



# Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

**9032**<sup>nd</sup> meeting

Thursday, 12 May 2022, 10.05 a.m.

New York

*Provisional*

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*President:* Mr. Mills . . . . . (United States of America)

*Members:*

Albania . . . . .	Mr. Hoxha
Brazil . . . . .	Mr. De Almeida Filho
China . . . . .	Mr. Dai Bing
France . . . . .	Mr. De Rivière
Gabon . . . . .	Ms. Koumby Missambo
Ghana . . . . .	Ms. Oppong-Ntiri
India . . . . .	Mr. Raguttahalli
Ireland . . . . .	Ms. Byrne Nason
Kenya . . . . .	Mr. Kiboino
Mexico . . . . .	Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu
Norway . . . . .	Ms. Heimerback
Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Nebenzia
United Arab Emirates . . . . .	Mrs. Nusseibeh
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . . . . .	Dame Barbara Woodward

## Agenda

Maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

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

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

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Joyce Msuya, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator; and Mr. Omar Abdi, Deputy Executive Director for Programmes at UNICEF.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Msuya.

**Ms. Msuya:** As the Security Council received an in-depth humanitarian briefing by Under-Secretary-General Griffiths last Thursday (see S/PV.9027), I will keep today's remarks brief. I know that Mr. Abdi, Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF, will of course provide details on the impact this war is having on children. Let me update members with the latest on the United Nations joint efforts to negotiate more humanitarian pauses to allow safe passage for civilians trapped by the fighting.

On Monday, together with the International Committee of the Red Cross, we were able to evacuate another 174 civilians from the Azovstal steel plant and other parts of Mariupol. This was the third operation in the past week out of Mariupol, bringing the total number of civilians evacuated from the steel plant, Mariupol and neighbouring towns to over 600. This is a truly monumental feat amid the shelling and destruction ongoing in the east.

This is a glimmer of hope. Yet, as we have seen these past couple of days, this war continues on its destructive path. The intense fighting is causing immense human suffering. Civilians, particularly women and children, are paying the heaviest price. Recent reports of the shelling of a school in Bilohorivka in Luhansk oblast, where women and children were seeking shelter from

the fighting, are abominable, and the human toll must be condemned.

Hostilities in populated areas are extremely destructive. The use of wide-area explosive weapons in these areas comes with a very high risk of indiscriminate effects and must be avoided.

The presence of landmine and unexploded ordnance also significantly affects humanitarian response and access. Even before this war, eastern Ukraine was one of the most mine-contaminated regions in the world. Support for mine action is crucial. Demining is a priority to open up humanitarian space.

Under international humanitarian law, the parties must respect all civilians, as well as civilian homes, schools, hospitals and other essential infrastructure; they must take constant care to spare them. This includes allowing civilians to leave areas of hostilities voluntarily and safely. It includes having special consideration for the needs of people facing specific risks, such as women, children, the elderly and people with disabilities. I also urge parties to the conflict to remove any barriers to the movement of humanitarian staff to ensure the continued delivery of life-saving assistance across Ukraine.

Let me briefly update Council members on the latest figures. Almost 14 million Ukrainians have been forced to flee their homes, of whom 8 million are internally displaced. Some 227 partners, the majority national non-governmental organizations, have provided humanitarian assistance to over 5.4 million people, many of those in the east. This scale-up is unprecedented.

As Council members are aware, in addition to the evacuations from the Azovstal plant and Mariupol, five inter-agency convoys carrying essential medical supplies, water, food rations, non-food-items, water-repair systems and generators have provided a lifeline to civilians encircled by fighting. This is by no means enough. Both parties have been notified of these convoys. I urge them to continue their facilitation efforts so we can reach many more civilians. This is also required of them under international humanitarian law. We must urgently take our efforts to scale.

Our recent efforts to evacuate civilians in the east have shown us that there is goodwill and common ground for us to build on between the parties. As requested by the Secretary-General, Mr. Martin

Griffiths is exploring ways to bring the parties together to discuss humanitarian issues, including safe passage for civilians and the movement of humanitarian convoys. Earlier this week, Mr. Griffiths was warmly received in Ankara by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, His Excellency Mr. Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, and Presidential Spokesperson İbrahim Kalın. Their discussions focused on Turkish support for the efforts of the United Nations towards progress on pressing humanitarian concerns in Ukraine.

We must explore all options to reach more people where needs are the greatest. We remain firmly committed to leaving no stone unturned in finding measures — from local pauses to wider ceasefires — to save lives. The world expects this of us. The people of Ukraine deserve this.

**The President:** I thank Ms. Msuya for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Abdi.

**Mr. Abdi:** I would like first to express our appreciation to Ambassadors De La Fuente Ramírez and De Rivière for requesting today's meeting. I would also like to thank the United States for calling this briefing during its presidency of the Security Council.

It has been just one month since UNICEF last briefed this Council on the situation of children in Ukraine (see S/PV.9013). As each day passes, more Ukrainian children are exposed to the horrors of this war. In just this past month, the United Nations verified that nearly a hundred children were killed, and we believe the actual figures to be considerably higher. More children have been injured and faced grave violations of their rights. Millions more have been displaced. Schools continue to be attacked and used for military purposes, and water and sanitation infrastructure has been affected. The war in Ukraine, like all wars, is a child-protection and child-rights crisis.

Last month, UNICEF briefed the Council following the attack on Kramatorsk train station, which was an attack on families fleeing the violence and which interrupted the work of our team on the ground to deliver desperately needed humanitarian assistance. We meet again today after another horrifying attack, this time on a school in Luhansk, which is yet another stark example of disregard for civilian lives. Today, even more families are mourning the loss of loved ones.

It is also a stark reminder that, in Ukraine today, education is also under attack. In February, the school

year came to a standstill when the war broke out. As of last week, at least 15 of 89 UNICEF-supported schools in eastern Ukraine had been damaged or destroyed since the start of the war. Hundreds of schools across the country are reported to have been hit by heavy artillery, air strikes and other explosive weapons in populated areas, while other schools are being used as information centres, shelters, supply hubs or for military purposes, which will have a long-term impact on children's return to education.

These attacks must stop. All parties must honour their legal and moral obligation to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure, respect international humanitarian and human rights law, and ensure that the rights of children are upheld. In 2021, the Security Council adopted resolution 2601 (2021), which condemns attacks on schools and calls for all necessary safeguards to uphold the right to education. The Safe Schools Declaration outlines what is needed to enhance protection of education in conflict. What is needed now is the courage, discipline, and political will to translate these words into action.

Schools are a lifeline for children, especially in conflict. Schools are a safe space, with routines providing protection from harm and a semblance of normalcy. Schools are also critical conduits for information about the risks of deadly explosive ordnance, and they are a connector to essential health and psychosocial services. The education workforce in Ukraine — teachers, principals, social workers, psychologists and other professionals — are equally affected by this conflict. Supporting them so they can stay and deliver is more important than ever.

We must also ensure creative, multifaceted, and flexible solutions that combine low- and high-tech methods to reach all children and minimize disruptions to their learning. In mid-March, over 15,000 schools resumed education in Ukraine, mostly through remote learning or in-person/hybrid options. The Ministry of Education and Science, supported by UNICEF and other partners, is doing everything possible to reach Ukrainian children, including supporting online education from kindergarten through grade 11. We are also supporting an ongoing digital campaign on explosive-ordnance-risk education, while providing education-related supplies. However, remote learning can be only a temporary solution. Lessons from the coronavirus disease pandemic show the importance of

children learning in a school setting with their peers and teachers.

In the broader region, thanks to the European Union's temporary protection directive, Governments and municipalities in neighbouring countries are enrolling children in national school systems and alternative education pathways, which is helping ensure the continuity of children's learning and supporting their completion of the school year. It is estimated that 3.7 million children in Ukraine and abroad are using online and distance-learning options. But enormous obstacles remain, including capacity and resource constraints, language barriers and unpredictable movements of children and their families.

We must make every effort to reach those most at risk of being left behind. For the youngest learners, access to education can be especially challenging: less than 5 per cent of preschool-aged refugee children are estimated to be enrolled in public kindergartens. Children with disabilities need access to inclusive services and assistive technology, as well as targeted programmes to cover their specific needs, including rehabilitation.

In the past month, we have seen small moments of relief as children and other civilians were evacuated from Mariupol and reached relative safety in other front-line locations. Humanitarians have reached millions of people in need across the country with health, education, water and essential supplies, as well as information, counselling and psychosocial support.

Yet we know that the situation for children and their families in conflict-affected areas without access to humanitarian assistance continues to be grim. Children and parents tell us of enduring a living hell, in which they were forced to go hungry, drink from muddy puddles and shelter from constant shelling and bombardments, and of dodging bombs, bullets and landmines as they fled.

The war in Ukraine has also had a devastating impact on the most vulnerable children globally, as world food and fuel prices have spiked to all-time highs. Children already affected by conflict and climate crises across the world — from Afghanistan to Yemen and the Horn of Africa — are now paying a deadly price for another war far from their doorsteps. The repercussions of the war in Ukraine will continue to ripple across the globe.

Ukrainian children have been uprooted from their homes, separated from caregivers and directly exposed to war. Their schools have been destroyed, and the critical infrastructure essential for their survival and well-being, including hospitals and water and sanitation systems, are being devastated by the fighting.

Ukrainian children tell us that they want to reunite with their families, return to their communities, go to school and play in their neighbourhoods. Children are resilient, but they should not have to be. They have already paid an unconscionably high price in this war. We must do everything possible to help ensure it does not also cost them their futures.

Once again, as humanitarians, we will do everything we can to continue meeting the needs of the children affected by this war and to provide safety, stability and protection, but that will never be enough. Ultimately, children need an end to this war — their futures hang in the balance.

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

I would like to draw the attention of speakers to paragraph 22 of presidential note S/2017/507, which encourages all participants in Council meetings to deliver their statements in five minutes or less, in line with the Security Council's commitment to making more effective use of open meetings.

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

**Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu** (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ms. Joyce Msuya and Mr. Abdi for their briefings. Their briefings confirm our concern about the terrible impact that the conflict in Ukraine is having on the lives of children, which is why my country and France requested this meeting.

As long as a cessation of hostilities is not achieved, the priorities of the international community must be to provide humanitarian assistance; to protect the civilian population, in particular the most vulnerable groups, such as children; and to avoid further damage to the infrastructure essential for their survival.

