



# Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

**8983**<sup>rd</sup> meeting  
Monday, 28 February 2022, 3 p.m.  
New York

*Provisional*

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*President:* Mr. Nebenzia . . . . . (Russian Federation)

*Members:*

Albania . . . . .	Mr. Hoxha
Brazil . . . . .	Mr. De Almeida Filho
China . . . . .	Mr. Zhang Jun
France . . . . .	Mr. De Rivière
Gabon . . . . .	Mr. Biang
Ghana . . . . .	Ms. Oppong-Ntiri
India . . . . .	Mr. Tirumurti
Ireland . . . . .	Mr. Kelly
Kenya . . . . .	Mr. Kimani
Mexico . . . . .	Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez
Norway . . . . .	Ms. Juul
United Arab Emirates . . . . .	Mr. Abushahab
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
United States of America . . . . .	Mr. Mills

## Agenda

Letter dated 28 February 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2014/136)

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*The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **Letter dated 28 February 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2014/136)**

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

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in the meeting: Mr. Martin Griffiths, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, and Mr. Filippo Grandi, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

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

I give the floor to Mr. Griffiths.

**Mr. Griffiths:** Mr. President, I am speaking to you from Geneva. Wherever we are in the world, we have all been watching the military offensive in Ukraine with a sense of disbelief and horror. As we all feared, civilians are already paying the price. The scale of civilian casualties and damage to civilian infrastructure — even in these very early days — is alarming. Humanitarian needs are growing at an alarming pace in the hardest-hit areas. Civilian children, women and men have been injured and killed. Homes have been damaged and sometimes destroyed.

As of yesterday, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights had reported at least 406 civilian casualties, including at least 102 dead in these few days. The real figure could be considerably higher, since many reported casualties have yet to be confirmed. We know — and of course we will hear much more from Mr. Grandi — that at least 160,000 people have been internally displaced across Ukraine, fleeing for safety, and we know that figure is likely to be much higher, potentially a significant proportion of the entire population. As Mr. Grandi will tell the Council, we believe that more than half a million refugees have been forced to choose to flee their country in search of

safety. Families have been separated. The elderly and people with disabilities find themselves trapped and unable to flee, unable to get even that small comfort. The picture is grim and could get worse still. Aerial attacks and fighting in urban areas are damaging critical civilian facilities and disrupting essential services such as health, electricity, water and sanitation, in effect leaving civilians without the basics for day-to-day life. Bridges and roads have been destroyed, cutting off people's access to critical supplies and services. The use of explosive weapons in urban areas carries a high risk of indiscriminate impact, which is of particular concern in places such as Kyiv and Kharkiv, since civilians will undeservedly suffer the most from such attacks on densely populated urban centres.

All parties must respect international humanitarian law, take constant care to spare all civilians and civilian objects from harm throughout their military operations and avoid the use of wide-area explosive weapons in populated areas. The longer this goes on, the greater the cost will be for civilians. Children will miss school and face a greater risk of physical harm, displacement and unimaginably severe emotional distress. Women, so often disproportionately affected by conflict, as we have so often discussed in this Chamber, will be at even greater risk of gender-based violence. Women and children may be exposed to other forms of exploitation. The economy of Ukraine could implode, which will further exacerbate humanitarian needs and create a ripple effect far beyond Ukraine's borders. Already the upheavals in recent days are deepening a pre-existing humanitarian crisis. Eight gruelling years of conflict in eastern Ukraine had already left 3 million people in need of humanitarian assistance on both sides of the contact line in the Donbas region. And it goes without saying that humanitarian needs are now much greater, including those resulting from the large-scale displacement to which I have already referred, across and beyond the entire country and not in one region alone.

Humanitarian workers are doing their best to respond. The United Nations has expanded its humanitarian presence in Ukraine, and we will continue to do so. We are working to ensure that we can scale up our operations as quickly as possible, and we have been preparing for this for some time. However, I must say that for the past three days our movements — that is, the movements of our dear colleagues in Ukraine — have been seriously constrained as a result of the ongoing

fighting and our inability to receive assurances from parties to the conflict that humanitarian movement will be protected. I was fortunate enough to receive the beginning of some assurances to that effect only this evening. We must hope that becomes a reality. In the meantime, as usual, local organizations and institutions are doing the truly remarkable job that they do in all such situations — responding to needs. Local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the Ukrainian Red Cross are working tirelessly to support civilians and evacuation operations. Health workers are working day and night to care for the injured. Aid organizations are providing psychosocial support to traumatized children and delivering first-aid kits. And we are all here this afternoon to support their efforts.

Today our most pressing humanitarian needs are for emergency medical services, including sexual and reproductive health services, critical medicines, health supplies and equipment, safe water for drinking and hygiene and shelter and protection for the displaced. In all, 119 humanitarian organizations are operating in Ukraine and have been able to provide some form of humanitarian assistance, but over the past few days their efforts have clearly been hampered. Right now, we urgently need progress on two fronts if we are to reach more people with the aid that they need and deserve.

First, we need assurances from the parties to the conflict that humanitarian workers and their movement will be protected, even when the conflict is at its most severe. We cannot wait for the conflict to subside. Even now, even today, even yesterday, we should be providing that protection to those workers so that they can do the job that they want to do. Under international humanitarian law, all parties must allow and facilitate the rapid and unimpeded passage of impartial humanitarian relief for civilians in need and must ensure freedom of movement for humanitarian actors, a point we have been making in many different ways for the past four days.

Secondly, of course, we desperately need more resources. Tomorrow, the Secretary-General will launch a humanitarian appeal for this crisis with two components — a three-month flash appeal for the situation inside the country and a regional response plan for the situation outside under the leadership of Filippo Grandi and his Office. The Secretary-General, together with Mr. Grandi, our NGO colleagues and me, will all call on Member States to show support with quick, generous and flexible funding. Cash will be a major

source for the delivery of humanitarian assistance given the particular circumstances that obtain in Ukraine.

However, that is certainly not enough. Simply put, the lives of millions of civilians are at stake. We know from other recent conflicts how brutal, deadly and protracted urban warfare can be. We know how countries' economies can be devastated and infrastructure investment and development gains set back an entire generation, and we know enough to know that we do not yet know what the consequences of the events that we are observing today will be. These things should never happen, in any country, anywhere. Every effort must be made to de-escalate the conflict for the hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians who have taken the decision to leave their homes to seek safety elsewhere in their country or beyond, and for the even greater number who remain in peril due to the loss of basic services, pensions, support and the services that their children need, and of the safety of a day that may or may not come.

Finally, I reiterate the Secretary-General's calls for the only thing that we must all pray for, which is an immediate cessation of hostilities.

**The President** (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Mr. Griffiths for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Grandi.

**Mr. Grandi**: Today and in recent days, the Council has heard that the United Nations humanitarian organizations, together with their non-governmental organization (NGO) partners, have remained in Ukraine. Let me start by saying how proud I am that we decided to do so, just as we did in Afghanistan a few months ago.

