeria will remain actively engaged within the Security Council to promote a peaceful political solution to the crisis.

Mr. Sowa (Sierra Leone): I thank you, Madam President for convening this briefing. I also thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his very informative briefing.

Tomorrow, 24 February, will mark exactly two years since the start of the conflict in Ukraine. The war has had profound repercussions that have gone beyond regional borders. The conflict has been protracted to the extent that the prospects for a peaceful settlement between Russia and Ukraine remains elusive, with both countries continuing to rely on military means to influence the war's outcome. There is therefore a seeming stalemate, with devastating consequences for

civilians and civilian infrastructure in Ukraine and far-reaching effects on the geopolitical landscape and the global economy. During the two years of the brutal conflict, more than 47,000 incidents involving armed clashes, air strikes and other attacks occurred across Ukraine in 2023 alone. Those incidents represented an increase in civilian death, widespread damage and the destruction of homes, schools, hospitals and other vital civilian infrastructure, including energy infrastructure.

The cost of the conflict has been excessively high. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, civilian casualties in Ukraine have exceeded 30,000, with more than 10,000 killed and 19,000 injured since the beginning of the full-scale conflict. It is believed that the actual figures are considerably higher. The International Organization for Migration has reported that the destruction of residential buildings has left almost 720,000 people in the worst-affected parts of Ukraine without access to adequate and safe housing. In the Kherson oblast, for example, nearly 30 per cent of people live in damaged buildings. Access to education remains highly limited, with almost half of all educational institutions damaged or destroyed in Kharkiv and Kherson, and a staggering 80 per cent in Donetsk, according to the Ministry of Education and humanitarian partners. Access to health care has also been impacted, with more than 1,500 attacks on health-care facilities verified by the World Health Organization, since February 2022. Nearly half of the health centres have been rendered non-functional in some parts of the east and south. Sierra Leone condemns all attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure and emphasizes that such attacks are prohibited under international law. We call on all sides to comply with applicable international law, in particular international humanitarian law.

The distressing attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure have caused the fastest-growing and largest displacement crisis in Europe. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that approximately 10 million people have been forcibly displaced by the war as of last month, including 3.7 million internally displaced persons, and 6.3 million refugees, who have fled Ukraine to other countries. As of the end of 2023, 5.9 million refugees from Ukraine were recorded located throughout Europe. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimates that there are now more than 14.6 million people in dire need of humanitarian assistance, including

approximately 10 million forcibly displaced persons. Approximately 3.3 million people living in front-line communities are grappling with severe shortages of resources and constant bombardment.

Children have not been spared the brunt or brutality of the conflict. Allegations of gross violations of the protection measures for children in armed conflict have been reported. The destruction of health-care facilities has exposed millions to increased trauma and mental health issues and affected children's well-being. Additionally, the attacks on schools have had a significant impact on educational activities. Reportedly, across the country, only one third of children are attending classes entirely in person, while one third are learning through a mixed in-person and online approach, and another one third are learning entirely online.

In view of the foregoing, Sierra Leone commends humanitarian aid agencies for considerably expanding the humanitarian operations over the past two years to respond to the growing needs and the deterioration that followed the escalation of the conflict. As hostilities along the front line continue to hamper the ability of humanitarian organizations to deliver aid and services to people affected by the conflict, Sierra Leone urges the parties to the conflict to allow humanitarian personnel unhindered access to people in dire need.

The economic ramifications of the war have been keenly felt across the global landscape, particularly in the food and energy markets, trade dynamics and supply chain disruptions. Those disruptions have contributed to price hikes and supply shortages that have reverberated across sectors reliant on stable market prices. In view of the economic challenges, Sierra Leone emphasizes the importance of a resolution of the conflict in order to enable recovery and stabilization — not only of the region but of the wider world. By supporting efforts to stabilize energy markets, restore trade networks and provide economic assistance to affected populations, we can mitigate the economic impact of the conflict and pave the way for sustainable economic growth and development in the region and beyond.