Attacks such as the one on a school in the Luhansk region are absolutely unacceptable and condemnable. Attacking schools is a clear violation of international humanitarian law, to which we must not turn a blind eye. In that regard, we are mindful of the work of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court.

We regret the fact that Luhansk is not an isolated case. The use of explosive weapons near schools and institutions of higher education and their access roads should be avoided at all times. Also, armed forces must be adequately trained to avoid affecting the civilian population.

The impact of the war on children is simply devastating. As UNICEF has indicated, two thirds of Ukrainian children have been displaced by the conflict, and in most cases they have had to leave the only home they have ever known. The conflict also affects the mental health and psychosocial well-being of an entire generation — those who have been displaced as well as those who have stayed behind. The trauma generated by this war does not discriminate; the constant bombardment and psychological harassment caused by the warnings of imminent attacks will have profound and long-term repercussions. We recognize the efforts of UNICEF and other institutions to address the dire mental health crisis, and we believe that comprehensive strategies are needed to address it.

We are also concerned about the increase in reported cases of sexual violence against children, for whom support services are very limited. The impact on health facilities also translates into the deterioration of sexual and reproductive health services and care for newborns.

The massive wave of displacement has made children and adolescents a target for human trafficking networks; unaccompanied and separated children are especially vulnerable. We call on host countries and institutions such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and INTERPOL to address those new circumstances and to register and identify refugee minors.

Finally, we cannot fail to mention the situation of children with disabilities, whose vulnerability is even more acute.

Mexico also stresses that any child fleeing Ukraine, or any other country, must be afforded the same treatment: there cannot be a system with two levels of standards in the treatment of refugees.

Any war is a war against children, and this war is no exception. That is why we ask the Secretary-General and his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, in the next report on that issue, to include Ukraine with a view to establishing a monitoring and

reporting mechanism and to list those responsible for grave violations against children, as well as to address the situation in the Working Group on Children in Armed Conflict.

**Mr. De Rivière** (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Msuya and Mr. Abdi for their briefings.

The Russian aggression continues inexorably. The Russian army continues to kill civilians, including children, and to destroy civilian infrastructure.

We all know that the number of civilian victims is much higher than the figures reported. The head of the human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine recently spoke of thousands more deaths, including in Mariupol, that black hole that is so difficult to access.

The cost of the war for children is terrible. Two thirds of Ukrainian children have been displaced, and the majority of them are unable to attend school. France condemns all attacks against schools, including the one in Bilohorivka. In addition, more than 200 medical facilities have been attacked or destroyed, according to the World Health Organization.

Attacks on schools and hospitals, as well as the killing and mutilation of children, are serious violations of international humanitarian law and the rights of children in wartime. We call on the Secretary-General to use all the tools established by the Security Council to verify facts and attribute responsibility, including the Secretary-General's annual report and his list of infamy of parties who have committed grave violations against children. Those who kill children and attack schools belong on that list.

Those crimes will not go unpunished. France will continue to support investigations to combat impunity, while lending its full support to the Ukrainian justice system and to international jurisdictions, including the International Criminal Court.

There is an urgent need for action. We call on Russia to respect the order of the International Court of Justice to end this unjustifiable and devastating war and to withdraw its troops from Ukrainian territory.

The protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure is a priority. We therefore reiterate our call for an immediate cessation of hostilities. Respect for international humanitarian law and human rights is non-negotiable. Humanitarian access must be guaranteed. France calls on the parties to cooperate with

the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Human Rights Council's Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine.

France commends the efforts of the Secretary-General, United Nations agencies and the International Committee of the Red Cross, which have enabled the evacuation of several hundred civilians from Mariupol. It is essential that the evacuation of civilians and all the wounded continue, allowing the evacuees to choose their destination. We also commend the work of UNICEF and UNESCO to ensure that displaced children have access to education, including distance learning.

The whole world is affected by this war, which increases the threat of a major global food crisis on a daily basis. We reiterate our call on Russia to lift the blockade of Ukrainian ports in the Black Sea in order to enable the exportation of food. France will continue to intensify our efforts to counter the negative impact of this war on the most vulnerable countries, in particular through the Food and Agriculture Resilience Mission initiative.

France and its partners will remain fully mobilized in support of Ukraine and the Ukrainian people. France will also continue to do its part, with aid amounting to \$2 billion, as announced by Emmanuel Macron, President of the Republic, at the Warsaw donors' conference on 5 May.

Having just commemorated the end of the Second World War, we are determined to continue to mobilize for freedom and peace in Ukraine and on the entire European continent.

**Mr. Hoxha** (Albania): Let me thank Ms. Msuya and Mr. Abdi for their update.

We meet again to discuss the situation in Ukraine. The war continues its destructive path. The overall situation is dire and worsening. People continue to suffer. The lives of countless civilians, particularly women and children, are being devastated because of this war of aggression that continues unabated.

If one would try to summarize the news that we get every day from Ukraine, including what we heard from the briefers today, it would be continued shelling with mounting civilian victims, targeted cities with large-scale destruction of civilian infrastructure, persistent attacks of hospitals, health-care facilities and schools, horrible crimes, including extrajudicial

killings, torture, rape and mass graves, countless shocking personal stories of lives uprooted and ripped apart that will never be the same again. We also hear about the continued Ukrainian resistance against the ongoing war that they did not want and did not choose.

As the war goes on and intensifies, so does the magnitude of human suffering. In only three months, more than 7,000 civilian casualties have been registered and 14 million people have been forced to leave their homes. Two months ago, the United Nations projected that some 4 million people would be displaced by the war. In less than 10 weeks, that number is now 5.8 million, and the new projection is double — 8.3 million. That requires more financial support for refugees and host countries to face challenges related to access to food, housing, transportation and services.

The massive destruction of civilian infrastructure has made life unbearable or completely disrupted for millions of people because the systematic destruction of health facilities, transport, supplies and warehouses only severs basic services.

Against that backdrop, we are particularly concerned by reports of unlawful attacks on schools, which deprives civilians of access to education. It is unbearable to see a school reduced to rubble. Schools, like hospitals, should be safe places, immune from harm and free from attacks. In Ukraine today, they are not safe. An average of 22 schools a day have regularly been under attack in Ukraine since the start of the war, disrupting the education of those 5.5 million children who are still in the country. Their school year ended on 24 February. At least one in six UNICEF-supported schools in eastern Ukraine have been damaged or destroyed since the start of the war. Only a few days ago, more than 60 people were feared dead after a Russian bomb flattened the school being used as a shelter in the village of Bilohorivka, in the Luhansk region. There is no justification for such recklessness.

In the context of that desolate picture, we are pleased to highlight that, on a positive note, UNESCO's Global Education Coalition, composed of some 200 members from the private sector, civil society, academia and the United Nations family, is working to ensure the right to education and the continuation of learning in Ukraine. Digital devices will be provided to Ukrainian teachers, who will reach out to hundreds of thousands of learners in order to ensure the continuity of online learning. In

addition, a high-education e-assessment platform will allow some 200,000 students to pass their examinations.

As the military aggression escalates, civilian casualties and more crimes and crimes against humanity mount, reports and preliminary facts gathered on the ground raise serious concerns about grave breaches of international humanitarian law in Ukraine. A report recently published pursuant to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Moscow Mechanism analyses a shocking range of apparent war crimes, from rape to torture to deportation and the use of human shields. It marks an important step in a long road to a full understanding of the illegal and criminal acts committed and suffered in the ongoing aggression. It concludes that, among other things, the two most blatant attacks mentioned several times during our discussions here — the bombing of the Mariupol maternity and children's hospital and the bombing of Mariupol's Donetsk Academic Regional Drama Theatre, where several hundred civilians were killed — most likely constitute an egregious violation of international humanitarian law and that those who ordered or executed those attacks committed a crime.

We must do all we can in order to secure the rights of children. In that respect, we call on the Secretary-General and his Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict to add Ukraine as a situation of concern in the upcoming twenty-second annual report on children and armed conflict, in the light of the grave violations committed against children in eastern Ukraine between 2014 and 2021, as well as evidence of an alarming increasing in grave violations across the country amid the rapid and ongoing escalation of hostilities since late February. A thorough investigation must be carried out, and accountability must and will be ensured.

The seismic effects of Russia's war in Ukraine are being felt everywhere. Stores in places far from Russia and Ukraine are running out of cooking oil, farmers are scrambling to buy fertilizers and Governments are struggling to respond to public disquiet due to the sharp rise in prices. Disruptions to the flow of those essential goods are compounding other supply chains, causing shortages and pushing millions of people into hunger. There must be no mistake about who is responsible.

Ceasefire arrangements for the evacuation of some 600 civilians from the steel plant in Mariupol show that it is possible to find solutions. It is possible to

silence the guns in the name of life when there is a will to do so. Similar arrangements should be extended to the wounded soldiers who are still there. We support the efforts of Under-Secretary-General Griffiths and commend United Nations actors on the ground for their contribution and encourage them to continue their efforts.

In conclusion, this senseless war must come to an end. The sooner it happens, the better for Ukraine and its people to start healing their profound wounds, the better for Russia and Russians to shed their attitude of self-victimization and the better for everyone, everywhere.

**Ms. Oppong-Ntiri** (Ghana): I thank you, Mr. President, and the delegations of Mexico and France for convening today's meeting. I would also like to join previous speakers in thanking Ms. Joyce Msuya and Mr. Omar Abdi for their briefings.

After several months of the violent conflict in Ukraine and its resulting humanitarian crisis, Ghana is deeply concerned about the lack of satisfactory progress towards finding a solution to the situation. It is indeed disheartening to know that innocent children have been caught up in this armed conflict, and sadly will be the most adversely affected by the horrifying situation.

As the war continues to affect social institutions, education has undeniably been one of the major casualties, leading to severe disruptions in the education of children. My delegation takes note of the report of the Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Science that 1,397 educational facilities across the country have been damaged and 102 destroyed by bombings and shelling, as of 26 April. Indeed, the reported attacks on schools and other educational facilities across Ukraine may constitute gross violations of international humanitarian law, particularly against children.

On that note, my delegation strongly condemns the bomb explosion at a school building in Luhansk, in eastern Ukraine, on 7 May, which resulted in a considerable number of civilian casualties, and we wish to commiserate with the bereaved families and the people of Ukraine. Ghana reiterates its call on all parties to refrain from attacking civilian infrastructure, especially infrastructure whose destruction impacts the lives of children.