But naturally, as we just heard, our colleagues on the ground, like the rest of the civilian population, are now caught up in this deadly conflict. Many of them have been relocated and military attacks may force them to move again. Yet they are still striving to deliver help to people in need whenever a small window of relative security allows humanitarian aid to be distributed — working with partners, including national NGOs, often in extremely dangerous circumstances. But we know that we are not even scratching the surface in meeting the needs of Ukrainians, including an unknown but surely very substantial number who have been forced to flee their homes in the past few days. The situation is moving so quickly, and the

risks are so high at this point, that it is impossible for humanitarian actors to distribute systematically the help that Ukrainians desperately need. I therefore echo the Secretary-General's urgent call, and those of the Emergency Relief Coordinator just a few minutes ago, as well as others. Civilians and civilian infrastructure must be protected and spared, and humanitarian access must be granted to those delivering aid to the people affected by war. A failure to do so will compound the already extraordinary levels of human suffering.

In addition to the grave situation inside Ukraine, as Mr. Griffiths just told us, hundreds of thousands are seeking refuge in neighbouring countries. They need safety and protection, first and foremost, but also shelter, food, hygiene and other support, and they need it urgently. As we speak, there are 520,000 refugees from Ukraine in neighbouring countries. That figure has been rising exponentially, literally hour by hour, since Thursday. I have worked in refugee crises for almost 40 years, and I have rarely seen such an incredibly fast and rising exodus of people — surely the largest within Europe since the Balkan wars. More than 280,000 have fled to Poland and another 94,000 to Hungary. Nearly 40,000 are currently in Moldova, 34,000 in Romania, 30,000 in Slovakia, and tens of thousands in other European countries. We are also aware that a sizeable number have gone to the Russian Federation.

I want to commend the Governments of receiving countries for allowing refugees access to their territory. The challenge to admit and register, to meet the needs and ensure the protection of those fleeing is daunting. So far, that challenge has been met, although I am seriously concerned about the likelihood of further escalation in the number of arrivals. We may have seen just the beginning. My message today is therefore one of gratitude to the Governments of Ukraine's neighbours, and through them, the expression of my heartfelt thanks to the citizens of those countries. Ordinary Poles, Hungarians, Moldovans, Romanians, Slovaks and citizens of other European countries have undertaken extraordinary acts of humanity and kindness. That is the humanitarian instinct that is so needed in times of crisis. I encourage Governments to continue to maintain access to their territories for all who are fleeing — Ukrainians, of course, but also third-country nationals living in Ukraine, people who are there to work and study, and in some cases people who are in Ukraine as refugees, all of whom are now similarly forced to escape the violence. At this critical

juncture there can be no discrimination against any person or any group.

I am aware that the European Union and its member States and other Governments have already provided bilateral support to countries receiving refugees from Ukraine, which I hope will continue. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), with its United Nations partner agencies and national and international NGOs, is present in all these countries, and we are scaling up. We encourage host countries to avail themselves of our support and expert advice as they address the situation and uphold their international obligations. We are helping, and can do more in areas such as protection and registration, the organization of reception capacity and the provision of emergency relief and cash assistance, as well as in identifying and responding to the needs of the most vulnerable, many of them women and children, including a growing number of unaccompanied and separated children.

I regret to say that unless there is an immediate halt to the conflict, as Mr. Griffiths said, Ukrainians will simply continue to flee. We are currently planning — I repeat, planning — for up to 4 million refugees in the coming days and weeks. Such a rapid increase would be a huge burden for receiving States and would no doubt stress reception systems and related resources. Like any country hosting refugees around the world, they cannot be left alone to shoulder that responsibility. I therefore welcome the support expressed by many European States at yesterday's European Union Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting to activate the Temporary Protection Directive for people fleeing Ukraine. If activated, it would enable the provision of immediate temporary refuge in the European Union and would also facilitate the sharing of responsibility among European member States for people fleeing Ukraine.

As Mr. Griffiths mentioned, we will launch the United Nations Humanitarian Appeal for Ukraine tomorrow, for activities both inside and outside the country. Private citizens and companies from around the world have already offered extraordinary financial support through thousands of donations, including more than \$40 million to UNHCR alone in a couple of days. I am counting on Governments to do the same, and quickly. Ukrainians, and the countries hosting refugees from Ukraine, cannot wait.

Finally, let us remember that Ukrainian refugees, like all others — and please let us not forget the continuing plight of Afghans, Syrians, Ethiopians, the Rohingya people from Myanmar and many others — never wanted to be refugees. They never wanted to be forced to flee their homes, and they all hope to return to their country as quickly as possible.

It is not very often that I get to brief the Security Council. I therefore want to take this opportunity to echo what I said the last time the Council invited me, a few months ago (see S/PV.8919). Humanitarian workers are courageous, resourceful and experienced, but they cannot keep pace with the constantly growing numbers of conflicts around the world or their increasing gravity. Today I am speaking to the Council as a sixth night of anguish falls over Europe, struck once again by war, and as millions of innocent Ukrainian civilians huddle in bunkers, scramble to board crowded trains and think with trepidation about the future of their children. As an old humanitarian worker myself, I want to say that the responsibility that the Council has — to ensure that peace and security for all ultimately prevail over power struggles and narrow national interests — has never been as urgent or as indispensable a task as it is tonight. If the Council fails — if we fail — it may be too late for us all.

**The President** (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Mr. Grandi for his briefing.

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

**Mr. De Rivière** (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Griffiths and Mr. Grandi for their briefings.

The humanitarian consequences of the Russian offensive in Ukraine are dire. The number of civilian casualties, including children, continues to rise. Cities are being bombed. Civilian infrastructure has been destroyed. About 500,000 people have been forced to flee and take refuge in Poland, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and Moldova. That number is increasing every hour. France salutes the solidarity shown by Ukraine's neighbours.

Russia, a permanent member of the Council, is violating the most fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations. It is riding roughshod over international humanitarian law. It is violating human rights and trampling on the Geneva Conventions. France reiterates its call for an immediate cessation

of hostilities, which must come before any peace talks. The protection of civilians, including children and humanitarian personnel, as well as civilian infrastructure, is a top priority, and France will not compromise on that. France reiterates its call for safe and unimpeded humanitarian access to all people in need. We have a collective responsibility and a moral duty to help the Ukrainian people.

France and its European Union partners stand firmly alongside Ukraine and its population. The European Union has already announced €90 million in humanitarian aid, in which France is playing its part. France has just sent 33 tons of humanitarian aid to Poland to help Ukrainians and is preparing to send more than 30 tons to Moldova. France welcomes the launch tomorrow by the United Nations of an emergency response plan for Ukraine and of a plan to help Ukrainian refugees in the region, and we call on all Member States to contribute financially. France also welcomes the Secretary-General's appointment of Mr. Amin Awad as United Nations Crisis Coordinator for Ukraine. The sanctions adopted by the European Union against Russia and Belarus will be implemented with full regard for international humanitarian law, and we will ensure that they have no impact on the humanitarian response.

Together with Mexico, France is preparing a draft resolution for the Council, calling for full respect for international humanitarian law, the protection of civilians and unhindered humanitarian access in order to meet the urgent needs of the Ukrainian population, to be put to a vote as soon as possible. France salutes the courage shown by the people of Ukraine. Within the United Nations and in all forums France will continue to work with its partners to mobilize support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine and the Ukrainian people.

