



# Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

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 Tuesday, 21 June 2022, 10 a.m.  
 New York

*Provisional*

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| <i>President:</i> | Mr. Hoxha . . . . .  | (Albania)                  |
| <i>Members:</i>   | Brazil . . . . .   | Mr. De Almeida Filho       |
|                   | China . . . . .  | Mr. Dai Bing               |
|                   | France . . . . .   | Mrs. Broadhurst Estival    |
|                   | Gabon . . . . .  | Mr. Biang                  |
|                   | Ghana . . . . .  | Ms. Opong-Ntiri            |
|                   | India . . . . .  | Mr. Raguttahalli           |
|                   | Ireland . . . . .  | Ms. Byrne Nason            |
|                   | Kenya . . . . .  | Mrs. Toroitich             |
|                   | Mexico . . . . .   | Mr. Gómez Robledo Verduzco |
|                   | Norway . . . . .   | Ms. Heimerback             |
|                   | Russian Federation . . . . .                                   | Mr. Nebenzia               |
|                   | United Arab Emirates . . . . .                                 | Mr. Abushahab              |
|                   | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . . . . . | Mr. Kariuki                |
|                   | United States of America . . . . .                             | Mr. Mills                  |

## 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 Lithuania, 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. Alice Nderitu, Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide; Ms. Liubov Tsybulska, Head of the Centre for Strategic Communication and Information Security; and Mr. Jared Andrew Cohen, Chief Executive Officer of Jigsaw and Adjunct Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations.

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

I give the floor to Ms. Nderitu.

**Ms. Nderitu:** I would like to thank the President of the Security Council, Ambassador Ferit Hoxha, and the other members of the Council for inviting me to brief them on the topic of incitement to violence, leading to atrocity crimes.

My mandate as Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide is to act as a catalyst to raise awareness of the causes and dynamics of genocide, alert the relevant actors through early warning where there is a risk of genocide and advocate and mobilize for appropriate action. In addition, since 2019 my Office has served as the focal point in the United Nations system for the implementation of the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, which integrates that priority into the work of the whole United Nations system, including at the country level, in all its agencies, funds and programmes, as a key element for advancing all relevant United Nations agendas. That is done in full respect for the essential right of the freedom of expression, as provided under international human rights law.

This week, on 18 June, we commemorated the first-ever International Day for Countering Hate Speech. My Office and the Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of

Morocco, the driving force behind General Assembly resolution 75/309, which established that International Day, also co-sponsored a side event in the Trusteeship Council on 17 June on the role of education in addressing the root causes of hate speech and advancing inclusion, non-discrimination and peace. The International Day for Countering Hate Speech was officially marked at a high-level informal meeting of the General Assembly, which was convened by the President of the Assembly yesterday, 20 June.

We all know from history the devastating impact that incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence and hateful and divisive narratives can have by generating hatred and incitement to violence. We saw it in the lead-up to the Holocaust, in Rwanda in 1994 and in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1995.

My Office also works with technology and social media companies to ensure that they adequately fulfil their responsibilities for addressing hate speech on their platforms, align their policies with international human rights standards and strengthen their commitment to putting the protection of human lives at the forefront.

My Office has developed guidance and policies, including on addressing and countering coronavirus disease-related hate speech, as well as, in the past few months, on Holocaust and genocide denial as hate speech and gender-based hate speech.

The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which was adopted on 9 December 1948, emerged from the shadows of the Holocaust. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states that any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law, and that direct and public incitement to genocide is a crime prohibited under international law. These also represent indicators of risk and potential triggers for the commission of atrocity crimes in the Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes — the methodology that my Office uses for analysis.

The 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide specifically identifies as punishable offenses conspiracy to commit genocide, direct and public incitement to commit genocide, attempts to commit genocide and complicity in genocide. The prevention of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes is a legal obligation for States under international law.

United Nations intergovernmental organs have held meetings and adopted several decisions since the start of the conflict in Ukraine. The Secretary-General has visited the region and called for the cessation of hostilities. He remains fully engaged with key actors, including the Governments of the Russian Federation and Ukraine, while reiterating the message that there is no alternative to diplomacy.

I have advocated publicly and privately in my engagement with a range of Member States for the need to reinforce prevention and accountability efforts.