Without the immediate cessation of hostilities, the 7.5 million children in Ukraine will continue to be

endangered by the escalating armed conflict. It is very disheartening to see images of students forced to hide in basements and bomb shelters and children missing months of schooling, which will certainly impact their future negatively. The persistent impunity and high-handedness against children, schools and educational facilities in Ukraine must not only stop forthwith but the perpetrators must also be held accountable for their actions. In the meantime, Ghana is still hopeful that the war will end soon by peaceful and diplomatic means so that teachers and students can return to their normal routines.

In the difficult circumstances faced in Ukraine, the fact remains that war is usually traumatic for children, especially when they are directly affected. The mental impact, especially on children, is likely to have devastating consequences for several years to come. In that connection, humanitarian efforts should focus not only on the physical needs of the affected children in Ukraine but also on their psychological needs and their need for emotional assistance, as the damage of the war will result in long-lasting psychological trauma.

My delegation reiterates that the mental well-being and safety of the children in Ukraine should be our ultimate concern and should remain at the forefront of the action of the international community, including the Security Council. At this juncture, we wish to commend the efforts of UNICEF and its partners in providing education-related supplies and appropriate learning opportunities for Ukrainian children in formal and informal settings.

My delegation calls on host and transit countries to ensure that the best interest of children, including learning opportunities, forms an essential element of their interventions. We believe that such interventions will minimize the enduring impact that the ongoing crisis will have on the lives of children in Ukraine and on their education. In the spirit of resolution 2601 (2021), I would like to reaffirm Ghana's commitment to United Nations endeavours to protect children in Ukraine, as well as its efforts to ensure uninterrupted education for them.

We encourage the continued deployment of the good offices of the Secretary-General in the international endeavour to bring an end to the war and facilitate a diplomatic solution to the ongoing security and humanitarian crisis in Ukraine.

In conclusion, for the sake of the lives of the innocent children in Ukraine, we reiterate our call on the Russian Federation to heed the repeated calls of the international community to withdraw all its invading troops from the internationally recognized borders of Ukraine and pursue the path of dialogue and diplomacy.

**Mr. Kiboino (Kenya):** I thank Assistant Secretary-General Joyce Msuya and UNICEF Deputy Executive Director for Programmes, Mr. Omar Abdi, for their briefings. I also welcome the participation of the representatives of Ukraine, Estonia, Poland and Slovakia in today's meeting.

The humanitarian catastrophe in Ukraine is deeply disturbing. We do not believe that it is inevitable for it to continue. However, we fear that the Council is settling into a familiar tragic pattern. The military conflict is becoming a protracted affair, in which the civilian population continues to suffer gravely. Rather than diplomacy, negotiation and a ceasefire being sought with ambition, far too much energy and attention are being used to make and defend accusations of violations of international humanitarian law.

We are forced to restate the obvious — that our responsibility as the Security Council is to protect international peace and security. Of course, our efforts to advance humanitarian aims in conflict are critically important, but the primary responsibility of the Council remains international peace and security. We must therefore urge the Council and all its members to make every effort to find a path to negotiating peace for Ukraine and its suffering people — a peace that respects and protects Ukraine's rights as a State Member of the United Nations.

The unfolding political situation in Europe, with alliances rapidly developing that may entrench differences, needs to be stabilized for the sake of international peace and security. If the Security Council and the international community truly embrace a preventive approach, then that is a priority. It is also the best safeguard against the humanitarian crisis that will otherwise emerge as a result of a broadening of the war in the future.

With regard to current humanitarian developments, Kenya condemns the recent attacks on civilian objects, including the reported bombing of a school in Luhansk that is believed to have been sheltering approximately 90 civilians. We again urge all parties to prioritize the protection of schools and other critical civilian

infrastructure, in accordance with international humanitarian law. We commend the Secretary-General for his efforts, which resulted in the recent round of evacuations to safety of more than 170 people who were trapped in the Azovstal steel plant and other areas of Mariupol.

We must not forget that this war has an impact on economies and vulnerable people around the world. The disruption of food and energy supply chains is compounding food and energy insecurity, especially in fragile contexts, and is driving millions of people deeper into poverty and humanitarian crises. We therefore appeal for enhanced support for other humanitarian situations, particularly in the global South.

In line with the Secretary General's recommendations on the basis of the assessments of his Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance, States should resist export restrictions and make reserves available to countries with serious food insecurity. We urge States, United Nations agencies and international financial institutions to urgently implement the Secretary General's recommendations. Time and boldness are of the essence if the war is not to lead to the escalation of multiple crises worldwide.

In conclusion, we call on the parties to the war in Ukraine and their allies and partners to make greater efforts to achieve a meaningful cessation of hostilities. In the meantime, we strongly urge Ukraine and the Russian Federation to offer guarantees for safe humanitarian passage for trapped civilians, particularly in eastern Ukraine.

**Ms. Heimerback** (Norway): I thank the briefers for their grave accounts of the humanitarian situation in Ukraine.

Norway once again condemns in the strongest terms Russia's unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine, which has created a humanitarian disaster that is the responsibility of Russia alone.

The civilian suffering must end. The Security Council's joint expression of support last week for the Secretary-General's effort to search for peaceful solutions (S/PRST/2022/3) is a first step towards that end. We need to see a path towards peace.

The ongoing attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure in Ukraine is having a particularly devastating and unacceptable impact on children and their families and communities. The use of heavy

explosive weapons in populated areas is destroying homes, schools and health centres, with children at especially high risk of suffering lethal and debilitating injuries — a risk seven times higher than the risk for adults. We also condemn the use of anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions, weapons that will continue to kill and injure long after the conflict ends.

The most recent attacks by Russia against schools and the civilians seeking shelter therein demonstrate a blatant disrespect for international humanitarian law. Those attacks are clearly in contradiction of resolution 2601(2021) on the protection of education in conflict, which was unanimously adopted by the Council just months ago. We call on all parties to protect and respect the civilian character of schools and educational facilities in accordance with international humanitarian law. Continuing education, even during armed conflict, is crucial, including for displaced children. Their right to education must be upheld.

All Ukrainian children are affected by this war. Many are displaced across borders or internally in Ukraine. We are particularly concerned about the high number of children who are separated from their families. Unaccompanied children are in a particularly vulnerable situation and are at risk of human trafficking and sexual violence and abuse. Access to child protective services is key, including child-appropriate mental health and psychosocial support.

Norway is alarmed about the situation for the many civilians, including children, the elderly and persons with disabilities, who remain trapped in the battle zone. All civilians, including those in care institutions, must have access to humanitarian assistance and safe passage for voluntary evacuation to safety. We are appalled by the reports of involuntary evacuations, deportations and so-called filtration camps.

We are also deeply concerned about the increasing reports of conflict-related sexual violence, including against men and boys. It is of the utmost importance that all survivors be assured of their sexual and reproductive health and rights. The atrocities committed during the war must be investigated and those responsible must be held accountable. We support the ongoing investigations, and we underline the importance of utilizing expertise on child protection, children's rights and gender. In ensuring documentation and accountability, it is also important that the right to freedom of expression and

free access to information be vigorously defended. Journalists must be protected.

I would like to conclude by commending the humanitarian organizations that are working every day to mitigate the humanitarian consequences of the war, especially local civil society organizations, which are doing a tremendous job.

But for the humanitarian crisis to truly end, the war must stop. Russia chose to invade Ukraine, in breach of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. Russia must also stop the war and withdraw its troops from Ukraine immediately.

**Dame Barbara Woodward** (United Kingdom): I would like to start by thanking Ms. Msuya and Mr. Abdi for their helpful and informative briefings.

Over the past 25 years, the Security Council has repeatedly recognized, condemned and sought to address the impact of conflict on children. While it will take time for the United Nations monitoring and reporting mechanism to establish the full extent of the impact of Russia's invasion on children, there is already evidence that Russia is committing four of the Security Council's six grave violations against children in times of war that are listed in resolution 1261 (1999).

First, children have been killed and maimed. Reporting from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights suggests that at least 238 children have been killed and 347 injured, although the true toll is likely to be far higher.

Secondly, schools and nurseries have been targeted across Ukraine and, as with the tragic bombing of the Mariupol theatre, children sheltering have been mercilessly targeted.

Thirdly, there are credible allegations of sexual violence against children by Russian forces and, as others have said, mass displacement has left children exposed to human trafficking and sexual exploitation.

Fourthly, reports of forced deportations continue, with more than 700,000 people, including many mothers and children, having been moved to Russia. There is now a very real risk of a lost generation and the continuation of a cycle of violence caused by Russia's invasion and the devastation that it has created.

In order to address that, we need to work together.

First, we urge all countries to endorse and implement the Safe Schools Declaration of 2015, which is designed to protect education in armed conflict.

Secondly, the international community must ensure that all credible allegations of crimes on the territory of Ukraine be investigated, including grave violations against children, whoever is accused of committing them. We support all efforts to improve our collective understanding of the situation on the ground through the collection of evidence and data and the work of the monitoring and reporting mechanism.

Thirdly, the United Kingdom is proud to continue to play a leading role in the humanitarian effort in Ukraine, delivering vital supplies and life-saving medical aid to those most in need, including children, but humanitarian support is not a solution to the suffering of children in Ukraine. Only the withdrawal of Russian troops and an end to Russia's war in Ukraine will end the cause of the suffering.

**Mr. De Almeida Filho** (Brazil): We thank the briefers from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and UNICEF for their presentations. We would also like to thank France and Mexico for their initiative to discuss the impact of the conflict in Ukraine on children and education.

Children in Ukraine — as elsewhere — must be protected from the harm of violence and under no circumstances should they be subject to violations of international humanitarian law, international human rights law or international refugee law. Brazil is deeply concerned by the continued reports of child casualties due to the use of explosive weapons, mine-related incidents and explosive remnants of war.

Both parties to the conflict must avoid the use of explosive weapons in densely populated areas, including near schools or universities or along routes to or from them. Schools and medical facilities should never be used for military purposes. It is of the utmost importance to implement resolution 2601 (2021), on the protection of education, which Brazil co-sponsored last year. The Safe Schools Declaration, which we have also endorsed, also provides important guidelines on the matter.