**Mr. De La Fuente Ramírez** (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Filippo Grandi, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and Mr. Martin Griffiths, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, for their briefings.

The numbers that have just been shared with us and the scene described reflect a humanitarian situation that is worsening with each passing hour. That is why, among other actions, Mexico and France will present a draft resolution aimed at achieving a general cessation

of hostilities, the protection of civilians and guaranteed access to humanitarian aid. We deplore the continuing clashes in such densely populated cities as Kharkiv, Odessa, Kyiv and others. The use of explosive weapons in populated areas is unacceptable. It is also very worrying that large sectors of the population no longer have electricity, water or access to basic infrastructure. Communities are becoming isolated and facing shortages of food and medicine. Health services should be preserved at all costs. We call for ensuring that all humanitarian workers are enabled access so that they can provide services without any restrictions.

As we have heard, hundreds of thousands of people are now displaced in Ukraine, in addition to those who are seeking refuge in neighbouring countries. The numbers, although still very preliminary, are already alarming and are growing rapidly. We will have more clarity on this escalation in the coming days, weeks, months and perhaps even in the coming years. We call for borders to be kept open, as has so far been accomplished with great solidarity so that all those seeking protection have been able to find it. We also call for respect for the principle of non-refoulement. Nonetheless, although we recognize the right of States to legitimate self-defence, the substantial increase in the flow of weapons and the impact that it will have on the civilian population is no less worrying.

We acknowledge the efforts of the Secretary-General, including the establishment of the Central Emergency Response Fund, and we appreciate the financial commitments that several States have already announced. We now need international economic solidarity if Ukraine is to meet its growing needs for humanitarian support.

Finally, Mexico calls unequivocally on all parties to respect international humanitarian law, in particular the four 1949 Geneva Conventions and its first additional protocol of 1977, as well as international human rights law.

**Mr. Kimani** (Kenya): I thank Mr. Martin Griffiths, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, and Mr. Filippo Grandi, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, for their briefings. I also welcome the participation today of the representative of Ukraine.

The humanitarian suffering in Ukraine is unnecessary and uncalled-for. Kenya offers its condolences to the families who have lost loved

ones to the conflict in the last few days. We regret the mounting casualties, the hundreds of thousands internally displaced and those who are leaving Ukraine as refugees, as well as the growing damage to civilian objects and infrastructure. We commend the United Nations for swiftly stepping in to provide humanitarian assistance. We also commend Ukraine's neighbours for opening their borders to refugees. We give special thanks to Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia for working with our Ministry of Foreign Affairs to ensure that Kenyan citizens in Ukraine are granted visa-free entry.

In the unfolding emergency there have been disturbing reports about racist treatment of Africans, and people of African descent, seeking to flee Ukraine to safety. The media is covering those appalling incidents, and several States have confirmed that their citizens have suffered such treatment. We strongly condemn that racism and believe it is damaging to the spirit of solidarity that is so urgently needed today. The mistreatment of African peoples on Europe's borders needs to cease immediately, whether it is directed at Africans fleeing Ukraine or crossing the Mediterranean. And we also need to understand that there are actors who want to magnify this story for cynical reasons that have nothing to do with the well-being and safety of Africans.

We are here to discuss the humanitarian situation in Ukraine. But if we are truly to hold to humanitarian principles, we must broaden our view. The extensive unilateral economic sanctions that have been announced against the Russian Federation are almost certain to have serious humanitarian consequences. In total, their effects may even amount to a form of blockade. It is our contention that the peaceful means for settling conflicts advocated by the Charter of the United Nations do not include acts that may constitute collective punishment. We must also add caution that such considerable sanctions, rather than opening the path to peace, may lead to an escalation and broadening of the conflict. The only way out of this increasingly dangerous crisis is to prioritize diplomacy in order to limit all military manoeuvres and open a path to negotiations. It is still not too late to turn to the good offices of the Secretary-General, regional organizations and bilateral efforts to de-escalate this dangerous crisis. Whether the conflict ends now or later, with even more disastrous results, it will still require an appetite for negotiating a stable security order. At this moment, statesmanship is

required, and we urge all leaders of the States involved to embrace their responsibility.

In conclusion, I reiterate Kenya's recognition of the inviolable rights of Ukraine to its sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence.

**Mr. Mills** (United States of America): I thank Mr. Martin Griffiths, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, and Mr. Filippo Grandi, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, for their truly sobering briefings. I think they underscore what the Secretary-General has said, which is that this is a moment of great peril and great tragedy. I thank their agencies and their teams for answering the call to help Ukrainians in need during this dire hour.

In a matter of days, Russia's unprovoked and premeditated invasion has unleashed vast human suffering across Ukraine. We need to address the displacement and refugee crisis that we have just heard described. We need to address the food-security crisis. And we need to document and address all violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law. The Council just heard the latest displacement numbers, which have been rising by the hour in the last four days. First it was 50,000 fled. Then it was 150,000 fled. Now it is half a million people who have fled. That does not even include the hundreds of thousands displaced internally within Ukraine. Behind each of those numbers are real people caught in a humanitarian nightmare unfolding before our eyes. The truth is, no one knows where it will end, how many people will flee their homes, how many will need humanitarian assistance or how many will die. That is because we do not know when President Putin will end his war of choice against Ukraine.

I want to thank the many countries and the people in the region who have opened their borders and homes to fleeing Ukrainians. The safety they are providing underscores our common humanity during an otherwise dark moment of war. I want to echo the calls of the United Nations Refugee Agency. We should help and welcome all those fleeing conflict, without regard to race or nationality. Refugees are refugees, regardless of race or creed. Of course, not everyone can or will choose to flee, and those who remain in Ukraine must be assured unobstructed protection and assistance. Four days into the invasion, our humanitarian partners have already identified cash, fuel constraints, volatile

security conditions and logistical challenges as key operational constraints affecting all aid delivery in the country.

We also need to be very concerned about the hunger that Russia's invasion will cause. The World Food Programme is warning us that the food-security impact of Russia's invasion will be felt far beyond Ukraine's borders. The Black Sea basin is one of the world's most important areas for grain and agricultural exports. Vulnerable people from Asia to Africa and the Middle East will face greater levels of food insecurity as supplies are disrupted, as we are already seeing. An estimated 283 million people in more than 80 countries are acutely food insecure or at high risk, and the conflict in Ukraine will only exacerbate situations already on the brink of starvation. That is yet another reason why hostilities must end now.

Finally, we are gravely concerned about the reports of damage to apartment buildings and schools, as well as significant infrastructure damage that has left hospitals and hundreds of thousands of people without electricity or water, while bridges and roads are damaged by shelling. It will be critical to ensure adherence to international humanitarian law, including obligations related to the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure. Humanitarian agencies must be granted secure and full access to people in need of aid. Tomorrow, as we have heard, the United Nations will be launching a funding appeal, an appeal for this humanitarian crisis. For its part, the United States is already providing nearly \$54 million in additional humanitarian assistance to Ukraine. The United States Agency for International Development has been airlifting and positioning relief supplies, which are especially needed to help older people, people with disabilities and those displaced from their homes face the winter weather. That is just the beginning, and much more is coming. We welcome the commitments and leadership of other nations aimed at ensuring that life-saving assistance reaches those most in need. No matter what happens next, we must do absolutely everything that we can to help the people of Ukraine.