Moreover, the conflict has strained global political and economic relations and heightened geopolitical tensions, with serious implications for international cooperation on critical socioeconomic and development issues and for the maintenance of international peace and security. The erosion of trust and cooperation

between nations has also exacerbated such critical global issues as arms control, nuclear non-proliferation, cybersecurity and trade agreements, posing additional challenges to the maintenance of international peace and security.

As we navigate the complexities of the Russia-Ukraine conflict and its multidimensional global repercussions, Sierra Leone calls once again for good-faith diplomatic efforts in the pursuit of a peaceful resolution. Meaningful steps must be taken towards the immediate cessation of hostilities and towards constructive engagement by the parties to the conflict, including on their legitimate concerns, with a view to finding a political and diplomatic solution, as envisaged in Article 33 of the Charter of the United Nations.

Let me close by noting that, based on our unwavering, principled view on the sacrosanct nature of the Charter principles of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Member States, we once again reiterate our call for the full respect of the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

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

I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing and indeed, for all he does in trying to forge peace in our world. I also wish to acknowledge the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine and all other ministers and high-level officials joining this meeting.

Tomorrow will mark exactly two years since Russian military forces invaded the territory of Ukraine in what was then termed a special military operation — an action that has cost the lives of more than 10,000 civilians, injured many more and displaced more than 6 million Ukrainians. The toll on civilians in both Ukraine and Russia — including women, children, the elderly and persons living with disabilities — is exceedingly high, with no immediate end in sight.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine two years ago violated the most basic tenets of the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of respect for territorial integrity, sovereignty and non-interference. Our countries have all felt the impact of this war to some degree — not only in terms of increased challenges to the rules-based order as we know it, anchored in the Charter and international law, but also in terms of disruptions in food and energy prices, logistics and supply chains,

and worsening hunger in the most vulnerable regions of the globe, which had already been struggling with coronavirus disease recovery efforts.

As a small developing State whose sovereignty and territorial integrity are protected by legal norms and instruments, Guyana deplores the threat or use of force in the conduct of international relations and condemns the military aggression that has been unleashed against the people of Ukraine. We reiterate our call for an immediate cessation of hostilities and a return to diplomacy. War must never be the answer. Instead, dialogue and diplomacy are the only guarantees of achieving lasting peace. While we welcome and recognize the efforts of some States Members of the United Nations to find a diplomatic solution, we encourage greater investments in that regard.

We call on the parties to respect the principles of distinction, precaution and proportionality and to comply fully with their legal obligations, including under the Geneva Conventions and the Additional Protocols thereto. It is regrettable that the Council, which has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, is still unable to find a meaningful solution to end the conflict and to minimize the full impact of the war on the erosion of international norms. We repeat our call for the complete withdrawal of Russian military forces from the internationally recognized territory of Ukraine and urge the parties to commit to a serious political and diplomatic process aimed at ending the conflict. We also urge strengthened efforts at all levels by all concerned parties towards a peaceful resolution.

Guyana stands ready to work with members of the Council, and in fact with everyone, to bring the war in Ukraine to a peaceful end and to find a sustainable solution for long-lasting peace.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine.

Mr. Kuleba (Ukraine): As we discuss the war, peace talks and negotiations here today, there is another air raid on Ukraine taking place right now, and a residential building in Odesa was hit less than one hour ago. Two civilians were heavily wounded and were delivered to the hospital, and I am afraid that someone is going to die in Ukraine before this meeting

is adjourned, because talking about negotiations is one thing, but firing more drones and missiles at Ukraine, as Russia does every day, is another thing entirely.

First of all, allow me to thank the Secretary-General for his presence at this meeting and his briefing, and my thanks, of course, also go to the Guyanese presidency for convening our meeting today.

It has been two years since Russia started its full-scale military invasion and ten years since it started its aggression by attempting to annex Ukrainian Crimea and launching a war in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Today, Russia's name is synonymous with aggression, war crimes and barbarism. Its ugly face is the direct result of its impunity, stemming first and foremost from its presence in the seat in this Chamber. That is the seat of the Soviet Union, a State that does not exist anymore, and the seat has never been legally transferred to the Russian Federation. That is an example of how a small fraud has led to a global catastrophe. We continue to insist that Russia has no legal right to be present at this table, and that future reform should correct that historic mistake, which has had deadly consequences.