In the face of conflict, children and their parents have to endure great challenges. There are reports of Ukrainian parents who, out of desperation, sent their children abroad with strangers. Authorities in

neighbouring countries have identified children as young as 4 and 5 years old crossing State borders alone or with barely familiar people. For them, family reunification should be pursued with great urgency.

We cannot overestimate the impact of war on traumatized children. Furthermore, due to disruption of the school system countrywide, their studies are discontinued and compromised, with a lasting impact on their personal development. As the conflict persists, the damage to children's education grows starker.

The cessation of attacks against civilian infrastructure is key in protecting children from the harm of conflict. Resolution 2573 (2021) provides fundamental guidance for the protection of objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population.

Children forced to flee their homes to ensure their own survival are especially vulnerable. Brazil is concerned by the alarming number of children who have become internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees. Support from the international community is needed more than ever, especially for those children who are unaccompanied or separated from their parents and family members.

As they are forced into the condition of refugees or IDPs, children can become more vulnerable to crimes, including sexual violence and exploitation. Their physical integrity and well-being should be a priority for all Member States.

In line with our tradition of solidarity, Brazil has been granting humanitarian visas and residence permits for displaced Ukrainians and stateless persons affected or displaced by the armed conflict in Ukraine. Once on Brazilian territory, they have full access to all public services and social benefits, on an equal footing with Brazilian nationals. Brazilian civil society has been forthcoming in mobilizing to provide further specialized assistance to aid local integration. Other Brazilian humanitarian actions include the donation of water purifiers, food, essential supplies and medical items.

We shall recommit to our efforts to end the conflict and prevent a lost generation of Ukrainian children as victims of trauma without access to proper education. The silencing of the guns and the withdrawal of troops may not be enough to end the war, but it could be the first glimmer of hope for the Ukrainians to resume their lives in peace.

**Ms. Byrne Nason** (Ireland): My thanks go to our briefers this morning — Assistant Secretary-General Msuya and Deputy Executive Director Abdi — for all the work that they and their colleagues have done to help alleviate the suffering inflicted upon the Ukrainian people by the Russian Federation's senseless and illegal war.

Shockingly, two thirds of all children in Ukraine have had to flee their homes — many leaving behind parents and grandparents, all leaving behind the lives they knew. Those children face the horrendous risks of abuse, trafficking and exploitation. That is unconscionable. We have heard reports of children killed and maimed by indiscriminate attacks. We are also hearing chilling reports of sexual violence perpetrated by Russian soldiers, with children reportedly among those violated. That is abhorrent. We simply cannot accept such violations of international law causing such suffering and trauma, whether in Ukraine or anywhere else in the world. Those horrific violations must end and those responsible must and will be held to account.

As civilian infrastructure across Ukraine continues to be demolished by Russian forces, we must respond to the destruction of hundreds of schools, including kindergartens. Attacks on schools in violation of international law have profound impacts on the children affected. Let us remember that, as in the case of killing, maiming and sexual violence, attacks on schools and hospitals are listable under the children and armed conflict agenda. If the Council is to protect children in armed conflict and seriously tackle impunity, we must support the integrity and the impartiality of listing on those grounds.

The Council recognized the right of children to education in conflict with the unanimous adoption of resolution 2601 (2021) just a few months ago. Are our memories really that short? Our words should be followed by actions. Collectively, we need to take action to address the disruption of education through the provision of education in emergency settings, psychosocial services, mental health support and health care. It is clear that child protection capacities in Ukraine need to be urgently resourced. As far as possible, the Council should support United Nations monitors and child protection staff.

Ireland calls on the Secretary-General and Special Representative Gamba de Potgieter to consider adding Ukraine as a situation of concern in the upcoming

annual report on children and armed conflict in order to further assist the extremely important monitoring work carried out by United Nations staff. Grave violations and abuses have been committed against children in eastern Ukraine since 2014. Now, with the alarming increase in violations since the further Russian invasion two months ago, we would fully expect to see that reflected in upcoming reports. We also call on the Secretary-General and Special Representative Gamba to use all tools and mechanisms to address any violations related to children and armed conflict taking place in Ukraine and to deliver on accountability.

The most innocent of victims, millions of Ukrainian children, are being robbed of their childhoods and of their futures by this war. Denying children their right to education has profound impacts not only on their individual development but also on the future of Ukrainian society as a whole.

We continue to see the devastating impact of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, including on schools. Now and long after the conflict, contamination by explosive remnants of war will have a disproportionate impact on the children of Ukraine, carrying risks of death or injury and further blighting their futures. Equally, robbing children of the possibility of routine vaccinations exposes them to critical outbreaks of communicable diseases, which can also have long-term, debilitating consequences.

The evacuations from Mariupol negotiated by the Secretary-General and the United Nations have shown that it is possible to do the right thing for civilians and that the humanitarian notification system can function. We must continue all our efforts to help the people of Ukraine.

The reverberations of the war, as we know, reach far beyond Ukraine's borders; we also know that they will reach beyond this generation. We all have a responsibility to support the people of Ukraine long after this war has ended.

At this table, we have repeatedly called for the war to end — for the Russian Federation to withdraw its forces and engage in true dialogue and diplomacy. However, as long as armed conflict continues, Russia must comply with its obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law. We will not tire of making this call; we must meet our responsibilities. The children of Ukraine deserve nothing less from us.

**Mr. Dai Bing** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Joyce Msuya and Deputy Executive Director Omar Abdi for their briefings.

The conflict in Ukraine is inflicting on children pain that is foreign to their age. Protecting children from harm is an obligation under international law that must be fulfilled by the parties to the conflict. China reiterates its call to ensure the security of children and the infrastructure on which they depend and to give priority to children's needs in evacuation and humanitarian relief operations.

We welcome the safe evacuation of civilians, including children trapped in the Azovstal steel plant in Mariupol, under the coordination of the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross, and hope that Russia and Ukraine will continue to increase coordination on humanitarian issues and make every effort to reduce the humanitarian impact of the conflict.

The attack on a school in the village of Bilohorivka on 7 May resulted in the loss of many lives. Such incidents are deeply deplorable. Schools should not be targeted or used for military purposes. The circumstances surrounding and the specific causes of the incident should be verified and established. Any accusations should be based on facts.

The conflict, which has been raging for more than two months, has uprooted more than half of Ukrainian children. Millions of children have taken refuge in neighbouring countries. China appreciates the safe haven, humanitarian assistance and psychological support provided by Ukraine and neighbouring countries as well as the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UNICEF and other humanitarian agencies to children seeking refuge.

China calls on the international community to continue to step up relief efforts to ensure that every child in need receives effective assistance. The risk of human trafficking, sexual exploitation and abuse faced by children seeking refuge, especially separated or unaccompanied children, is worrying. China calls on UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and other agencies to strengthen monitoring and support the countries concerned in taking measures to prevent and eliminate violations against children.

The World Health Organization's (WHO) warnings about disruptions in routine immunizations for children and the growing risk of outbreaks of epidemics such as measles should be taken seriously. China supports WHO in its efforts to cooperate with Ukraine and the countries concerned to ensure that children can receive vaccinations on time.

Education gives hope to children in conflict and is also a matter of the future of Ukraine. China supports UNICEF in its efforts to help the Ukrainian Government provide educational supplies and learning opportunities to internally displaced children and encourages the host countries to integrate refugee children into their own educational systems in order to ensure that children's right to education is not disrupted by the conflict.

Achieving peace is the best protection for children. Dialogue and negotiation are the most realistic and feasible path to achieving a ceasefire and to stopping the war. The international community should encourage Russia and Ukraine to return to the negotiation track and continue creating the political conditions necessary for the restoration of peace.

China welcomes the presidential statement adopted by the Security Council last week on Ukraine (S/PRST/2022/3) calling for the peaceful settlement of international disputes and supporting the Secretary-General's efforts to promote peace.

Sanctions will not bring about peace but will only accelerate the spillover of the crisis, triggering sweeping food, energy and financial crises across the globe and making children around the world suffer the bitter consequences of sanctions. With children living in conflict situations in Afghanistan, Yemen and the Horn of Africa as well as the Sahel region bearing the brunt of the humanitarian impact, China once again calls on the parties to remain rational and exercise restraint, transcend prejudice and strife, and make unremitting efforts towards the early resolution of the crisis in Ukraine so that children can enjoy a peaceful future.

**Mrs. Nusseibeh** (United Arab Emirates): I, too, should like to join others in thanking the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Ms. Joyce Msuya, and the Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF, Mr. Omar Abdi, for their valuable briefings.

As we have heard from today's briefers, the extent of the devastation due to the war in Ukraine does not

appear to have reached its limits, and its impact is disproportionately affecting children. Well over half of Ukraine's 7.5 million children have been displaced as a result of the conflict. There are also deeply disturbing reports of hundreds of children having been killed and maimed since the conflict began that should be investigated.

War is always deeply traumatizing, particularly for children. This conflict is no exception, and there is a dire need for essential services such as education and health care to be provided urgently and to continue throughout the course of the conflict.

We know only too well from our own region and beyond the costs of conflict for children and their education — from children in Syria who have been denied an education for more than a decade, to Palestinian children facing continued disruptions to their schooling, to girls in Afghanistan who have been denied secondary education since August 2021, to children in Yemen, Libya, the Horn of Africa and the Sahel, as well as countless additional examples from around the globe.

There is a lost generation of children and youth who simply will never regain a meaningful opportunity to learn. The children of Ukraine could face that same fate while this armed conflict continues, and we therefore, like others, urge that all diplomatic efforts be made to end it. It is crucial that we redouble our commitment to ensure educational access in Ukraine, where the conflict has already significantly disrupted children's access to education, which comes on top of the coronavirus disease pandemic-related disruptions, which had negatively impacted children's lives before the conflict had even begun.

As the international community responds to the urgent humanitarian needs in Ukraine, education must be a priority. It is also critical to ensuring that future generations have the skills necessary to effectively contribute to their communities. We must think about the period after the conflict as much as the period of its duration. As UNICEF recalled, children will have a much better chance of recovering if they can quickly return to school and to some form of normalcy in their lives.

In the light of all those difficult realities, I would like to focus on the following points.