**Mr. Kelly** (Ireland): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths and High Commissioner Grandi for their sobering briefings and urgent calls to action today.

The Russian Federation's unprovoked and unjustified further invasion of Ukraine continues

to visit death and destruction on the country and its people, inflicting enormous hardship and suffering. Ireland stands in unwavering solidarity with the Government and people of Ukraine. They have shown extraordinary courage and resilience. This fresh onslaught comes on the heels of eight years of conflict in eastern Ukraine, where 1.4 million people were already displaced and relying on assistance to meet their daily needs. The Russian Federation's invasion has created a humanitarian catastrophe, compounding the suffering of millions with a rapidly rising toll of internally displaced persons and refugees in need of humanitarian assistance. Millions of people in Ukraine are grappling with the humanitarian consequences of a war not of their making. Innocent civilians, including children, are paying the terrible price of conflict. In Kharkiv, Kherson and elsewhere, we have seen significant damage to essential infrastructure that has left hundreds of thousands of people without electricity and water. It has deprived them of vital medical facilities, transportation services and means of communication. That is unacceptable.

The parties to the conflict must comply with international humanitarian law, including the obligation to attack only military objectives, the prohibitions on indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks and the obligation to take all feasible precautions in attacks. Ireland is gravely concerned about the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, which carries a particular risk of harming civilians and is in violation of those fundamental legal obligations. We are particularly concerned about the reports of the indiscriminate Russian attacks and shelling in Kharkiv, which are causing death and destruction among the civilian population. There have been reports that Russian forces have used banned cluster munitions. If confirmed, that will be a further damning indictment of Russia's military aggression. Cluster munitions are indiscriminate by their very nature, and we condemn any use of them in any circumstances.

Ireland urges against attacks on infrastructure and installations, including nuclear power plants. Such attacks could have profound effects on the health of millions and render the surrounding environments uninhabitable for generations to come. Any armed attack or threat against nuclear facilities devoted to peaceful purposes constitutes a violation of international law, including the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the first Additional Protocol to the Geneva

Conventions and the Statute of the International Atomic Energy Agency. We are also deeply concerned about the deployment of weapons and armaments and the conduct of missile strikes directly from the Chernobyl exclusion zone.

The Russian Federation must protect all civilians in Ukraine. We recall its obligations to respect international humanitarian law and human rights law. The safety of all humanitarian and medical workers must be assured. Humanitarian actors must not be prevented from ensuring the delivery of principled assistance where and when it is most needed. Ireland and its European Union (EU) partners are providing significant humanitarian support and we stand ready to do more. We commend our EU partners and Moldova for their generosity and solidarity in providing shelter to hundreds of thousands of people fleeing the war. They are deserving of our support in providing timely humanitarian assistance, especially to the most vulnerable — the elderly, the young and the sick. We appeal to all countries in the region to keep their borders open to all who are seeking safety and protection. Ireland is already providing humanitarian support, including core funding to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. We also recently announced a €10 million humanitarian package.

When conflicts rage, outcomes that are unpredictable and even barely conceivable can become all too real. Threats to unleash forces that cannot be controlled, including threats of nuclear weapons, are utterly unacceptable. Ireland has long argued that nuclear weapons offer no security. Their use would cause devastation in the region and beyond, bringing a new blight on humankind for generations to come. That is not a prospect that any of us should be willing to contemplate. We urge the Russian Federation to immediately cease hostilities, withdraw unconditionally from the entire territory of Ukraine and refrain from further threats or the use of force of any kind against Ukraine or any other Member State. In sum, we urge Russia to turn away from war and choose the path of dialogue and diplomacy. That is the right path, and the time to take it is now, before any more lives are ruined or lost.

**Ms. Juul (Norway):** Let me first thank Mr. Martin Griffiths, the Emergency Relief Coordinator, and Mr. Filippo Grandi, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, for their frank accounts of the Russian invasion's consequences for civilians in Ukraine. We



need their strong leadership in the response to the unfolding humanitarian crisis. Norway is stepping up its support to the civilian population in Ukraine. Our Government has announced that it will provide up to \$226 million to the humanitarian response.

Let me start by underlining that Russia, and Russia alone, bears sole responsibility for this humanitarian crisis. Through its unprovoked, unjustified and irresponsible military aggression, it has blatantly violated Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The parties to the conflict in Ukraine must comply with their obligations under international law, including international human rights law and international humanitarian law. They must ensure the protection of the civilian population throughout Ukraine. We demand that all the parties ensure that everything and everyone engaged exclusively in medical duties — medical personnel, hospitals and other medical facilities, along with their means of transport and equipment — are respected and protected. We call on the parties to the conflict to protect all humanitarian personnel and ensure and facilitate safe, rapid and unimpeded access to humanitarian aid for those in need. The space for neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian action must be restored and protected.

There is ongoing fighting in and around urban areas, including the use of heavy explosive weapons. We are deeply concerned about the long-term harm that it will cause to civilians, including children, and civilian infrastructure. Homes, schools, hospitals, waterworks and other civilian infrastructure are being damaged and destroyed. We are also very concerned about the reported use of cluster munitions. Explosive remnants of war will continue to kill and injure even after a conflict ends and prevent people from returning home, going to school, returning to work and rebuilding their communities.

Hundreds of thousands of civilians are fleeing the conflict. We commend the neighbouring countries for keeping their borders open and for the great generosity and solidarity that they have shown to the people fleeing the conflict. The door to safety and protection must remain open to all in need, without discrimination. We will do our part, including by providing support.

Two media workers were shot and injured this weekend. Journalists and media workers are civilians under international humanitarian law. The world relies on independent and truthful reporting of the events that

are unfolding. The heroic efforts by the Ukrainian and international press are incredibly important. We urge all parties to respect and protect the press, both on the ground and online.

We demand the unconditional withdrawal of Russia's troops from the territory of Ukraine in order to restore respect for the Charter of the United Nations and international law and prevent further civilian suffering. Russia started the war in Ukraine, and it can choose to stop it now.

**Mr. Hoxha (Albania):** I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths and High Commissioner Grandi for their startling updates on the catastrophic situation unfolding in Ukraine.

Russia's unprovoked aggression is causing an unprecedented humanitarian situation in Ukraine on a scale that Europe has not seen in decades. We all know the toll of war. In every conflict, it is the civilian populations that bear the worst of the consequences and pay the highest price. Conflicts mean innocent victims, destruction, displacement, refugees and severe human suffering, and those who initiate conflicts know that.