In a statement dated 18 March, I acknowledged the 16 March order by the International Court of Justice indicating provisional measures in the case concerning allegations of genocide under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. I echoed the Court's pronouncement that States parties must honour their obligations to prevent and punish the crime of genocide in good faith and act only within the limits permitted by international law and in conformity with the spirit and aims of the United Nations. The Court spoke, and it is imperative to ensure that the provisional measures it indicated are implemented in full and without delay in order to prevent any further loss of life.

I also called for a cessation of hostilities and the protection of civilians. I echoed the concerns of other senior United Nations officials regarding the heightened risks of sexual violence, especially trafficking in persons, which has a significant impact on women and children. I acknowledged the important role of regional and international efforts to address the ongoing humanitarian crisis with the millions who have been displaced. I also stressed the importance of ensuring that all parties adhere to international human rights law, international humanitarian law and all other related obligations and principles.

Before the start of the current conflict this year, my Office had already been working closely with the United Nations country team in Ukraine to support intercommunal dialogue efforts. I encourage prioritizing accountability and the continuation of such intercommunal efforts.

On 14 April, I reiterated my strong concern about the continuing deterioration of the situation in Ukraine, with the ongoing loss of life and intensified suffering. I called on all who are in a position of influence and those able to effect real change on the ground to

redouble their efforts to help to the restoration of peace. I also called on religious leaders to use their influence to support efforts to resolve the ongoing conflict rather than inflaming it further. I reminded them, as I reminded other actors, that advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence is prohibited under international law.

Pursuant to its resolution 49/1, the Human Rights Council established the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, which complements the important work of the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Ukraine. Among other things, the Commission is mandated to investigate all alleged violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law; to establish the facts, circumstances and root causes of any such violations and abuses; and to collect, consolidate and analyse evidence of such violations and abuses, including their gender dimension, in view of any future legal proceedings. At the same time, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights continues to document civilian casualties and the impact of hostilities, monitor freedom of movement and receive and report on allegations of human rights violations. In addition, the thirty-fourth special session of the Human Rights Council in May was devoted to Ukraine and among other things called for a cessation of hostilities. The Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court has also announced his decision to open an investigation into the situation in Ukraine.

Serious allegations have been raised, including indications of the possible commission of genocide and war crimes. Determinations of the commission of the crime of genocide can be made only by a court of competent jurisdiction. My Office does not carry out criminal investigations of specific incidents, present or past. Without judicial or quasi-judicial powers, my Office does not determine whether specific situations, either ongoing or from the past, legally qualify as any of the international crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. In my role as Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, my main responsibility is prevention, not adjudication. Nevertheless, serious allegations of the commission of international crimes in themselves constitute indicators of the risk of the commission of such crimes. For that reason, I can only reiterate my call to bring an end to

this war in order to ensure the protection of civilians, and accelerate diplomatic efforts to make both of those things possible. Prevention focuses on the future, but it also looks to the past, and the outpouring of hostility in response to the war means that we must work harder to protect everyone.

War is a problem created by humans and one that humans have the capacity to resolve. History has produced individuals and collective bodies who have ended wars. Many people believe in the United Nations and envision a world where peace, justice and non-violent relations prevail. We need the membership of the Security Council and the concerned parties to articulate an inclusive vision and propose a road map aimed at ending the war. That road map must consider peace itself to be a process that is not indifferent to injustice. Ending this and other wars requires sustained action, including by bridging generational divides, countering divisive rhetoric and hate speech, offline and online, and addressing human rights violations, which have a direct impact on livelihoods and the quality of life.

In conclusion, as Secretary-General Guterres has noted, the only solution to this conflict is a diplomatic one. That will be possible with the commitment of all parties. But with each and every delay, the escalation of human suffering continues.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Tsybulska.

**Ms. Tsybulska:** I thank you, Sir, for the opportunity to speak at this important meeting on behalf of civil society, which, like my Government and, above all, our brave armed forces, is now defending Ukraine from Russia's barbaric aggression.

Ukraine is going through the most difficult period in its history. The largest war since the Second World War has been going on in Europe. Russia wants to destroy Ukraine literally, by killing and raping, but also in a broader sense by eliminating our culture, language and history — basically everything that shapes our identity. Russia has demonstrated an imperial appetite for hundreds of years. Ukraine's history has been one of continued struggle for survival and independence against Russia's attempts to conquer us, not to mention its infliction on us of the Holodomor — a mass famine in which the Soviets killed at least 4 million Ukrainians by deliberately depriving them of food — during which

the regime housed citizens of Soviet Russia in the homes of people who had just starved to death. Their homes were literally still full of the warmth of their lives when the new owners moved in. That is exactly what is happening now. Russia has brought famine to our land and is blackmailing the entire world with a food crisis.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Ukrainian writers, artists and poets were tortured and murdered during a period that has gone down in Ukrainian history as the Executed Renaissance. According to Moscow, the Ukrainian language and Ukrainian art should not have existed. That is exactly what is happening now. Russian teachers have forbidden children in Mariupol, Kherson and Melitopol to speak Ukrainian. Ukrainian libraries and museums are being destroyed with ostentatious brutality.