First, we remain deeply concerned by reports of the ongoing damage and destruction of civilian infrastructure, including health and educational facilities. The bombing of the school in Bilohorivka over this past weekend is one disturbing example. UNICEF has noted that at least one in every six UNICEF-supported schools in eastern Ukraine has been damaged in the course of the conflict. We underline the importance of protecting educational facilities and ensuring continued access to education.

Secondly, facilitating access to education, particularly for refugee children, is imperative to supporting children's development and maintaining a sense of stability in their lives. We commend the neighbouring host countries, as well as UNICEF and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, for facilitating the continuation of education services, including by providing equipment that supports online teaching, in addition to expanding digital education platforms. Such efforts are invaluable and must be supported by the international community. Furthermore, distance learning can mitigate some of the disruptive effects of the conflict, and we noted that 12,600 schools providing education to nearly 4 million students are now operating remotely.

Thirdly, providing psychosocial services is critical to ensuring children's well-being during and after the war. Children have been uprooted from their homes and separated from caregivers. Many children have witnessed or experienced violence, including reported sexual violence, and all credible reports should be investigated. We commend the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and UNICEF for their support for the provision of psychosocial services to children, as well as their efforts to particularly help children with disabilities.

Finally, we reiterate our call on all parties to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law. We further underline that the protection of children and all civilians can be assured only through a cessation of hostilities throughout Ukraine and the reaching of a diplomatic solution to this conflict. That is essential not only for the children of Ukraine, but also for all children globally living through years of armed conflict. None of those children should be neglected by the Security Council. The reverberating impact of this conflict, including through the rise in food and commodity prices, will fall the heaviest on the health and development of children.

In that vein, we call on both sides to remain committed, despite the difficulties, to dialogue and for the international community and the Security Council to support efforts to end the conflict and establish a process for peace. We are encouraged by the Secretary-General's efforts in that regard, as well as the feedback of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to the Council that recent efforts to evacuate hundreds of civilians in Mariupol have shown the goodwill that exists on both sides and are grounds to build upon. We must build on that opportunity and double-down our efforts to support such initiatives.

**Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome the UNICEF Deputy Executive Director for Programmes, Mr. Omar Abdi, and Assistant Secretary-General Joyce Msuya to this meeting. We listened carefully to their briefings.

Today a number of representatives spoke on issues other than children and education, which was the topic of today's meeting. But I am not going to respond to that. I will focus on children and education.

We believe that the topic of today's meeting is particularly relevant, since we are focusing not only on children, but also on their education, which is fundamental for their personal development.

For more than eight years in Ukraine, the Kyiv regime has been waging a civil war against its people. The plans that the Maidan authorities had for the children of Donbas became clear from the words of former Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko, spoken in 2014 in relation to the people of Donbas, citizens of Ukraine — citizens of his own country:

“We will have work; they will not ... We will care for people — children and pensioners; they will not. Our children will go to schools and kindergartens, but theirs will sit in basements ... That is precisely how we will win this war.”

Mr. Poroshenko kept his promise, unlike many others. The Ukrainian authorities have indeed kept the children of Donbas out of their basements with their shelling. Schools, hospitals, children's playgrounds and critical infrastructure have been targeted by the Ukrainian military. However, our Western colleagues, for political reasons, prefer to ignore that.

Over the past eight years, more than 100 children were killed in Donbas as a result of the Ukrainian armed forces' shelling. The residents of Donbas have

a tradition of taking flowers to the Alley of Angels, a monument to the children who died at the hands of the Ukrainian military, who took up arms against their own people. Many Ukrainian prisoners of war are also taken there today for educational purposes so that they realize with whom they have actually been fighting all these years.

Between 2014 and 2022, more than 200 educational facilities have been damaged in the Luhansk People's Republic alone, almost half of which were schools and kindergartens.

This spring, children are once again being killed by Ukrainian shells in Donbas. The number of orphans whose parents have been killed by the Ukrainian army's shelling is also increasing. Russia is helping the inhabitants of the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics as much as it can. As of the beginning of May, more than 215,000 children without parental care have arrived in our country. Some of them came with their guardians and legal representatives. Approximately 1,200 children came from orphanages in the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics. We work closely with the authorities of the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics on the adoption of orphans. Temporary guardianship, which allows children to be temporarily placed with Russian families, is being used in the interests of the children.

We send humanitarian aid to children in Donbas. With regard to refugee children, we organize their placement in schools, making use of all options: ordinary schools, home-based schools, inclusive schools and distance learning.

The Russian armed forces are doing their utmost to ensure the safety of children during the special military operation in Ukraine. We strongly condemn violations of international humanitarian law, particularly those committed against children. We regard as unacceptable both deliberate attacks on children and other categories of protected persons and the indiscriminate or excessive use of force and use of schools for military purposes. Today we once again heard from a number of colleagues accusing the Russian military of committing acts of violence, including sexual violence, against children. Such comments were made by my British colleague in particular, as well as other speakers. Those accusations are absurd. In that regard, I would like to refer to a primary source. In an interview with the Belsat television company, the Ukrainian Presidential Commissioner

for Children's Rights, Darya Gerasymchuk, said the following: the Ukrainian Prosecutor General's Office does not have a single such confirmed fact.

Many educational buildings in cities where there is active fighting have been used by the Ukrainian military as strongholds, causing considerable damage. We have the strong impression that the norms of international humanitarian law exist for anyone but Kyiv. The occupation of schools, kindergartens and other children's educational institutions by the Ukrainian armed forces is not the exception but the rule. That inhumane method of warfare endangers the lives of children, deprives them of their right to education and destroys Ukraine's educational facilities.

The deliberate destruction of civilian objects is a trademark of Kyiv. That is not Russian propaganda, as some people here would like to believe. On 6 May, we held an informal Arria Formula meeting of the Security Council and gave the floor not only to independent foreign journalists but also to ordinary people from the two republics. Without hiding their feelings, they told us how the so-called heroic Azov Battalion had shot at civilians before their very eyes, including in buses with children who were trying to evacuate from the war zones, how those battalions drove people from their flats and the wounded from hospitals, how they occupied kindergartens and schools and how they set up their camps and warehouses for storing weapons and ammunition there. There are many such testimonies, and we are carefully documenting them.

The actions of the Kyiv authorities also cast a shadow over other so-called soft law documents on the protection of schools and education. I am referring in particular to the Safe Schools Declaration — a text that is not legally binding, but about the importance of which our Western partners talk so often. And what do we see? Ukraine, which has supposedly publicly committed itself to that instrument, is completely ignoring it. In that way, not only do Ukraine's actions pose a risk to children whom the Ukrainian armed forces are using as human shields, but they also devalue the significance of that instrument.

Incidentally, Ukraine readily targets schools not only on its own territory and in the Donbas. For example, yesterday, a school in the village of Solakha, which is in the Belgorod region of the Russian Federation, was bombarded.

We would also like to draw the Council's attention to another important fact: the Ukrainian nationalists — in particular, fighters from the infamous Azov regiment — have been recruiting children into the Ukrainian armed forces for many years and have also been educating them to hate everything Russian. To this end, in a number of regions in Ukraine, they have set up children's camps where children from the ages of 7 to 18 are hosted. One of these camps was the Pilgrim orphanage in Mariupol, where children were turned into future fighters. Another similar establishment is a Ukrainian youth organization called Centuria, whose ideology is based in radical Ukrainian nationalism.

Even before the beginning of the special military operation by Russia in Ukraine, reports on the training of child soldiers appeared repeatedly, including on Western television. In 2018, journalists from the Associated Press in Ukraine observed how young people from the Azovets youth camp were taught to “destroy sub-humans”. Journalists from the United States suffered culture shock.

Since our discussion today is on education, I would like to talk about the quality of education in Ukraine, which the Kyiv regime has continually tried to tailor to its ideology. We have analysed more than 300 school textbooks and manuals from the country, which has shown that ongoing targeted work is seeking to create a chain of information that distorts history and historic truth. I am not even talking about the fact that fascist collaborationists are presented to children as heroes. Rather, I am talking about the fact that, in contemporary Ukrainian education, the goal is, from the earliest ages, to orient Ukrainian young people against Russia; we have been sculpted as the enemy for a long time now. In the post-Maidan years, it has become common practice for Kyiv's education system to issue materials teaching children how to use firearms against so-called separatists and occupiers.

The total Ukrainization of education and the rewriting of the pages of history that the Russian and Ukrainian nations share is what is being done by the Ministry of Education and Science in Ukraine. In 2016, this authority, “taking into account the historic events of recent years”, established 25 educational programmes, with the broadest changes being brought to the history and geography programmes.

I even brought with me a geography textbook for eighth-grade students edited by Maslyak and Kapirulin.

Believe it or not, the forefathers of the French, the Spaniards, the Portuguese, the Turks, and even the Jews all came from Ukraine. I turn now to my French colleague, Mr. De Rivière, to ask him if he knew that he was in fact Ukrainian. If he does not believe me, he just needs to read this textbook — it really says so. The iron logic behind this is that, since the French are descended from the Gauls, then they came from Galychyna, which is now in Ukraine.

According to the authors of the textbook, Ukrainians and Poles have Slavic roots, but Russians have Finno-Ugric roots. Belorussians were stripped of their Slavic identity, having been relegated to the Baltic peoples. In the book *The History of Ukraine*, for seventh-grade students, edited by Lyakh and Temirov, it says that the Ukrainian people have existed for 140,000 years. In a history book for ninth-grade students, edited by Turchenko and Moroko, it says that by the end of the eighteenth century, Ukrainians were one of the largest nations in Europe. In this regard, we should mention that Galichanets, the author of the book *The Ukrainian Nation* is absolutely convinced that “the population of Eastern Europe entered the first millennium of the new era under the name Ukrainians” — notwithstanding the fact that no one called the inhabitants of the territory of modern Ukraine Ukrainians.

Even in the work of Taras Shevchenko, the nineteenth-century poet who is much revered in both Ukraine and Russia, the term “Ukrainians” is entirely absent. The inhabitants of those lands were called Ruthenians, Russians, or in extreme cases, Little Russians, but I am not going to get into this subject, which is so unpleasant for my Ukrainian colleagues.

There are a range of different absurd examples from Ukrainian school curricula and textbooks. For example, there is a Ukrainian historian, Valeriy Bebik, who is not the only one to assert that Constantinople was a colony of Chersonesus, which is now Sevastopol, and that the ancestor of the Scythians were Heracles, a native of Crimea, whose roots are to be found on the island of Khortytsa in the Dnieper. The city of Mena in the Chernihiv region, it turns out, got its name from the first Egyptian Pharaoh, Menes, and according to his calculations, the “Ukrainian State” itself has existed for more than 7,500 years.