As we have heard, the situation is alarming. Mr. Grandi mentioned the staggering numbers of hundreds of thousands of people on the move in and out of Ukraine, and all of it happening in just a few days. Women, children, the elderly and people with disabilities are currently the most in need. As the aggression goes on, civilians everywhere in Ukraine are terrified of what awaits them, wondering when rockets will fall on their roofs and in what other ways this absurd war will affect them. International law is clear about the fact that targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure constitutes a serious crime and its perpetrators must be held accountable. There is no justification for this war, just as there is no justification for the destruction of bridges, the deliberate targeting of infrastructure and the launching of missiles in residential areas.

We are happy to hear that despite the hostilities, the United Nations operation in Ukraine has expanded. We support a strong and reinforced presence of the United Nations and humanitarian partners on the ground. We support ensuring safe, protected, unimpeded access for humanitarian workers and their deliveries to areas affected by conflict. Our message is clear. Civilians and civilian infrastructure must be protected; security and access for humanitarian efforts must be guaranteed; safe and unhindered access for humanitarian assistance

to Ukraine and its people should remain a priority; international humanitarian law and international human rights law, in particular, the four Geneva Conventions and their first Additional Protocol, must be upheld; and human rights violations and other crimes must be documented for the purposes of accountability.

We commend all the countries that are hosting refugees. As Prime Minister Rama announced last week, we are happy to shelter Ukrainians who have been forced to flee because of the war. Albania is participating in the wide array of sanctions recently adopted by the European Union and will close its airspace to all Russian operators except for flights conducted for emergency and humanitarian needs. We are working to provide assistance in the form of military and hospital supplies to Ukraine.

The decisions and actions made in the coming days will directly affect the lives of millions of people. What is happening in Ukraine should not happen anywhere. We need peace, not war. We need friendship, not aggression. We will continue to stand with Ukraine.

**Mr. Tirumurti** (India): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths and High Commissioner Filippo Grandi for their briefings.

India remains deeply concerned about the developments in Ukraine, where the situation continues to deteriorate. Our well-considered calls for an immediate cessation of violence and an end to all hostilities are an urgent imperative. India's Prime Minister advocated that strongly in his recent conversations with the leaders of the Russian Federation and Ukraine, whose commencement of direct talks we welcome. We reiterate our belief that differences can be bridged only through sustained dialogue and diplomacy. We also underline that all Member States have agreed on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States.

There is an urgent and pressing humanitarian situation developing in Ukraine. In such times of conflict, India considers that the safety and well-being of civilians, especially women, children and the elderly, are the top priority. We believe that the core principles of humanitarian assistance should be fully honoured. Taking into account the humanitarian requirements in Ukraine, my Government has also decided to provide urgent relief supplies, including medicines, that will be dispatched tomorrow.

We remain deeply concerned about the safety and security of the thousands of Indian citizens, including students, who are stranded in Ukraine. Our evacuation efforts have been adversely affected by the developments on the ground at Ukraine's border crossings. Given that the safety of Indian nationals is of paramount importance to my Government, senior ministers from the Government of India are being deployed to Ukraine's neighbours as special envoys, and we thank those countries for their cooperation at this difficult time. We stand ready to help people from India's own neighbours and from developing countries who are also stranded in Ukraine and may be seeking assistance. We also support all United Nations humanitarian efforts. As we reiterated yesterday, there is no option but to return to the path of diplomacy and dialogue. That is the only way ahead.

**Dame Barbara Woodward** (United Kingdom): I would like to begin by thanking today's briefers, Mr. Filippo Grandi and Mr. Martin Griffiths.

As a result of President Putin's decision to launch a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, a country of 44 million people is now on the brink of humanitarian catastrophe. Whatever my Russian colleague claims, the world can see Russia's indiscriminate attacks on men, women and children across Ukraine and its disregard for international humanitarian law. Missiles have rained down on Kharkiv, with cluster munitions hitting residential areas and injuring residents. Disruptions to supply chains have caused food shortages in Kramatorsk. The reckless bombing of an oil depot in Vasylykiv has unleashed toxic fumes in nearby communities. The violence in Kyiv has forced people to seek refuge underground, with many thousands, including the elderly and disabled, unable to evacuate. And as we have heard from the United Nations, as of today, hundreds of civilians have been killed as a result of the Russian invasion.

My Russian colleagues may try to paint the United Nations reporting as hysteria, just as they said it was Western hysteria to warn of their impending invasion. But let us look at the facts. Half a million people have already fled to Poland, Hungary, Romania, Moldova, Slovakia and other countries. Seven million people have been displaced, and that figure, as the High Commissioner for Refugees told us, is rising exponentially. United Nations agencies and humanitarian partners have been forced to suspend operations. As the High Commissioner stated, in this

moment of urgent need the situation the agencies are facing is impossible.

The United Kingdom stands with the Ukrainian people during their time of need. Yesterday, Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced \$54 million in aid to help our Ukrainian friends. That latest assistance package brings the total amount of United Kingdom Government aid pledged to Ukraine this year to \$190 million. Last week, Mr. Johnson also announced that the United Kingdom would guarantee up to \$500 million in loans to Ukraine through the multilateral development banks. The United Kingdom will also participate in tomorrow's United Nations appeal. United Kingdom Government experts have deployed to the region to provide humanitarian support to those fleeing violence in Ukraine. But we know that a humanitarian response is not enough to save the Ukrainian people from the disaster that Russia is inflicting on them. Our message today is therefore simple. Once again, for the sake of humanity, we call on President Putin to stop this war and withdraw his forces from Ukraine.

**Ms. Opong-Ntiri** (Ghana): At the outset, let me thank Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths and High Commissioner Filippo Grandi for their very sobering briefings, which unfortunately confirm the images we are seeing in the media.

Ghana is seriously concerned about the humanitarian situation unfolding in Ukraine. Today's briefings highlighted indiscriminate attacks in civilian-populated areas that have spread fear and panic among populations and forced people to take refuge in shelters and subways. Children and newborn babies have not been spared in this regrettable situation. Thousands of people have also been internally displaced, including Ghanaians and other nationals, with more than half a million people forced to flee to neighbouring countries as refugees.

Ghana calls for an immediate and unconditional cessation of the hostilities that have caused the current humanitarian crisis and urges the parties to refrain from further attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, in accordance with international humanitarian law. We strongly call on the parties to grant unfettered access to humanitarian agencies and guarantee their protection and safety. We also call for the safe passage of all civilians caught up in the war who desire to leave Ukraine. In that regard, Ghana encourages the countries

neighbouring Ukraine to facilitate the free passage of persons fleeing the war, without discrimination, and to provide them with humanitarian assistance, including medical care, in line with the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality. We continue to urge the parties to accept the path of peace and seek an early resolution through dialogue and diplomacy.

**Mr. Biang** (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I thank Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths and High Commissioner Filippo Grandi for their insightful briefings. I also welcome the participation of the Permanent Representative of Ukraine in these discussions.

Our view of the situation in Ukraine is clear. We do not want a war against a Member State of the United Nations, and we equally deplore the humanitarian consequences of war. My country is deeply concerned about the attacks on civilians and civilian public goods. We urge the parties to the conflict to refrain from any use of weapons that may have indiscriminate effects. We stand in solidarity with the people who are victims of a war not of their choosing and one that they did not provoke. For that reason, we call for the unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid to those who need it, without discrimination. We commend in that regard the outpouring of generosity that Ukraine's neighbours have shown in welcoming those fleeing the war.