I should not fail to mention the mass deportations in the 1960s and 1970s of Ukrainian dissidents, who were forcibly sent to the farthest corners of the Soviet Union, where they died in intolerable living conditions in labour camps. Again, deportations are exactly what is happening now. In the space of just a few months, more than 1 million people have been deported from eastern and southern Ukraine to Russia, 307,000 of them children. We Ukrainians have seen all of those terrible crimes more than once, whether in relation to us, the Crimean Tatars, the Baltic peoples, the Poles, the Chechens or others. That is the modus operandi of the Kremlin.

However, the current war is extraordinary for its inhuman cruelty. It exhibits the brutality of medieval wars, with bombings of maternity hospitals and even cemeteries; deliberate attacks on shelters and evacuation routes; the rape of women, men and children; and the mass murder of unarmed civilians, all of which everyone has certainly seen in the media. The Russian army has demonstrated barbarity that is difficult to imagine in the twenty-first century.

As soon as the full-scale invasion began, Ukrainians everywhere asked just one question: "Why? Why do they hate us so much?" And then the whole of society united in a single effort to tell the truth to so-called ordinary Russians. We would send them photos and videos en masse of the atrocities committed by Russian soldiers in Ukraine. We would call our acquaintances and relatives in Russia to explain the horrors of the war, hoping to arouse their sympathy. We thought

that when the Russians saw all of the atrocities, they would surely condemn such lawlessness. Instead, we saw a total absence of any compassion. There was no compassion for the one-year-old boy from the city of Izium who died after being raped by two Russian soldiers simultaneously, or for the 16-year-old girl from Irpin whose nails were torn off by Russians before she was raped and shot in the head. The majority of Russians have not condemned those war crimes. They have begun to show pride and approval.

Many people think that those are isolated cases. However, in addition to what we saw online, in addition to opinion polls showing full support for the Kremlin's actions in Ukraine by Russians, we also listen to interceptions — conversations between Russian soldiers and their families. Here are just a few quotes.

From a conversation between a Russian soldier and his wife, we intercepted:

“You there, rape Ukrainian women and do not tell me anything.”

And from a conversation between a Russian soldier and his mother, we intercepted:

“It is right that you kill them all. They are all Nazis. And children too.”

These are the consequences of the consistent work of the Russian propaganda machine. The Kremlin's media created an alternative reality for millions of people, in which Ukrainians have ceased to be human beings and must be physically exterminated on a massive scale.

All these years, Russian propaganda has been systematically spreading hatred towards Ukraine and the West, systematically dehumanizing us. It denies the existence of Ukraine, the Ukrainian language and culture. In some cases, Russian soldiers explicitly justified their violence against civilians by referring to programmes and articles they saw in the Russian media.

There is a lot of evidence for genocidal rhetoric. My colleagues and I started a database to show the longevity and systematic nature of the demonization of Ukrainians. Here are just a few examples.

In an article from 4 April published by Russia's State-run RIA Novosti news agency, pro-Kremlin journalist Timofey Sergeytsev called for the destruction of Ukraine's national identity and a campaign of brutal punishment of its people. He called for imprisonment,

forced labour and death for Ukrainians who refused to comply with the Kremlin's rule in Ukraine.

On 5 April, Dmitry Medvedev, former Russian Prime Minister and President, currently Deputy Chairman of the Security Council of the Russian Federation, described Ukraine as a completely fake nation and a copy of the Third Reich that does not deserve to exist. He then went even further and proposed to expand Russia from Lisbon to Vladivostok.

On the programme of the well-known propagandist Vladimir Solovyov, one of the guests stated the following:

“Ukraine cannot be repaired. You cannot repair this construct. It has to be destroyed, as it is anti-Russia, an entity that threatens Russia.”

Another well-known figure in Russia media, Anton Krasovsky, who led the RT television channel said:

“This country should not exist. And we will do everything so that it does not exist. We will burn down your Constitution.”