Putin's regime, which has been in place for approximately 24 years now, has already ruined millions of lives. During that time, Moscow launched or joined at least three major wars — in Georgia, Ukraine and Syria — which is approximately one war every eight years. It has also been behind an attempted coup in Montenegro and destabilizing efforts in the Sahel region. The scariest thing is that we must now focus not only on the lives that Russia has already taken but on the lives that it is prepared to take in the future. Russia has acted every time the Council has failed to act. For every word uttered in this room, Russia has taken a real human life, and that is continuing to happen right now. And it is only through our resolute and joint actions that we can put the aggressor in its place and restore international peace and security. We do believe in this Organization and the Charter of the United Nations. And we applaud the tireless efforts of the responsible members of the Council.

Russian propaganda is now trumpeting what it calls the liberation of Avdiivka. But what we are seeing in Avdiivka right now is liberation à la russe. Russia has fully liberated the city of its people, its buildings and its life. It has dropped hundreds of guided aerial bombs, each with a warhead weighing 250 or 500 kilograms — hundreds of bombs, each carrying 250

or 500 kilograms of explosives. If we google that, we can see the holes that such bombs leave when they hit a building, house or hospital. The streets of Avdiivka are literally covered with the corpses of Russian soldiers killed in the so-called meat assault. That is not what we call it. It is what the Russians themselves call that barbaric war tactic. They send their own people into meat assaults. That means “conquer at any cost”. That is their strategy. Russia has paid for the ruins of Avdiivka with the lives of at least 17,000 Russian soldiers since October 2023. That is more casualties in a few months than in the 10 years of the Soviet war in Afghanistan.

Immediately after occupying the city, the Russians committed new war crimes there. As is confirmed by footage circulated by Russian propaganda itself, they killed at least five heavily wounded Ukrainian prisoners of war. Justice must be done for all the victims of Russian crimes, and we continue to work to hold Russia accountable. We categorically reject any Russian attempts to evade responsibility, including by spreading lies about the recent International Court of Justice ruling on 31 January. Our detailed letter outlining Ukraine's position was distributed in the Council a few days ago. No task is more important for everyone present in this Chamber than realizing that there are other cities, outside Ukraine, that could become Avdiivka if Russia's imperial conquest is not stopped.

On the eve of the invasion two years ago, I warned that no nation would be able to sit out the crisis that was about to begin. And that is what happened. So I ask those who did not hear me two years ago to please hear me today. Either we stop Russia in Ukraine now by expelling the invaders or we will face a fire in other parts of the world that will claim millions of lives. And when future generations look back at this moment and read the records of our meetings, they will wonder why the world failed to act in such an obvious case, in which one country shattered the entirety of international peace and security. They will ask why we were not able to stop it. We can restore peace if we act together in a resolute and principled manner. But rather than watching Moscow create problems and inviting others to solve them, which is the usual Russian strategy, we must push Russia back, because Russia itself is the problem, the global problem.

While we gather here, the situation on the front lines remains tense as Russia stops at nothing to bring more death and destruction to Ukraine. Russia still hopes

to see our divisions, perplexity and indecisiveness, which would weaken international solidarity and military assistance for Ukraine. Intensifying missile terror against civilians and civilian infrastructure also serves Russia's purpose. Moscow hopes that the world's empathy for Ukrainians will be depleted if Ukrainians are killed every single day for too many days in a row. We will not allow that to happen. We will rally the world behind our true cause even more. Russia's terror only strengthens our resilience and commitment. I want everyone to remember that more support to Ukraine means more opportunities for peace — just and lasting peace — based on the Charter and the peace formula proposed by Ukraine.

Ukraine wants peace more than any other nation, but we are not going to allow Russia to kill us freely on the road to peace. Nor will we ever accept any offer to surrender or concede our lands and freedoms in the guise of peace. That is not only because it will render futile the ultimate price that we have been paying for two years in a row now, but also because we will all be doomed to pay a much higher price in the future. If the Council genuinely wishes to reduce that price and give peace a chance, I ask it to send air defence to protect our civilians and ammunition to stop the Russian army on our soil.