I want to echo the cries for help from the African nationals and students, including students from my country, who are facing discrimination as they flee the war in Ukraine and seek shelter. There have been many accounts of people experiencing racism, which is unacceptable. We urge respect for people's dignity and call for all persons in distress to be treated equitably. Gabon would like to take this opportunity to emphasize the African Union's call under these circumstances for respect for international law and for the equal treatment of all persons crossing international borders during the conflict.

The only way to end humanitarian suffering and the people's distress is by ending the hostilities. We therefore reiterate our call for an immediate ceasefire and de-escalation.

The scale of the needs in Ukraine and its neighbouring countries requires a commensurate humanitarian response. The funding appeal for humanitarian assistance to be launched tomorrow

by the Secretary-General will give us an excellent opportunity to achieve that.

In conclusion, my country urges the international community to demonstrate empathy and to provide support to all the victims of the war, without discrimination based on nationality or race.

**Mr. Abushahab** (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank Mr. Martin Griffiths and Mr. Filippo Grandi for their briefings.

The humanitarian situation in Ukraine has deteriorated significantly in recent days, with the continued fighting resulting in damage to the country's infrastructure as well as civilian casualties and deaths. According to United Nations reports, hundreds of thousands of people are suffering owing to the lack of essential services. Many homes have been damaged or destroyed and hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced or are seeking refuge in neighbouring countries. All civilians seeking refuge should be able to do so unimpeded and without being discriminated against. In the light of the crisis in Ukraine, we stress the importance of focusing on the deteriorating humanitarian situation for civilians, including by working to ensure their protection and prevent the disastrous humanitarian situation from escalating beyond our ability to address or contain it. For its part, the United Arab Emirates is addressing the humanitarian needs resulting from the crisis in Ukraine with continuing efforts to alleviate the suffering of civilians affected by the conflict.

We deplore the ongoing violence in Ukraine and reiterate the need for self-restraint, a ceasefire and a peaceful resolution. If the hostilities continue, more innocent people will lose their lives and the humanitarian situation, which has been exacerbated by extreme cold temperatures this winter, will worsen further, at a time when civilians are fleeing the crisis and seeking refuge and safe havens. We therefore urge all the parties to fulfil their obligations under international law, including by allowing humanitarian aid to reach those in need and refraining from targeting civilians. We also reiterate the importance of complying with the principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, especially that of respect for the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of States. Those principles, on which the United Nations was founded, apply to all Member

States, regardless of their resources, capabilities or physical size.

In conclusion, my country emphasizes once again the importance of working to reach an immediate ceasefire and seeking peaceful solutions that serve regional and international security and stability.

**Mr. De Almeida Filho** (Brazil): I would like to thank the briefers for their informative presentations. I also want to take this opportunity to express our solidarity with all the families who have lost someone in this war; with all the people left without a home, water or electricity; with those who are fleeing in fear, in some cases with nowhere to go; and with everyone who is now trapped in a conflict zone, desperately attempting to find refuge. I want to commend all the personnel who are now in Ukraine trying to alleviate the people's suffering. We know that they are doing their best in very challenging circumstances, and we know that more can be done to assist them in their efforts.

As we speak, hundreds of thousands of civilians have already fled Ukraine. Many more, perhaps millions, will certainly follow. Most of the hostilities are playing out in densely populated areas where there is an increased risk of civilian casualties, including children, particularly when explosive weapons are used. Civilians are being called on to join the fighting, possibly with no proper training. There is a pressing humanitarian need for medical services, medicines, health equipment, shelter and protection.

Brazil calls on all the parties to fully respect international humanitarian law and uphold the principles of distinction, proportionality, precaution, necessity and humanity at all times. It is vital that we ensure the protection of civilians, critical civilian infrastructure, refugees and displaced persons, as well as unhindered humanitarian access to all in need. We also reiterate our appeal to Ukraine and Russia to facilitate the evacuation of all persons who want to leave the territory of Ukraine. Brazil expresses its gratitude to Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Moldova, Romania and others that are facilitating the exit of people fleeing the conflict, including Brazilians and Latin Americans.

In international humanitarian law, it does not matter how a war came to be or who was responsible for it. What matters is sparing civilians and maintaining a minimum of humanity in an already inhumane situation. We therefore can and must come together, beyond any discussions in the Security Council on

the reasons for the war, in order to adopt measures to minimize the humanitarian impact of the conflict. That is the minimum that we can do.

In moving forward, it will be important to closely monitor the situation on the ground, the number of civilian casualties and the immediate needs of the population. At the same time, there is no doubt that the best way to protect civilians and prevent a humanitarian crisis is to prevent conflict and cease it as soon as it erupts. Any war will generate devastation, death, chaos and fear. The greater the escalation, the higher the risks of human suffering. In the past few days, permanent members of the Council, who bear the greatest responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, have been openly referring to severe unilateral sanctions, military action and nuclear forces. That must stop. The world needs that escalation to stop and dialogue to resume. The severe economic sanctions being imposed may have ripple effects on the world's economy with consequences felt far beyond Russia. Populations in developing countries may be the ones who suffer the most. Supplying arms to the region and promoting its militarization will hardly promote dialogue and will probably provoke more tensions.

Since we have seen reports of nuclear forces being put on high alert, I would like to remind the Council that the International Court of Justice has stated that nuclear weapons have the potential to destroy all civilization and the entire ecosystem of the planet, and that their use or threat of use would generally be contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict. Any use of nuclear weapons would have unacceptable humanitarian consequences for current and future generations in the territory of Ukraine and beyond. So far we have received reports of approximately 200 to 300 civilian casualties in Ukraine, which is already devastating. How many deaths would there be if a party were to resort to the use of a weapon of mass destruction? What would be the extent of that destruction? We have seen it before, and we hope — we plead with everyone involved — that we will not see it again.

**Mr. Zhang Jun** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths and High Commissioner Grandi for their briefings.

What is now unfolding in Ukraine is indeed heart-wrenching. We call on all the parties to exercise restraint, de-escalate the situation and prevent civilian casualties. The safety and security of the lives and property of

all civilians, including foreign nationals, and their humanitarian needs, should be effectively guaranteed.

Preventing a large-scale humanitarian crisis is of the utmost importance. We welcome the remarks by the Secretary-General indicating that the United Nations will play an active role in coordinating the humanitarian assistance. In our view, the United Nations and the international community should provide humanitarian assistance in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality, as set forth in General Assembly resolution 46/182, in order to prevent the politicization of humanitarian action.

The most important thing for the time being is to return to the track of diplomatic negotiations and a political settlement as soon as possible, and to promote a de-escalation of the situation. China supports holding direct dialogue between Russia and Ukraine, which is the way to ultimately resolve the crisis. The international community should foster favourable external conditions for dialogue and a political settlement, and refrain from exacerbating the situation. Any action by the Council should help play a constructive role, rather than leading to further escalation

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

We listened very carefully to the briefings by Martin Griffiths and Filippo Grandi.