Genghis Khan, the famous twelfth- and thirteenth-century Mongol commander, was, according to Mr. Bebik, in fact called Bogdan. If you do not believe

me, Mr. President, then the author advises you to read *The Secret History of the Mongols*, where Genghis Khan is called Bogd Khan. From this, it is clear that he was not a Mongol at all, but a real Ukrainian. Besides, this historian is certain that he fought under the Ukrainian trident and the country's yellow and blue banners.

Of course, Mr. Bebig's main conclusion is that Ukraine was the cradle of global civilization. Even Jesus Christ, in Mr. Bebig's terms, as he said in one of his interviews, could be from Galicia. This is no joke. I am simply quoting an interview with him on this topic.

Some Council members might ask why I am spending so much time on this person. Of course, there are many crazy people in our countries who promote marginal and very controversial theories of history. There are naturally many of them; we have them in Russia too. But there is one nuance in this regard, and that is that Valeriy Bebig is not any ordinary madman, but a distinguished madman and a leader of other crazy pseudo-historians. In 2015, when Poroshenko said that the country urgently needed a special "Ministry of Information Policy" — in essence, a Ministry of Truth, or, rather, a Ministry of New Truth, but you can call it what you wish, Mr. President — the man appointed Interim Chair of the Advisory Board of the Ministry was Mr. Valeriy Bebig, who became, simply stated, the chief historian of Ukraine. Furthermore, he was repeatedly nominated for the National Ukrainian Prize named for Taras Shevchenko, which is a State award given for a significant contribution to the development of culture and art. The decision to award it is made by the President personally for work that

"represents the highest spiritual achievement of the Ukrainian people to advance the historical memory and identity of the nation".

Bebik was therefore not just some kind of misfit but was in essence the father of modern Ukrainian historiography.

We hope that, ultimately, Ukrainian children will be able to continue their education under a normal curriculum and not be fed the drivel that the Ukrainian authorities are forcing on them at the moment.

**Ms. Koumby Missambo** (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Joyce Msuya and Mr. Omar Abdi for their respective briefings, and I thank France and Mexico for their initiative in requesting today's briefing on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine focusing on the situation of children in the context of the war.

The humanitarian situation in Ukraine is getting worse as the fighting continues. To date, nearly 14 million people have been forcibly displaced since the war in Ukraine began. Half of the refugees or displaced persons are children. Whether these displacements are to other cities in Ukraine, to neighbouring countries or to more distant lands, they remain a source of trauma and distress.

Women and children, who are among the largest contingents of civilians fleeing combat zones, are also paying the highest price for the consequences of war. Among the children who have left Ukraine since 24 February, a number are unaccompanied minors, which increases their risk of being subjected to all sorts of abuse, trafficking and exploitation. These vulnerabilities are exacerbated by the daily difficulties inherent to water shortages and difficulties in getting health care or energy. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees statistics on children killed or injured during the fighting, particularly in the eastern and western regions of Ukraine, are chilling.

We call once again on the warring parties to respect international humanitarian law. Civilians — and in particular children, as well as humanitarian personnel — should never be targeted by fire. We also call on the parties to facilitate the deployment of unhindered humanitarian assistance wherever there are people in need without discrimination.

The situation of children calls for the greatest attention of the international community in order to mitigate the consequences of the war on their daily lives, particularly in terms of schooling. It is important that we make it possible for them to continue their studies. We are grateful to UNICEF for the inventiveness it has shown in continuing to provide schooling for children affected by war in host countries by setting up temporary classes and distance-learning opportunities and organizing educational and recreational activities. I would also like to specifically congratulate all the countries that have received refugees and made arrangements for the urgent schooling of refugee children from Ukraine.

We commend the work of UNICEF, which is fulfilling its mandate towards children in Ukraine by addressing families and children in order to provide for their hygiene needs, their primary or specialized health needs, including psychosocial health and mental-health care, while also ensuring their safety. We are also

grateful to all the United Nations specialized agencies deployed on the ground and encourage them to work with UNICEF to limit the trauma of children victims of war.

We have taken note of the statistics in the most recent report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on children registered in reception centres and the establishment of Blue Dot hubs to provide information for families in reception centres and all the mechanisms that are being deployed to strengthen the protection of families and children. It is crucial to limit as much as possible the chance for mafia networks to benefit from the distress of these populations.

Alongside the work on the ground to respond to critical humanitarian emergencies, discussions must continue in parallel to find a political resolution to the situation, with the aim of bringing an end to the war. That is the greatest step that can be taken to help the children on whose behalf we are meeting today.

The solution can be found only through dialogue. That is why my country once again calls on the parties to seize every opportunity to resume dialogue. We call for firm commitment to the return of peace and security in Ukraine.

**Mr. Raguttahalli (India):** Let me begin by thanking the briefers from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and UNICEF for their insights on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine, particularly on the impact of the conflict on children and education. We have carefully noted the points made by them.

Children constitute a third of humankind — the most important third, as they are our future. They are also the most vulnerable to suffering, particularly in situations of armed conflict, and therefore need additional protection and care. The conflict in Ukraine is no doubt severely affecting the 7.5 million children across Ukraine.

While the protection of the rights of children, including their access to education is the primary responsibility of the national Government, the international community has the obligation to do its utmost to provide succour to children affected by this conflict. India is a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and appreciates the ongoing efforts, including those of UNICEF, to alleviate the suffering of

the children. We also support UNICEF's efforts to scale up its operations.

The conflict has also forced more than 5 million people to take shelter in the neighbouring countries and another 7.1 million are displaced within Ukraine. Out of those, women and children constitute the majority. We commend the efforts by the neighbouring countries of Ukraine that have welcomed refugees from Ukraine, especially for treating women and children with compassion and dignity. As a country that has welcomed refugees over centuries, India knows the importance and value of treating them equally and with dignity and catering to their needs and requirements.

The impact of the situation on the education of children has also been severe. It has further aggravated the pandemic-related challenges that children were already facing. There are reports that more than 900 education facilities and schools have either been damaged or destroyed in Ukraine. The efforts of the Government of Ukraine to protect schools and other learning spaces, students and teachers to ensure uninterrupted education for children needs the unequivocal support of the international community.

Let us not forget that the situation has also affected foreign students, including those from India. India facilitated the safe return of 22,500 Indian nationals, most of them students studying in various universities in Ukraine. We are exploring options to minimize the impact on our students' education. We appreciate the relaxations made by the Government of Ukraine for this academic year in respect of medical students.

India has been sending humanitarian supplies to Ukraine and its neighbours, which include medicines and other essential relief material. Just last week, a further tranche of aid, including essential medicines and medical equipment, were handed over to the Ukrainian side. We support calls for guarantees of safe passage to deliver essential humanitarian and medical supplies, including through the establishment of humanitarian corridors. We hope the international community will continue to respond positively to the evolving humanitarian requirements.

The food security challenges emanating from the conflict require us to respond by going beyond constraints that presently bind us. Energy security is also a serious concern and needs to be addressed through cooperative efforts. We acknowledge the efforts made

by the Secretary-General, particularly the findings of the Global Crisis Response Group Task Team.

While responding positively to the evolving humanitarian requirements is an obligation and responsibility of the international community, it is in our collective interest to work constructively, both within the United Nations and outside, towards seeking an early resolution of the conflict. Since the beginning of the Ukrainian conflict, India has stood for peace, dialogue and diplomacy. We believe that no solution can be arrived at by shedding blood and at the cost of innocent lives, especially those of women and children.

Allow me to reiterate once again the importance of the United Nations guiding principles for humanitarian assistance. Humanitarian action must always be guided by the principles of humanitarian assistance, namely, humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. Those measures should not be politicized.

In conclusion, we continue to reiterate that the global order is anchored in international law, the Charter of the United Nations and respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of States.

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

I thank Assistant Secretary-General Msuya and Deputy Executive Director Abdi for their very insightful briefings, which provide the Security Council and the watching global community an opportunity to hear of the immense suffering that has resulted from this unnecessary and brutal war, especially the suffering Russia is inflicting on children in Ukraine.

Their briefings underscore what all of us — all of us who do not live in Russia — have seen on our screens and in the media for the past two and a half months. Children in Ukraine have been displaced, hurt, orphaned or killed. Of the nearly 14 million people forced to flee their homes since the conflict escalated, approximately half are innocent children — children who deserve a chance to live, grow and thrive, but instead are struggling every day to survive in horrific circumstances.

The danger to children is only increasing. Growing numbers of hospitals and schools have been destroyed, as we are hearing. In the first five weeks since the 24 February invasion, an average of 22 schools were struck every day. Since this war began, there have been more than 200 attacks on health-care facilities and

schools. We heard news this past weekend, as other members have mentioned, of a bomb hitting a school in the eastern Ukrainian town of Bilohorivka. It killed as many as 60 people, including many children. And reliable reports indicate that when first responders arrived at the school to assist victims of the bombing, Russia's forces opened fire on them.

We have all seen devastating and gruesome images of mass graves. There are reports of individuals executed en masse, bodies marked with unequivocal signs of torture, and now we are hearing more and more horrific accounts of sexual violence against women and girls, as well as boys and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer persons.

The United States is particularly concerned about the situation in Kherson, where Russian forces have reportedly removed local officials and installed an illegitimate pro-Russian puppet administration. In recent days, those illegitimate proxies have increasingly indicated an intention to petition Russia to annex Kherson. Russia is clearly seeking to assimilate these regions into its orbit. And for the children of Kherson, that would have grave consequences. For example, schools would be forced to adopt the Russian curriculum, with the goal of trying to erase all signs of Ukrainian adult identity or Ukrainian culture.

In addition to fearing every waking day for their lives and safety, displacement poses particular risks for children. They become increasingly vulnerable to human trafficking and other forms of exploitation and abuse. This is even more acute for those children who are unaccompanied or have been separated from their parents or caregivers.

Ukrainians — many of them children — have reportedly been deported to Russia and processed through so-called filtration camps. Meanwhile, Russia's Commissioner for Children's Rights, Maria Lvova-Belova, has touted efforts to fast-track the adoption of children from Ukraine within Russia.