The President: I now give the floor to the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade and Minister for Development, Cooperation and Humanitarian Affairs of Luxembourg.

Mr. Bettel (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): Once again Mr. Nebenzia is leaving the room as we take the floor. That makes it difficult to have a dialogue, which is what he asked for this morning. It was unfair of him to say that we are all civil servants and bureaucrats. I was democratically elected, along with opposition parties that have the right to participate. It is also important to recall why we are here. I would like to take five minutes to explain why we wanted to speak. It is simply because it is important to remind everyone in this Chamber of the values that led us to say that we wanted to build something together after the Second World War.

It is also important to point out that today Russia is completely isolated, with the exception of Syria, Iran, North Korea and maybe Belarus, which are its big supporters. I would ask myself if they would be my most trustworthy allies when speaking about democratic values, as the Ambassador wanted to do this morning in the General Assembly. Russia is isolated. In talking

about Nazis, and saying that Ukraine is full of Nazis, Russia says that it is liberating Ukraine from Nazis, which is an affront to the Russians who died fighting the Nazis in the Second World War. It is an affront to equate the two, the heroes of the Second World War and the desire to liberate Ukraine from Nazis. In my view, that attitude and those comparisons are rewriting history.

I would also like to speak to what continues to be described as a special military operation. Yes, it is special because it is unjustified. It is criminal. It is special because a military operation should have some justification and this one does not. That is why they call it special. I belong to a generation that did not experience war. I used to have a neighbour from Germany. Today that person is my partner, neighbour and friend. I build things with them. The safety of young people today depends on their neighbours. When I look at certain countries sitting around the table I see the Republic of Korea, a country that must wonder when it wakes up in the morning what the dictator to its north is thinking or planning. It is sad for today's generations to know that security is not the same for everyone but depends on where we are born. While I am not here to talk about other current conflicts that are not on the agenda today, we should think about the chances we want to offer young people. That is why I recommend that those who have not done so sign the Safe Schools Declaration, on protecting children in school, because they will hold it against us if we jeopardize their future. Today we are deciding the future of our world.

I thank you, Madam President, for giving me the floor. It is a subject that is close to my heart, as I am of Russian and Polish origin, and I find it sad that many Russians today are ashamed of their nationality when it used to be a proud country. I would like Russia to recognize its errors. It is never too late to do that. But ensuring accountability for impunity should exist and should be at the foundation of international law. But the fact is that based on its presence here in this Chamber, the statements made and the fact that it has an Ambassador who walks out, we can see the level of Russia's willingness to engage in dialogue. We are at an impasse. We have to take the necessary steps.

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

Ms. Baerbock (Germany): As the representative of Russia asked why we Europeans are here today, I will tell him. Throughout my entire life, I have been

lucky to live in peace in Europe, like millions of my generation. The reason we are here today is because Russia broke that peace in Europe. Russia broke our European peace order on our common shared continent. It broke the peace for millions of Ukrainians — men, children and women.

That includes women such as Anastasiia, a young mother who lost her lower leg when she stepped on a Russian mine. She wants to return to the front as soon as she can. Women such as Oksana, a surgeon who decided to operate on her own father when he was injured in Bucha. And women such as Yulia, a teenage girl I met in Kyiv after she was freed from being held hostage in Russia. She pleaded with me not to give in to Putin.

When I think about the ruthless war of aggression that Russia has waged in Ukraine for two years now, I think about Anastasiia, Oksana and Yulia and about the bravery and resilience of millions of Ukrainians who know that, if they stop defending their country, Ukraine ends. It is because they see what the brutal reality of Russian occupation means to their people in the eastern Ukrainian territories, where thousands of children like Yulia have been deported to Russia and where women and men are brutally raped, arrested and tortured.

And yet we hear again “we want to negotiate”. But Putin makes it clear every day, every hour, as we just heard, that he does not want to negotiate peace; he wants to complete his conquest. He has said it over and over again.

Russia, a permanent member of the Security Council, wants a sovereign State to give up its right to exist. Where would we end up if that principle were to prevail — as the Secretary-General has also asked? Which of us would be the next country to be invaded by a ruthless neighbour? Whose children would be abducted next? Whose sons would be shot? Whose daughters would be raped?