Without a doubt, all of us are very concerned about the situation in Ukraine. We can see the suffering of ordinary people, who have basically become hostages of Ukrainian radicals and nationalists who desperately are clinging to power. I say that because the people in the areas under the control of the Russian armed forces are not encountering acute humanitarian issues. Once the radicals have left, the local authorities are working normally and providing all the necessary services to the people. Life-sustaining infrastructure is functioning. The acute issues are only in towns where the Ukrainian authorities issued a criminal and irresponsible order to distribute arms to anyone who wants them, including criminals who had been released from prisons for that purpose. That has resulted in mass incidents of robberies, killings and looting. There is plenty of information about that on social media. There are also appeals on social media by heads of some local administrations calling on Ukrainian authorities to stop the madness. There have also been many cases in

which victims of looters and bandits are shamelessly said to have died at the hands of so-called Russian subversive groups.

I address the people of Kyiv, who are held in the city by the radicals as human shields. The Russian Ministry of Defence confirms that all the peaceful citizens of Kyiv can leave the capital of Ukraine without hindrance via the Kyiv-Vasylykiv road. That road is open and safe.

We repeat again that the goal of Russia's special military operation is not to occupy Ukraine or to harm the local population. The demilitarization of Ukraine, which is packed with NATO weapons, is aimed at protecting the long-suffering people of Donbas and Ukraine.

Russia's special operation does not impact critical civilian infrastructure. Over the five days of the operation, there have been no recorded cases of targeted destruction. Similarly, there is no evidence of the Russian military causing the death of civilians. Yet we are constantly being told the opposite, with a reference to some kind of credible reports. The widespread fake information is used to blame us for what Ukraine itself is doing. This flow of blatant lies, replicated by Western media, unfortunately has become a dangerous sign of our time. At this Security Council meeting, we heard once again about the bombings of residential areas, hospitals, schools and kindergartens. It is well known that Ukrainian radicals are deploying assault weapons in residential areas, which constitutes a direct violation of international humanitarian law. We ask Martin Griffiths and Filippo Grandi to comment on that.

Everyone is well aware that, starting in 2014, Russia and Russia alone has provided assistance to the civilian population of Donbas, who were faced with constant shelling by the Ukrainian army and the blockade imposed by Kyiv. We have already explained our approach in several Security Council meetings, and I will not repeat that. Let me just say that we deeply regret the fact that, even today when we discuss the humanitarian situation in Ukraine, not a single Western colleague has mentioned the people of Donbas. Rather, the West has chosen to ignore their suffering for the past eight years.

An important support measure for the people of Donbas was the 2019 decree by the President of Russia, Mr. Putin, entitled "On defining for humanitarian purposes categories of persons entitled to apply for citizenship of the Russian Federation via a simplified

procedure". At a time when the people of south-eastern Ukraine were pushed to the brink of survival by the criminal authorities in Kyiv, who had organized a socioeconomic blockade of Donbas, providing them with Russian citizenship allowed them to receive social benefits, pensions and salaries, as well as education and health-care services.

Currently, in Russia there are more than 110,000 refugees from Donbas. They had to leave their homes a week ago when Kyiv made another attempt to "solve" the problem of Donbas by military means, in violation of the Minsk package of measures. The blame for that situation also belongs to our Western colleagues, because they openly indulged Kyiv when it rejected the Minsk package of measures and filled the country with weapons. By our estimates, since the beginning of the conflict in 2014, approximately 3 million Ukrainians have moved to Russia.

In conclusion, let me reiterate that Russia did not start the war, but rather is trying to end it. Ukraine started the war in 2014, but the international community has tried to ignore it all these years.

It was strange to hear the representative of France say that the European sanctions against Russia do not violate international humanitarian law or the interests of ordinary people in Russia. We have heard such duplicitous claims before in the context of other country situations.

With regard to the draft resolution on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine proposed by France and Mexico, we need to study the text closely before we can make any assessments. In any case, Council members should know that the Russian military will provide any necessary humanitarian assistance to the people of Ukraine in the territories that have been freed from the radicals.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

**Mr. Kyslytsya (Ukraine):** First of all, I would like to thank the Security Council for addressing this urgent issue. With every new day, the unprovoked Russian war against Ukraine increases the human suffering across the entire country.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to the Secretary-General for his powerful statement and relentless engagement with the situation in my country.

The Ukrainian Government welcomes the appointment of Mr. Amin Awad as Assistant Secretary-General to serve as United Nations Crisis Coordinator for Ukraine, and I know he has arrived in Geneva and assumed his duties. His mission will be extremely difficult against the backdrop of the ongoing Russian military activities, which are often equal to war crimes. At the same time, millions of Ukrainians will require his attention, in particular our children, women, older persons and other vulnerable citizens. I wish him and his team strength and mercy in their work.

Let us be clear: this is not only a security crisis. This is a humanitarian crisis. This war of choice is not only a violation of international law, but it violates the conscience of the world. Security assistance is needed, but it alone is not enough. We call on international organizations to provide us with humanitarian assistance. We call on the international community to register all cases in which international law and international humanitarian law are violated.

Almost all speakers and briefers today were unanimous in their assessments: the situation in Ukraine could deteriorate sharply. Let me provide the Security Council with the latest available information from the Government of Ukraine.

Today is the fifth day of a full-scale, unprovoked and unjustified war launched by Russia against Ukraine — launched by Russia against the very heart of Europe, launched by Russia against the idea and the ideals of democracy. It is the most horrible and large-scale invasion since the Second World War.

This morning (see A/ES-11/PV.1), I told the General Assembly about the shelling of the residential city of Kharkiv by Russian Grad rockets, which killed and wounded dozens of innocent civilians. The residents of Kyiv — home to 3 million innocent people — and its suburbs are sitting in Russian crosshairs right now. According to Ukrainian Health Minister Viktor Lyashko, as of today more than 352 people, including 16 children, have been killed, and approximately 2,040 people, including 45 children, have been wounded.

Russia continues attacking kindergartens and orphanages. Russia is attacking hospitals. Russia is attacking mobile medical aid brigades with shellfire

and sabotage groups. Russia fired on ambulance crews near Zaporizhia and Kyiv. Let me say that again so that everyone can see those images in their minds: Russia is attacking hospitals, mobile aid brigades and ambulances. This is not the action of a State with a legitimate security concern; this is the action of a State determined to kill civilians. There is no debate. These are war crimes. These attacks violate the Rome Statute, and they are far from over.

It is why I say that this is a humanitarian crisis. As we sit here, Russian missiles are aimed at destroying critical infrastructure, which could lead to a serious environmental disaster and even radioactive contamination. International humanitarian law is crystal clear: none of those facilities are legitimate military targets. The civilian population of Ukraine is the first to suffer from such attacks, and, if we do not act today, it will be far from the last.