Children are being exposed to extreme violence, fear and anxiety. That can have major psychological effects on children that will have an impact for generations. Unless appropriate support is provided, the trauma associated with these experiences can have serious and enduring negative consequences on their cognitive development for years to come.

Many on the Security Council have just now called for diplomacy to resolve this crisis. We agree that diplomacy and dialogue are essential to resolve the crisis, and Russia should show its commitment to pursuing a peaceful resolution by silencing the guns and withdrawing its forces from Ukraine. We call again on Russia to end its war on Ukraine and abide by its obligations under international humanitarian law, including those regarding taking feasible precautions to avoid and minimize harm to civilians, including children. Additionally, all parties to the conflict should urgently facilitate safe and unhindered access for medical and humanitarian workers and supplies in order to ensure the provision of necessary humanitarian assistance and allow safe passage for those seeking to flee, including children.

We join others in calling on the Secretary-General and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to add Ukraine as a situation of concern in the upcoming annual report on children and armed conflict. Given the scale and nature of reported violations and abuses committed by Russia against children in eastern Ukraine between 2014 and 2021 and the evidence of alarming increases in violations and abuses by Russia across Ukraine since February 2022, the situation warrants a place in the report.

As almost all of us around the table have said, the international community has an obligation to protect children, the most vulnerable among us. Member States should work collectively to ensure that innocent children — regardless of the borders within which they reside — can live without imminent fear of death, shelling and lifelong trauma.

Let us do our part. Let us not forget the children of Ukraine.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I would like to again draw the attention of speakers to paragraph 22 of presidential note S/2017/507, which encourages all participants in Council meetings to deliver their statements in five minutes or less, in line with the Security Council's commitment to making more effective use of open meetings.

I now give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

**Mr. Kyslytsya (Ukraine):** I recognize the representatives of Putin's regime, in the permanent seat

of the Soviet Union, as possible defendants in a future trial for war crimes and crimes against humanity. They should consider this meeting as a pretrial hearing.

First of all, I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Joyce Msuya and UNICEF Deputy Executive Director Omar Abdi for their briefings.

Admiration and pain are the sentiments of all of those who are now watching the Azovstal steel plant in Mariupol. Courageous defenders are holding their positions under full blockade, without any replenishment. Another day, another week, another month — every day and every night — the Russian occupiers have been trying to break the resistance of the Ukrainians in Azovstal. Every day and night, they drop heavy aerial bombs, shell the facilities with heavy artillery and multiple-launch rocket systems. Assault groups of the Russian infantry are attacking non-stop.

The defenders of Mariupol have already done the impossible: they have stopped the overwhelming force of the Russian troops for more than three months. Their contribution to the disruption of the Russian blitzkrieg plans cannot be overestimated. For that, Mariupol has paid a heavy price, with the death toll among its residents over these months — around 20,000 — being double the amount killed there by the Nazis in the Second World War. That is the reason why the attackers have shown no restraint in their attempts to finally crush the resistance. That is the reason why we are extremely concerned about the destiny of the defenders of Azovstal should they fall into the hands of the Russian troops. Even during the evacuation of civilians from Azovstal on 7 May, the Russian forces continued to shell the Ukrainian soldiers. As a result, three Ukrainian servicemen were killed and six were wounded — in violation of all agreed arrangements.

Many in Azovstal have been heavily wounded and have no access to the medical treatment they urgently need. We therefore call for the evacuation operation to continue. We call on the Security Council and the Secretary-General to invest further efforts in order to ensure the evacuation of the sick and wounded from the Azovstal area, in accordance with international humanitarian law. They have to be brought to safe places, where their right to life will be guaranteed. Russian captivity is not a place for the servicemen from the Azovstal steel plant.

We are also alarmed that the repressive Russian practice of using filtration camps for Ukrainians fleeing

dangerous areas is being consolidated further. Given the inhumane conditions and ill treatment, the word “filtration” can only be considered as a euphemism for the word “concentration”. It is outrageous that Russia has applied these filtration practices to civilians who were evacuated from Azovstal under the facilitation of the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross. Some of them were illegally detained.

For instance, during the evacuation on 9 May — ironically Mother’s Day — the Russian occupiers separated a four-year-old girl, Alice, from her mother, a medical worker. Only the little child was allowed to leave the occupied territory, while her mother was reportedly detained in a filtration camp. These actions by the Russian forces constitute a gross violation of a child’s right to life and security, guaranteed by the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, the Geneva Conventions and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. We demand that Russia immediately and unconditionally release the child’s mother and ensure that she is reunited with her daughter. We call on UNICEF to use all possible means to protect the rights of this child and other children who were separated from their parents by the Russians.

The presidential statement of 6 May (S/PRST/2022/3) serves as another example. Immediately after the Russian Federation joined the members of the Security Council in recalling the obligation of all Member States to settle their disputes by peaceful means, it fired rockets on Ukraine’s Odesa, Mykolaiv, Kharkiv and Zaporizhzhya regions. Russia continues its missile terror on a daily basis, primarily targeting civilian infrastructure. Since 24 February, Russia has fired more than 2,100 missiles on Ukrainian cities and villages. Women and children throughout Ukraine remain the most vulnerable groups subjected to the missile terror of Russia.

At least 226 children have been killed and 417 wounded by Russian troops in Ukraine. There is no doubt that actual statistics are much higher, as occupied territory remains a no-go zone for any credible international mechanisms.

Every day of the Russian invasion of Ukraine brings us new tragedies and new crimes committed by the Russians. One of the most recent cases occurred in the village of Bilohorivka, in the Luhansk region, on 7 May, following a Russian air strike on a local school — the only building with a shelter. Only 30 civilians out of 90

were rescued. The school, once full of joyful children, was turned by Russian pilots into another mass grave.

Last night, Russia carried out an air strike on Novhorod-Siverskyi, destroying another school. As of today, approximately 130 educational institutions have been entirely destroyed and more than 1,500 have been damaged. I reiterate that schools must never be attacked or used for military purposes. The targeting of civilians and civilian objects, including schools, is a violation of international humanitarian law.

In violation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Russia continues its kidnapping of Ukrainian children. After forcible transfer to Russia, they are illegally adopted by Russian citizens without any of the mandatory procedures envisaged by the legislation of Ukraine being observed. According to official Russian sources, on 7 May, to date, more than 1 million Ukrainians have been transferred to Russia, including 200,000 children. Some 2,000 of them are orphans or those deprived of parental care. These children’s living conditions and the state of their health remain unknown. We call on UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Committee of the Red Cross to demand from Russia immediate and unhindered access to those children, as well as to all persons who have been transferred from the conflict-affected areas of Ukraine to Russia or to Ukrainian territories under temporary Russian control. We also call on the Secretary-General to use all the mechanisms established by the Council to monitor and report on violations against children in conflict.

According to the World Health Organization, at least 3,000 people have died in Ukraine during the period of the invasion, owing to lack of access to treatment for chronic diseases. The Health Minister of Ukraine reported that, as of today, Russian troops have destroyed or damaged approximately 400 health-care facilities. Given the circumstances of the war, the treatment of cancer patients in Ukraine has stopped completely. There are serious problems with access to insulin and antibiotics. The situation in relation to access to medical services in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, in the east and south of the country, can only be described as a disaster. There is a shortage of the most basic drugs. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities estimates that Russia’s military attacks against Ukraine are putting the lives of 2.7 million people with disabilities at risk.

We welcome the launch of the commission of inquiry to investigate atrocities related to Russia's war on Ukraine. The resolution adopted today in Geneva mandates the commission to conduct a special investigation into war crimes committed by Russian invaders in areas of the Kyiv, Chernihiv, Kharkiv and Sumy regions. The list includes the arbitrary executions of more than 1,000 civilians and widespread instances of sexual violence, torture and other violations. Ukraine, together with up to 50 partner countries, will ensure accountability for all perpetrators.

It is symbolic that one of the Russian rockets launched on 7 May destroyed the museum honouring Ukrainian philosopher Hryhoriy Skovoroda. In his doctrine, he promoted humanistic ideas. Indeed, the current Russia is too far removed from humanism. The recent sabre-rattling celebration of 9 May served as another illustration of that. Every year on 8 May, the entire world honours, with the slogan "Never Again", the memory of the victims and those who stopped Nazism 77 years ago. Russia has made 9 May a cornerstone of its own ideology, which is a combination of propaganda war, hatred towards neighbours, militarization and the utmost disregard for agreed rules, norms and values.

We are grateful to all Member States and others that co-sponsored the joint statement on the occasion of the seventy-seventh anniversary of the end of the Second World War in Europe. They demonstrated their resolute stance to the cynical attempts to appropriate and exploit the memory of the victory over Nazism and use it for justifying the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Listening to Mr. Putin nowadays, one can hardly believe that he is the same person who once wrote in his op-ed for *The New York Times*, nine years ago, that "[t]he law is still the law, and we must follow it whether we like it or not". He also wrote that "[u]nder current international law, force is permitted only in self-defence or by the decision of the Security Council". Putin wrote that "[a]nything else is unacceptable under the United Nations Charter and would constitute an act of aggression". The op-ed appeared in the 11 September 2013 edition and was entitled "A Plea for Caution from Russia".

Nine years ago, Russian diplomatic vocabulary still contained the word "caution". According to Putin's op-ed, Russia's current actions against Ukraine should be considered as an act of aggression, as no one attacked Russia and no single decision was adopted

by the Security Council in support of Russia's actions in Ukraine. Were it not so tragic, it could have been funnier and much more deepfake than the deepfake Putin videos on *The Daily Show* with Trevor Noah. In fact, they are much closer to reality than statements made by Putin's envoy when he speaks in this Chamber.

Not long after Putin's hypocritical op-ed about the supremacy of international law, in March 2014, Putin's former envoy, the late Mr. Churkin, made an effort, at least, to keep up appearances in the Security Council, trying to find some justification for the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Today's standards of Russian diplomacy have gone through the floor, and all masks are off. Russia is the only beneficiary of the Council's inaction on the issue of its war on Ukraine. At the same time, I doubt that it is in the interest of 14 Security Council members to tolerate the Russian strategy of undermining the Council's credibility.

I urge the Security Council to demonstrate resoluteness in safeguarding this organ and its mandate from destructive Russian practices. I do not apologize for not listening carefully to the drivel of the Russian Ambassador, but I need to break the news to his delegation: scientific evidence still suggests that all modern humans are descendant from African populations — homo sapiens. They spread out from Africa approximately 60,000 years ago, and I am proud to be one of them.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Estonia.