Finally, the head of Roscosmos, Dmitry Rogozin, also posted recently on his Telegram channel that

“if we do not kill them — Ukrainians — as our grandfathers did not kill them, we will have to die, but our grandchildren will have to pay even more. So let us better end it now.”

Colonialism became a mindset for the Russian people, one in which there is no room for democracy, human rights and freedom. The world missed that very dangerous processes have begun to unfold in Russia. The world's largest country, with a population of 140 million people, has begun to profess extremely chauvinistic, nationalist and racist beliefs. We have seen similar events play out in the history of humankind. We know the terrible consequences it can lead to. For years, we repeated “never again”, yet this horror is happening again right in the heart of Europe. Russia is no longer authoritarian. It is a totalitarian State in which the regime has given a green light to its citizens to be as cruel as possible. It gave them permission to kill, torture and rape. That permission was delivered through the media, through televisions and smart phones. Ordinary Russians, who were then sent to Ukraine to fight, were turned into murderers and rapists, and millions of Russians back home were allowed to cheer and applaud those actions.

The Kremlin has been saying for years that Ukrainians are Nazis, that Russia protects Russian speakers — liberating them from the Nazis. However, it turns out that the Kremlin does not care about Russian speakers. It kills them with the same fury as everyone else. Thousands in the mass graves in Mariupol spoke Russian. Russia liberated them from only one thing — life.

Russian officials like to say that all these crimes are staged and that there is no evidence. I have to disappoint them. Thousands of pieces of evidence of Russian war crimes have already been collected and continue to be collected. Russia does not follow any rules of war. And the whole world sees it.

It is very important to understand that this threat exists not only for Ukrainians; it is a threat to the entire Western world. After all, in recent years, the Russian State media machine has also created an enemy image of the Western countries. Russian State media speaks of the erosion of moral values, of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's aggressive intentions towards Russia, and it imposes on Russian citizens the view that Russia has the historical right to bring order to the West.

There are already many victims of this war. It is unlikely that we will ever be able to count them accurately. But there will be more, much more, if we do not stop Russia and do not do everything possible to make the Russians understand their mistake. If this process of bringing them back to humanistic values does not happen, as it did in Germany, Russia will do it again.

Russia has never reflected on its crimes in the telling of its history. It did not reflect the bloody revolution at the beginning of the last century. It did not reflect Stalinism, purges, deportations, murders and persecutions of journalists, activists and politicians, the invasion of Georgia, the annexation of Crimea and the downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH-17. That is why Russia is committing these crimes with impunity, over and over again.

It is now extremely important for us to study the connection between what Russian propaganda has been saying all these years and the mass atrocities committed by the Russian army in Ukraine. However, we must not only study, but hold accountable those who have been inciting hatred and spreading genocidal rhetoric all this time.

It was systematic propaganda that enabled the genocide, with specific people behind it. This is not a mythical formation with no faces. We know the names of those who fed hatred to a huge nation, in return for generous compensation from the Russian State budget. As a result, my country is flooded with blood and tears. Let us not let these people avoid responsibility, together with the rest of the Russian leadership, which should be brought to justice. Let us avoid the trap of the banality of evil when criminals claim that they only obeyed orders. Unpunished evil returns. Let us finally punish it and protect millions of free people in Ukraine and across the world.

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

I now give the floor to Mr. Cohen.

**Mr. Cohen:** It is truly a profound honour and privilege to be invited to speak to the Security Council today. I want to start by thanking the Government of Albania, in particular Prime Minister Rama and Foreign Minister Xhaçka, for the invitation. From Afghanistan to Ukraine and on so many other issues, Albania has stepped up to embody the best of what it means to embrace a moral imperative.

When this Chamber was built and the Security Council was established, no one at the time could have conceived or imagined a future where nearly 65 per cent of the world's population is connected to something as complex as the modern Internet. But missing from the discourse back then because of the state of technology were words like distributed denial-of-service attack, cyberattack, malware, virus, trolling, online harassment, doxxing, Domain Name System poisoning, hacking and so many other terms that we find ourselves grappling with today. But while these concepts are relatively new in the history of the Security Council, the motivations behind them and the potential consequences are as familiar as the history of war and conflict.

The interconnectedness brought about by the Internet and social media has advanced humankind in ways we could never have deemed fathomable. It has also given us unparalleled visibility. For example, if we look at the war in Ukraine, there are more hours of footage uploaded to YouTube, TikTok and other platforms than there are aggregate minutes of the entire war itself.