If we were to give in, that would be the end of the Charter of the United Nations, our Charter. Therefore, we will not cease our support for Ukraine. That is why the German Government just signed a bilateral security agreement that offers Ukraine reliable, long-term support. We will stand with Ukraine for as long as it takes, and with men and women like Anastasiia, Oksana and Yulia, men and women who are defending their peace, our peace, our freedom and our Charter of the United Nations.

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

Mr. Sikorski (Poland): I associate myself with the words of Minister Kuleba of Ukraine and my colleagues from the European Union.

I am amazed at the tone and the content of the presentation by the Russian Ambassador. I believe it would be useful for me to correct the record.

Ambassador Nebenzia has called Kyiv the clients of the West. Actually, Kyiv is fighting to be independent of everyone. He calls it the “criminal Kyiv regime”. In fact, Ukraine has a democratically elected Government. He calls them Nazis. The President is Jewish, the Defence Minister is Muslim, and they have no political prisoners.

He said that Ukraine was wallowing in corruption. Alexei Navalny documented how honest and full of probity his own country is. The Ambassador blamed the war on United States neocolonialism. In fact, it is Russia that tried to exterminate Ukraine in the nineteenth century, and then again under the Bolsheviks. This is the third attempt. He said that we are prisoners of Russophobia. Phobia means irrational fear. Yet we are being threatened almost every day by the former President of Russia and by Putin propagandists with nuclear annihilation. I put to members that it is not irrational when Russia threatens us. We trust it.

He said that we are denying Russia’s security interests. That is not true. We only started re-arming ourselves when Russia started invading its neighbours. He even said that Poland attacked Russia during the Second World War. What is he talking about? It was the Soviet Union that attacked Poland, together with Nazi Germany, on 17 September 1939. They even held a joint victory parade on 22 September 1939.

He said that Russia has always only beaten back aggression. What were Russian troops doing at the gates of Warsaw in August 1920? Were they on a topographical excursion? No, the truth is that, for every time that Russia has been invaded, it has invaded others 10 times. He said that this is a perfidious proxy war by the West. My advice is not to fall into the “Western trap”. Russia should withdraw its troops to the international border and avoid this Western plot.

He also said that there was an illegal coup d’état in Kyiv in 2014. I was there. There was no coup. President Yanukovych murdered 100 of his compatriots, and he

was removed from office by a democratically elected Ukrainian Parliament, including his own party — the Party of Regions.

Finally, he said that we, the West, are somehow trying to persuade people that Russia can be beaten. Russia did not win the Crimean War. It did not win the Russo-Japanese war. It did not win the First World War. It did not win the Battle of Warsaw. It did not win in Afghanistan. And it did not win the Cold War. But there is good news. After each failure, there were reforms.

Such demagoguery is unworthy of a permanent member of the Security Council. But what the Ambassador has achieved is to remind us why we resisted Soviet domination and of what Ukraine is resisting now. They failed to subjugate us then, they will fail to subjugate Ukraine and us now.

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

Mr. Landsbergis (Lithuania): I speak on behalf of the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia and my own country, Lithuania.

Today and tomorrow, many will yet again call on Russia to end its brutal war against Ukraine. Many will say that Russia's unprovoked aggression goes against everything for which the United Nations stands. Some will question the credibility of the Security Council to defend the rules-based international order. But however loud and eloquent we are, our protests and outrage will barely register in Moscow and rockets will continue to rain down on Ukrainian homes, hospitals and schools.

Today we are facing choices that might well define this century, just as the choices in the 1930s defined the previous century. Do we continue to appease the aggressor, who is patient and meticulous in his attempts to turn everything the Organization holds dear into a mockery? Do we once again allow him to escape responsibility for his aggression? Do we continue to feed him with lives and land, misled by our fear of escalation and naïve hopes that this time he will be fully satisfied?

Today we come to the Council to address the entire international community with a very simple message — for all our sakes, wake up. If we fail, the rules-based order will crumble. Ukraine's sovereignty, Europe's security, as well as the success of global efforts for human rights and accountability, food security and nuclear safety, will all be in the hands of those who benefit from disruption and chaos.