**Mr. Jürgenson (Estonia):** I am speaking on behalf of the Baltic countries — Latvia, Lithuania and my own country, Estonia.

I thank the briefers for their updates on the alarming humanitarian situation in Ukraine and the daily work by UNICEF and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to help those affected by the brutal Russian military aggression.

We cannot consider this dire situation without making clear who, by choice, started this war and who can end it — the Russian Federation, which must put an end to its aggression and the suffering of children in Ukraine. The Russian aggression has been accompanied by killing, torture and terror aimed at civilians, while demonizing and dehumanizing them in Russia's war propaganda. Make no mistake: children have been, and continue to be, targets for Russia. "For children",

written in Russian on the side of a Russian missile that struck the Kramatorsk train station, was a cynical but revealing expression of that fact.

Children have been born in shelters during bombings, lived through days of air raids and destruction and stepped onto trains leaving their homes and families behind. Since 24 February, the United Nations has recorded 238 children killed and more than 300 injured in Ukraine, which it admits is a clear underestimate. Hundreds of schools and educational institutions have been destroyed or damaged according to the United Nations, including most recently in Bilohorivka, with the death of more than 60 people, after a Russian bomb flattened a school there. Children are suffering in besieged cities, such as Mariupol, without access to humanitarian assistance.

In less than three months, 14 million people, including two thirds of Ukraine's children, have been forced to leave their homes. The Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights asserts that more than 121,000 children have been forcibly deported to Russia. The forced deportations, together with the Russian steps towards legislative changes to accelerate the adoption of children from Ukraine, in violation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, need to be monitored by the United Nations and other relevant organizations.

The Russian actions represent violations of international law amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity, as well as grave violations against children in conflict. That includes killing and maiming, attacks against schools and hospitals and sexual violence. Russia's crimes have been recorded, and it will be held accountable. We underline and support the role of the International Criminal Court, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine and the United Nations human rights monitoring mission in that work.

We call for the full implementation of resolution 1612 (2005), as well as additional resolutions on children and armed conflict, including resolution 2601 (2021) on the protection of the right to education. We recall that Russia, a permanent member of the Security Council, has endorsed and must comply with them. We underline the importance of recording, monitoring and reporting violations against children in Ukraine to the Security Council, including by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

We value the tireless work by UNICEF, other United Nations agencies and civil society in Ukraine and beyond to protect children. We welcome the work of the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross in coordinating their efforts to ensure the safe passage of civilians, including children from Mariupol.

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania will continue to support the work of those organizations and provide financial and in-kind humanitarian assistance to Ukraine in an amount totalling more than €46 million. We have welcomed those fleeing the war in Ukraine and have offered them access to our education and health systems, as well as online-learning opportunities and mental-health support for children within and outside Ukraine.

The Security Council has stood strong in calling for the protection of children in conflict. It needs to be strong and absolutely clear in calling on Russia to end its aggression and the horrors it has brought upon children in Ukraine.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Poland.

**Ms. Skoczek (Poland):** I would like to thank the United States for organizing this important and timely briefing and for shedding light on the situation of children in Ukraine in the aftermath of Russia's aggression. I would also like to thank the excellent briefers, Ms. Joyce Msuya and Mr. Omar Abdi, for their insights and, more importantly, for all their work in helping the youngest victims of Russian aggression.

Since the outbreak of the war, as of today, more than 3.3 million people, mostly women and children, have crossed from Ukraine into Poland to seek refuge. Both as a State and a society, Poland is making every effort to meet their needs. Ensuring that children continue their education is one of our top priorities. While keeping in mind that the interruption of the educational process, even for a short period of time, has long-lasting effects and can prevent students from returning to learning, we are determined to ensure that each of those affected by the war can continue their education. Depending on parents' preferences, we offer support by enrolling children in Polish schools or providing them with the equipment necessary for distance learning within the Ukrainian educational system. For those who want to continue their education in Polish schools, we have organized preparatory classes, which will help them to

find their way within the Polish educational system and overcome the language barrier.

Currently, there are almost 200,000 refugee children from Ukraine in Polish schools. About 20 per cent of them are attending preparatory classes, and 80 per cent are attending regular classes together with Polish children. The Ministry of Education has created an online platform through which various educational tools are available for free. In addition, the Ministry has organized special language courses for teachers from Ukraine who have come to Poland. Courses have also been set up for Polish teachers, including in the Ukrainian language, to make it easier for them to communicate with children coming from Ukraine and better respond to their educational needs.

Additionally, I would like to talk about the project involving the Polish Centre for International Aid in coordination with CARE. As part of the cash-for-work programme, Ukrainian teachers can find employment in Polish schools and kindergartens as assistants for refugee children. We also pay particular attention to the needs of children with disabilities. Children with special-education needs and their parents can benefit from psychological and pedagogical assistance in Polish kindergartens and schools. Students who were pursuing higher education in Ukraine before the outbreak of the war can also continue their studies at Polish universities. Moreover, we have launched several programmes offering institutional and financial support for academics from Ukraine to enable them to continue their research projects.

Schools provide children with education, but they play a much greater role in children's lives. In times of war, classrooms can and should provide children with a sense of stability and act as a safe space to learn and process their trauma. However, across Ukraine, hundreds of schools have been destroyed by Russian shelling and air strikes. Many classrooms are simply unusable after having been damaged or destroyed. Even after the war is over, it will still take a long time to rebuild schools and other educational facilities.

Attacks on civilian areas, including civilian infrastructure, are endangering children's lives and futures. Poland condemns, in the strongest possible terms, attacks against civilians and civilian objects such as schools, hospitals and orphanages. All perpetrators of violations of international law, especially international

humanitarian law and human rights law, must be held accountable.

More than 2,000 patients from Ukraine, nearly half of whom are children, are hospitalized in Poland. A paediatric hub was established in the city of Lublin, from which young patients are being transferred to institutions all over the country and abroad.

It must be stressed that Ukrainian children — just like all children, all around the world — were already dealing with mental-health challenges as a result of being isolated for almost two years during the pandemic. Now that they have left the comforts of home — not to mention those family and friends who stayed in Ukraine to fight — any progress towards pre-pandemic normalcy has been cruelly interrupted. Poland is offering psychiatric, psychological and other mental-health social services to help Ukrainian refugees; however, their needs are growing every day.

Poland is doing the best it can to help Ukrainian children through such troubled and terrifying times. By offering them safety among our families in our homes and a kind of normal life with both its duties and joys in Poland, we hope that we are able to save at least a part of their dreams and childhoods.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Slovakia.

**Mr. Mlynár (Slovakia):** I would like to start by thanking today's briefers — Assistant Secretary-General Msuya and Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF Abdi — for their briefings, which once again shed light on the devastating impacts of the Russian war in Ukraine, this time specifically on the issue of children and their right to education. We have listened carefully to and appreciate the updates that they have shared with us, and we will certainly factor in all of that additional information in our work and activities going forward.

As UNICEF's Regional Child Protection Adviser for Europe and Central Asia said on 6 May in a press briefing, hospitals, nurseries and schools unfortunately continue to be affected by strikes. Slovakia categorically condemns those attacks, including the most recent one in Bilohorivka in the Luhansk region. That attack, along with all other attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, constitutes a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law and must be thoroughly investigated. Justice must be served. We also concur

with the Secretary-General that the attack is yet another reminder that, in a war, civilians — and children in particular — pay the highest price.

We have also been following those developments very carefully in our current capacity as Vice-President of the Executive Board of UNICEF and as a neighbouring and directly affected country. According to the most recent reports, including updates from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights monitoring mission in Ukraine, as of 11 May, more than 230 children have already lost their lives, and more than 340 children have been injured. Approximately two thirds of Ukrainian children have been forced to flee their homes and all of them have been negatively affected. That will have a terrible and devastating impact on the future of this generation, which is also something we must bear in mind.

Instead of enjoying their childhoods, millions of Ukraine's children are witnessing the horrors of war even though they bear not even the tiniest fraction of guilt for what is happening. Children are being separated from their families and friends and are being directly exposed to blaring sirens, bomb explosions and physical and, unfortunately, even sexual violence, causing them physical harm and enormous psychological trauma. They will need months and years to cope with that — if they are ever able to.

Children in Ukraine have been stripped of their fundamental right to access to safe and quality education, which in many cases has prompted their mothers to undertake the main responsibility for home-schooling. That is a so-called special achievement of Russia's so-called special military operation: a children's crisis of unprecedented proportions. It is with a heavy heart that to be accurate I have to refer to it that way. It is one of the fastest large-scale displacements of children since the Second World War, caused by Russia's unjustified, unprovoked and senseless aggression against Ukraine, constituting a blatant violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

Just briefly, I would like to add that Slovakia has already received more than 136,000 children, of

whom more than 30,000 have been granted temporary protection so far. Children fleeing Ukraine are provided with as comprehensive care and support as possible, including psychosocial assistance, medical care and assistance in connecting or reuniting with their relatives and families.

We have been able to enrol approximately 10,000 children aged 3 to 17 in Slovak schools, and we are working hard to increase that number in order to provide all the refugee children staying in Slovakia with a proper education. I am pleased that the First Lady of the United States was able to see those efforts recently herself a few days ago. She met with teachers and mothers on Mother's Day to express her support and solidarity and compared notes on practical aspects of life.

Refugee children involved in the educational process are also entitled to a food subsidy. Together with our partners from UNICEF and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, we have agreed to develop a joint child-protection capacity-building plan for implementing partners and other stakeholders in child protection, inclusion and education.

Slovakia continues to stand in solidarity with Ukraine. As a close friend and good neighbour, we will continue doing our utmost to help alleviate the people's suffering. We appreciate the work of international organizations and institutions aiming to improve the humanitarian situation, and I am also pleased to add that the Prime Minister of Slovakia, Mr. Eduard Heger, recently announced an additional financial contribution that includes, inter alia, €130,000 for the specific UNICEF programme and project.

To conclude, Slovakia once again calls on the Russian Federation to immediately cease hostilities against Ukraine and unconditionally withdraw all of its troops from the entire territory of Ukraine. That is the only way in which we will be able to stop our children's suffering.

*The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.*