But with great promise also comes new vulnerabilities. That is why I founded Jigsaw in 2010 at Google — because I wanted technology to address the future challenges that could potentially destabilize the Internet that was being created. Those challenges are here today and are impacting the most vulnerable segments of the world’s population, who are increasingly caught in the crossfire of inter-State cyberconflict.

Like land, air and sea, the Internet has become a critical domain to occupy during war. For nations at war, their first strike is increasingly a cyberstrike. Looking back to 2014, in the Donbas, before any tanks crossed the border or any physical weapons were fired, there was the systematic targeting of police officers in the eastern part of Ukraine, encouraging them over Telegram channels to defect, with result that, when the first shots were fired, the support and rule of law would be undermined.

Narratives are amplified to mitigate a perceived threat or even topple democratic systems. From across the globe, combatants can gain access to and attack critical infrastructure that affects the livelihood of our communities. This has brought digital and information warfare to the forefront of geopolitical conflicts.

In 2016, I wrote in *Time* magazine that all wars will begin as cyberwars. They will unfold silently, invisibly and relatively inexpensively. I believe this to be even truer today, but the types of attacks we see have unfortunately diversified and democratized. Nowhere is this more true than in Ukraine.

Let me be clear about one thing: for all nations concerned about their cybervulnerabilities, there is absolutely nothing that they will see in their countries that will not be directed at Ukraine first and worse. It has been disproportionately targeted by the most advanced cyberattacks since 2014. It is essentially our crystal ball for what is likely to come.

It is a testament to the Ukrainian effectiveness in deflecting and countering these attacks that it has become increasingly difficult to understand the full breadth of what is playing out. As one example, Russia’s cyberattacks on Ukraine are so egregious that the Ukrainian elements of criminal ransomware groups made up of both Russian and Ukrainian citizens, when given the order to deploy ransomware, chose to defend Ukraine instead and leaked the logs associated with the ransomware.

Let me attempt to highlight five key attack vectors that are illustrated in Ukraine. I have a rule that I am not going to articulate and capture problems, without subsequently offering examples of what can and should be done about them

The first vector is attacks on critical infrastructure. This is what we typically think of as traditional hacking of systems and infrastructure. These attacks target industrial capacities, government institutions and essential non-governmental organizations, and they often seek to take advantage of long-cultivated zero-day exploits to bring these institutions down. The term “zero-day” refers to the time where basically there are “zero days” to patch a vulnerability in a system, because the vulnerability is discovered at the precise moment of attack. Most of these attacks were mitigated in the early phases of the war. But, even now, attacks against Ukrainian institutions, individuals, and organizations continue to accelerate.

Let us start with distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks, which overwhelm a website with traffic coming from different compromised computers around the world, with the aim of censoring the website by knocking it off the Internet. This has been among the most pervasive forms of attack since the mid-1990s. Last month, Cloudflare mitigated the largest HTTPS attack ever reported. These attacks are not only getting larger; they are getting more sophisticated, and they are targeting a broader cross-section of society. As an example, 60 per cent of all DDoS attacks have targeted institutions of education, where the primary beneficiaries of those websites are young people, as well as entities critical to telecommunications. They are also developing so-called microfloods, which are low-throughput attacks, which have been harder to detect and have increased steadily, up by 123 per cent over where they were at the beginning of this year.

In Ukraine, Russia has deployed DDoS attacks that have taken down overall connectivity by 15 to 20 per cent in the country, and, on multiple occasions, the attacks have become so ferocious that Internet connectivity dropped to close to zero. They have blocked access to essential services, financial institutions, the Government and critical non-governmental organization services. These attacks are not only targeting institutions in Ukraine. In May alone, many Government agencies around the world reported numerous DDoS attacks, including the Port of London Authority, Italy’s Supreme Council of Magistrates, its customs agency, Ministries for Foreign

Affairs, Education, and Cultural Heritage, Estonia's Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and Germany's Ministry of Defence, the Bundestag and the Federal Police.

The second vector of attack focuses on organized harassment through toxicity and deception. These attacks have targeted prominent individuals and whole classes of people. Deepfakes of alleged cocaine addiction were used to seed and feed a harassment campaign against President Zelenskyy. The aggression aimed to undermine President Zelenskyy's mental stability while persuading public support towards Russia. In another broad effort, numerous campaigns have aimed at creating resentment towards Ukrainian refugees throughout Europe, with the obvious goal of creating change and havoc at the ballot box. Disinformation has spread across social media platforms on refugee-linked criminal activity and preferential treatment of refugees over countries' own citizens.