History reminds us of the terrible cost of wrong choices. Hedging our bets earns us nothing but more war. Russia is being emboldened by our cautious response. We see it emboldened in Ukraine. We see it emboldened in Russia itself, eliminating any opposition in Russia, aiming to destroy any hope for a different Russia — a normal, peaceful Russia.

Equally, other revisionist Powers across the world are already exploiting our indecisiveness. If not contained, the Kremlin-driven arc of instability will continue to expand, igniting more conflicts that we are not prepared to counter.

Ukraine may seem far away, and the world's attention is divided, but it is imperative to realize that Russia's aggression against Ukraine ultimately has an impact on us all. The war must be won, and won decisively. It is not just Europe's war — it is a challenge to the international order, which, while imperfect, seeks to ensure that law, rather than military might, determines our borders and sovereignty.

The choices we make at this crossroads will define how we are remembered. We have the capacity to win, as Ukraine continues to make enormous sacrifices to stand against the ruthless aggressor. History reminds us of the cost of our past mistakes. We must also find the political will to come up with an adequate legal response to Russia's illegal war of territorial conquest. Russia's leadership must bear full responsibility for the aggression launched by Vladimir Putin, or else impunity will continue.

I would like to remind all those here today that our three Baltic countries — Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania — have been occupied, colonized and exploited by the exact same aggressor more than once — I repeat, more than once. That is why we know from bitter experience that whatever words are spoken and whatever agreements are signed, the aggressor has no plans to stop until it is stopped.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of Croatia.

Mr. Grlić-Radman (Croatia): Many of us addressed the Council a year ago (see S/PV.9269), calling on Russia to cease its illegal aggression against Ukraine. Yet we are meeting in this Chamber again today, regrettably marking two years since the beginning of Russia's military aggression against Ukraine and 10 years since the illegal annexation of Crimea.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine is a blatant violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, affecting both regional and global security, including the pillars of nuclear safety and security. To date, countless lives have been needlessly lost in that war, including those of tens of thousands of Ukrainian civilians. For that, there needs to be accountability — not only because accountability provides justice to the victims, but also because it helps prevent future atrocities.

Yet instead of ending that senseless war, Russia is intensifying it. Russia's actions have put entire societies around the world at risk by exposing them to food insecurity and energy shortages. We urge Russia to respect the International Court of Justice's preliminary measures, to cease all attacks, particularly those affecting civilians and causing damage to civilian infrastructure, and to comply with Security Council resolutions and the values and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

We reaffirm our unwavering support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, as we have done since the beginning of the aggression.

Croatia provided and continues to provide aid to Ukraine, with urgent and humanitarian assistance alone amounting to almost €60 million. Over 25,000 Ukrainians have found temporary protection in Croatia. Recognizing from our own experience the costs and threats arising from mine contamination, Croatia hosted in Zagreb the first-ever high-level International Donors' Conference on Humanitarian Demining in Ukraine in October 2023. That conference, co-organized by the Governments of Croatia and Ukraine, confirmed support to Ukraine's demining efforts from 34 participating countries, who pledged half a billion euros overall.

Finally, we call on Russia to withdraw its troops from Ukraine's internationally recognized borders, cease its illegal procurement of arms and ammunition, and uphold its responsibilities as a Member of this Organization, as well as a permanent member of the Council.

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

Ms. Bruins Slot (Kingdom of the Netherlands): I am here today on behalf of the Group of Friends of Accountability following the Aggression against Ukraine — a group of 49 Member States and the European Union. We share a strong conviction: we do

not accept that might makes right. And so it is with heavy hearts that we continue to witness Russia's unwarranted, unprovoked and illegal war in Ukraine.

Time and time again, United Nations Member States have underlined the need for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace. Yet Russia has turned a deaf ear to those pleas. As firm believers in right over might, we cannot look away. We must do our utmost to hold Russia and those responsible to account for the crimes committed in and against Ukraine.

We commend the efforts and initiatives already taken thus far, such as the ongoing work of the United Nations human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine established by the Human Rights Council and Special Representative of the Secretary-General Patten's Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict. We also continue to support the Ukrainian Prosecutor General and the work carried out by the International Criminal Court, the International Centre for the Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine and the Register of Damage for Ukraine. That is because we are all working towards one goal: ensuring accountability for the most serious crimes committed on Ukrainian territory and against the Ukrainian people.