We welcomed the statement issued today by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), Mr. Karim Khan, on the situation in Ukraine and his decision to proceed with opening an investigation. In his statement, the ICC Prosecutor said:

“I have reviewed the Office’s conclusions arising from the preliminary examination of the situation in Ukraine and have confirmed that there is a reasonable basis to proceed with opening an investigation. In particular, I am satisfied that there is a reasonable basis to believe that both alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity have been committed in Ukraine in relation to the events already assessed during the preliminary examination by the Office. Given the expansion of the conflict in recent days, it is my intention that this investigation will also encompass any new alleged crimes falling within the jurisdiction of my Office that are committed by any party to the conflict on any part of the territory of Ukraine;

“I will also be asking for the support of all States parties, and the international community as a whole, as my Office sets about its investigations. I will be calling for additional budgetary support, for voluntary contributions to support all our situations and for the loan of gratis personnel. The importance and urgency of our mission is too serious to be held hostage to lack of means.”

I would say to my colleagues from around the world that this affects them too. Russian military aggression

affects not only Ukrainians, but also threatens thousands of foreigners who remain in Ukraine. The Ukrainian Government is doing its best to facilitate their passage at the State border, even as the border has become overwhelmed with the massive influx of people fleeing Russia's armed aggression.

Temporary volunteer assistance points have been set up at the border to provide foreign students with food and other humanitarian needs. Please do not be misled by Russian disinformation: there is no discrimination based on race or nationality, and, if there are cases, they should be investigated.

Journalists working in the free press are also under fire during live reports from the scenes of action and hotspots. A journalist and a photographer working for the Danish newspaper *Ekstra Bladet* were injured when their car was targeted in the district of Okhtyrka of the Sumy region.

Ukrainian children are crossing the EU-Ukraine border without their parents and without power of attorney from their parents. In that regard, we request decision-makers in the EU countries to provide clarifications and instructions to EU institutions in order to secure the free movement of, and assistance to, such underage persons and their guardians.

According to the Ministry of Education of Ukraine, more than 350,000 school children have no access to education. Schools are closed, owing to severe insecurity in several areas across the country. The number of refugees is being assessed. It could be hundreds of thousands of people who have been forced to flee across international borders into neighbouring European countries, mostly Poland, Slovakia and Romania. It can take several days of waiting to cross the border, and we are grateful that more checkpoints on the border with Poland have been opened, including two additional pedestrian crossings for all who want to get from Ukraine to the neighbouring safe country.

Key local authorities have set up a coordinating humanitarian headquarters to provide food and basic necessities to those in need. An electronic platform will be launched tomorrow. On the platform, businesses will be able to provide information about available resources, and Kyiv residents will be able to make their needs known. All of the information will systematize the quick and effective communication and distribution of essential goods.

Olga Stefanishyna, the Vice-Prime Minister of Ukraine, who has been appointed as the Government coordinator for humanitarian assistance, is working 24/7. There are many urgent things to do, such as agreeing on humanitarian corridors to evacuate civilians from the most endangered territories. However, I need to warn the Council not to be misled by Russian assurances of security. Russian words often, if not always, do not match their deeds. For instance, just recently, we heard Russian politicians and diplomats, even here in this Chamber, say that there would be no invasion of, or attacks against, Ukraine. Therefore, those corridors can be easy targets for the Russian army.

The Vice-Prime Minister is working to help people at the border crossing-points in the western regions of Ukraine who have been waiting to cross for at least one to two days, provide assistance to internally displaced persons in those areas, including housing, schools and jobs, and to provide humanitarian aid to civilians who have remained in their homes and are now cut off from markets, including in the occupied territories.

This is not only a security crisis. This is a humanitarian crisis, as I said earlier. The Russian war against Ukraine has brought the entire region to the brink of a humanitarian catastrophe. Let me therefore repeat our call to international organizations to provide every possible form of humanitarian assistance and record all cases in which international law and international humanitarian law are violated. Council members have all heard the lies from the Russian side, the lies in Moscow, the lies in the General Assembly and the lies in the Security Council.

Do not listen to Russian lies. Listen to Ukraine's cries. Listen to the cries of men, women and children who have lived in peace, who deserve to remain in peace and who support — and will forever support — Council members' own nations' efforts for peace, across Europe and around the world. Russia has tried, and failed, to defend its lies. But the people of Ukraine, with the help of the world, will never fail to defend our land.

Do not listen to Russia's lies. Listen to Ukrainian cries. We need the Council's help.

The Russian Ambassador laments the fact that a dozen Russian spies will no longer be able to enjoy all the benefits of American life while conducting activities that are incompatible with their status, which is used as a cover. The Russian Ambassador should instead work hard to report to his superiors on his cronies — a



bunch of cronies — in line with his narrative here at the United Nations.

I would like to conclude by saying that I look forward to midnight, although midnight is the most dangerous time right now, as that is when the majority of attacks take place. However, I look forward to midnight when this abomination of an occupation of the seat of the President of the Council will come to an end.

**The President** (*spoke in Russian*): I shall now give the floor to Mr. Griffiths and Mr. Grandi to respond to the question I posed in my capacity as the representative of the Russian Federation — about the placement of heavy weaponry in residential areas in Ukrainian towns and how that is in line with international humanitarian law?

I give the floor to Mr. Griffiths.

**Mr. Griffiths:** Let me respond to that if I may, or, indeed, try to respond to it. I can say that we have no confirmation of reports of radicals placing such weaponry in residential areas. The fact is that accountability at this stage for breaches of international humanitarian law, which we must see in time, is naturally, at this level of the conflict, level of violence and level of uncertainty, very difficult to establish. We are truly in the fog of war. It is a fog that obscures the future of so many of the people in Ukraine.

I made several points in my briefing about our fears surrounding the impact on civilian objects and civilian infrastructure as a result of urban warfare. I mentioned, for example, our reminder that large-scale urban warfare also requires that we avoid wide-area explosive weapons. We are extremely concerned about what we now see on the streets of some of the key large, modern cities of Ukraine — the way in which people are voting with their feet, the way in which basic services are being interrupted and the way in which civilian infrastructure is being damaged. In time, I am quite sure that we will discover who did what and who breached which requirements of international humanitarian law.

**The President** (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to Mr. Grandi.

**Mr. Grandi:** I fully support the remarks just made by the Under-Secretary-General.

**The President** (*spoke in Russian*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the Russian Federation before I adjourn the meeting.

I would like to say that I was surprised at the comments by the briefers. Some reports, footage and messages about the developments in Ukraine are taken for granted, while others, although obvious and undoubtedly true, are deemed to be unconfirmed and unverified. We will share some videos with members. We expect the United Nations leadership to comment on how such acts by Ukrainian radicals should be perceived.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

As this is the last scheduled meeting of the Council for the month of February, on behalf of the Russian Federation, I would like to express our sincere appreciation to the members of the Council and to the Secretariat for all their support. It has been a very busy month, but we managed to reach consensus on several important issues within our purview, although, as members know, not on all of them. I would like to again thank all the representatives of the Secretariat, including conference services, interpreters and translators, verbatim reporters and security staff.

Our presidency is coming to an end. I know I speak on behalf of the Council in wishing the delegation of the United Arab Emirates good luck in the month of March.

*The meeting rose at 4.55 p.m.*