This strategy goes beyond Ukraine's borders. It focuses on grass-roots movements to drive public and political support away from Ukrainian defence. As an example, in Poland, where the vast majority of refugees are women and where refugees are being housed in individual Polish citizens' homes, there is a disinformation campaign targeting women of the households, encouraging them to protect their husbands against these refugees, playing on fears that some individuals might have.

We have also seen attacks on the conversation more broadly, which constitutes the third vector of attack. Information warfare has made its way into the homes of ordinary people across the globe. Activist and political leaders now have a direct line of communication to organize around a cause. This has enhanced the voices of those living in societies where censorship is a dark reality and is most pervasive. Authoritarian regimes develop sophisticated strategies to disorient digital conversations, and, if successful, they completely control the narrative. One of the more complex cases involved the creation of fake fact-checkers who sought to create confusion by "fact-checking" Ukrainian claims that were never made. In debunking fabricated false claims, the effort aimed to position Ukrainians as liars and sway public and political support towards Russia. Such attacks have been amplified by a combination of real-people trolls and enhanced chatbots and challenged many platforms' ability to respond quickly and accurately.

The fourth vector of attack has been the use of misinformation and disinformation to incite and justify extreme violence. Our team at Jigsaw has developed research that confirms the ability to leverage disinformation to motivate violence, especially to motivate animosity toward what is called an "outgroup". The relentless Russian propaganda to its citizens that Ukrainians were "Nazis" likely served to dehumanize Ukrainians in the eyes of Russian soldiers, leading to the many war crimes now alleged against Russian forces.

Efforts to reconstitute the Ukrainian Internet as the Russian Internet constitute the fifth and final vector of attack that I will speak about today. In the first major city to be captured by Russian forces, Kherson, targeted attacks on fibre-optic backbones and a power outage took them offline, but then their Internet traffic was routed through Crimea. Interestingly, when Russia annexed the occupied Ukrainian territory in 2014, it also took over their Internets, seizing the assets of incumbent telcos and routing traffic through Rostelecom. This "soft substitution" of one for the other began after the Russian invasion of Crimea. Today that model has been accelerated, and Donbas' Internet is, for all intents and purposes, now a Russian Internet. Borders are still contested, but the digital frontier is now already frozen.

Let us now talk about solutions. Each of these attacks now forms part of the rubric and strategy of war and has implications far beyond the current conflict in Ukraine. It is increasingly urgent for the Security Council to consider the digital implications of war and explore legal revisions to cover such threats.

At Jigsaw, we are contributing in the ways we can. Last month, we launched a new programme that we are calling "Protect Your Democracy". Protect Your Democracy offers a suite of free tools to people and organizations to help protect their access to the free and open web, defend websites from cyberattacks, shield their accounts from hacking and safeguard the digital public square. In addition, Project Shield is a free service that extends Google's DDoS protection services to websites not on Google's cloud. Using what is called a "reverse proxy", the tool functions as an insurance policy that protects the site when it needs it most. Deployed first in Ukraine in 2014, where we first got the idea, when we asked human rights and civil society organizations what they needed, Shield is again active at work in Ukraine. We are protecting more than 150 government, non-governmental, publisher, and human



rights organizations sites that are under repeated and daily DDoS threat. Project Shield was specifically recognized as contributing to Google's receipt of the first Ukraine Peace Prize.

Protect Your Democracy also aims to protect the conversation. Included in the toolkit is a multilingual product built by Jigsaw called "Perspective API". The technology helps content moderators monitor and detect toxicity in text-based communications online. We do this by amassing a data training set of annotated and toxic comments and then training a machine-learning model to measure toxicity by literally showing it billions of examples in multiple languages of what other people have described and labelled as toxic. Google, Reddit, *The New York Times* and many other publications around the world leverage that API to promote healthy dialogue and discourse.

We have also published an open-source tool called Harassment Manager, which helps users who are often targets of harassment, such as journalists, human rights defenders and civil-society leaders. It helps them document and manage the harassment that they receive on social media platforms, which can be voluminous and down to the second. In partnership with Twitter and Thomson Reuters Foundation, the tool will be freely available for the Foundation's community of journalists this summer.