Russia's act of aggression violates the Charter of the United Nations. As parties to the Charter, there is only one way we can respond: that cannot stand. Therefore, we reiterate our call on the Russian Federation to comply with its international obligations. We will never stop calling for that. We will keep demanding that Russia withdraw all of its forces and respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. We will never stop supporting the people of Ukraine.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister of National Defence of Portugal.

Ms. Carreiras (Portugal): I welcome the opportunity to address the Security Council on the situation in Ukraine.

As Russia's illegal and unprovoked full-scale invasion enters its third year, and as the Ukrainian territories of Crimea and the Donbas reach a full decade under illegal Russian occupation, we cannot and will not fail to reiterate our resolute condemnation of those blatant violations of international law. The war not only jeopardizes the foundations of international security, but

also has sent shockwaves around the world, disrupting global food and energy markets and particularly affecting the most vulnerable countries.

Ukraine can continue to count on Portugal's full and unwavering support, both bilaterally and collectively within every multilateral framework, including here at the United Nations. From day one, we have been unequivocal about where we stand: side by side with Ukraine.

The value of our commitments can only be measured by the consistency of our actions. In addition to our political support, Portugal has provided military support and humanitarian aid. In all of those efforts, we have consistently responded to the calls of the Ukrainian people and the Armed Forces of Ukraine, bearing in mind our shared commitment towards restoring peace and security in Europe. It is not only the Government, but also the citizens of Portugal who strongly support that effort, even though we are geographically so far away.

Ultimately, the goal is one and the same: to defend and uphold the rules, principles and values that are enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. That can happen only with a just and sustainable solution that is in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and with Ukraine's peace formula and that holds accountable those responsible for the ongoing atrocities. We therefore call on Russia to cease all operations, retreat from Ukraine and respect international law. Together, united, we will prevail in supporting Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of North Macedonia.

Mr. Osmani (North Macedonia): I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing on Ukraine.

Tomorrow we will mark two years since the Russian Federation's full-scale invasion of Ukraine — a blatant violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. North Macedonia strongly condemned and further condemns and renounces the decision of Moscow to opt for the path of war, a clear act of aggression against an independent country. We urge Russia once again to end that senseless war and withdraw its troops from the sovereign territory of Ukraine. That is the only way to restore peace and to create the conditions to further diplomatic engagement for a just and sustainable solution, in line with international law and full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

We recall the adoption of last year's important General Assembly resolution ES-11/1. My country joined the other 140 Member States in a common endeavour to restore peace, to safeguard the rules-based international order, as well as to reaffirm its firm and unequivocal support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders as of 1991. We deplore the Russian Federation's failure to observe it.

During these two years, the people of Ukraine have shown resilience and extraordinary courage in their fight for their freedom, independence and mere existence and are just simply defending themselves, all of which are in line with Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations. And every day we continue to hear reports of more civilian deaths, destruction and suffering, especially in the communities near the active conflict zones in eastern and southern Ukraine and call for an end on all attacks on critical infrastructure, including schools, hospitals, energy, water and sanitation systems.

Justice and accountability must prevail. Accountability is not an objective per se; rather, it is as an indispensable tool to secure peace, stability and security and the most effective instrument to avoid this happening again to another sovereign State, to another nation.

We reiterate the importance of investigating the war crimes and other crimes, including the crime of aggression, committed on the territory of Ukraine in order to bring the perpetrators to justice, in accordance with international law, in particular the International Criminal Court, and support the creation of a special tribunal regarding the crime of aggression against Ukraine. And North Macedonia will continue to engage in the work of the core group on options for the establishment of a tribunal on the crime of aggression against Ukraine.

In these difficult times, North Macedonia will continue to stand by Ukraine and its people, hopeful that reason will prevail, and that life will be back to normal soon. Restoring peace should be an imperative. We remain fully engaged in providing support to those efforts and firmly believe that multilateralism should overcome militarism.

The meeting rose at 5.35 p.m.