Our behavioural research and product development teams are focused on helping users become more resilient to misinformation and disinformation while browsing and communicating online. We have developed a technology that encourages users to think carefully as they engage with low-quality content across the Web. Our prototype on YouTube resulted in a statistically significant increase in users' ability to spot manipulation.

We are exploring new techniques that protect people against misinformation by teaching them to spot and refute a misleading argument or tactic called prebunking. We are currently exploring prebunking campaigns in Central and Eastern Europe in response to the anticipated disinformation around refugee flows and look forward to reporting on its impact in the coming weeks and months.

While the programme currently focuses on Central and Eastern Europe, it will eventually be available in more than 35 languages in the near term, including Polish, Czech and Ukrainian. As we work to scale

the programme globally, we will continue to explore emerging threats and what new tools should be built to tackle them.

Finally, we have free and open-source tools that help protect against attacks at the network level. Those tools allow individuals who are experiencing a filtered Internet in a moment of crisis to be able to contact civil-society organizations in other countries that have set up a cloud server to allow a channel for people in those countries to be able to experience the Internet of a different country. That tool is being used by activists across the world.

Let me finish with a note of caution and a call to action. In doing so, I want to reflect on one of my favourite authors, Barbara Tuchman, who wrote *Guns of August*, the seminal book on the causes of the First World War. Her lesson was profound about the dangers of mass mobilization and the type of powder keg that it can create, where a small trigger can bring the world to war. We understand the lessons associated with mass physical mobilization. We are seeing that play out in Europe at this precise moment, and that is why we all are here today.

It is not clear to me that we understand the consequences and the implications of the mass mobilization of cyberwar. I am deeply, deeply concerned that we are bringing the country to the brink of a threshold that once we have crossed there will be no going back. My caution is that while cyberwar is less visible and harder to understand, it is far more contagious, harder to control and increasingly has physical-world implications. We have no deterrence in the cyberdomain, and the world's connected population is caught in the crossfire, getting hit by the digital equivalent of shrapnel on a daily basis. None of that can be put back in a box once it has been deployed, and it is not possible to control what ultimately happens to it.

States must find a way to turn the volume down and settle on some kind of deterrence doctrine for the cyberdomain. Companies and technology experts have badly needed expertise, but there is no magical algorithm or single fix for this. It will take a lot of experimental efforts rather than a single grand effort to protect our digital world. My hope is that in sharing a little bit about Jigsaw's work with the Council, it offers one small example of what that experimentation can look like.

**The President:** I thank Mr. Cohen 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 make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Albania.

I thank Special Adviser Nderitu for her insightful presentation and the clear messages that we heard here today. I thank Ms. Tsybulska for her account and Mr. Cohen for a most insightful and thought-provoking outlook on the contribution of the technology world, including Jigsaw, to specific and targeted programmes to keep the infinite Web as a healthy space of freedom.

For years, in the early 1930s, the Nazis used virulently anti-Semitic newspapers such as *Der Stürmer* to help incite the German people to the active persecution of Jews. Years later, a failed and obscure artist-turned-politician, a certain Adolf Hitler, would implement exactly what he had anticipated in his notorious book, with the consequences that we know, engraved in posterity as the Holocaust. The world was shocked, rightly. But everything that happened had been said openly.

In 1994, a Rwandan radio station, RTL, close to the Government, did everything to incite Hutus against the Tutsi minority, repeatedly describing the latter as cockroaches and snakes. The station, unfortunately, had many listeners. Within 100 days, an estimated 1 million people, the overwhelming majority of whom were Tutsis, were savagely slaughtered. The world witnessed, powerless and with dismay, one of the most infamous examples of human behaviour in modern history.

In the early 1990s, on a different continent, in Europe, a Bosnian Serb television station would unleash its primitive hatred of the Bosnian Muslims and fill the air with uninterrupted praise for the Bosnian Serb "liberating forces" from those undesirables, qualified at that time as Turks. While a campaign of terror with concentration camps, mass executions that saw some of the worst atrocities in Europe since the Second World War was going on, that television station and its many followers applauded the heroic acts of their army — the very army that committed genocide in Srebrenica.

A few years later, in Kosovo, the derogatory term *Shiptar*, used for Kosovo Albanians, would notoriously

help to promote incitement to violence and celebrate the ethnic cleansing campaign that led to mass crimes in Kosovo, including widespread sexual violence, looting and the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of people from their homes. The propaganda called it a liberation — almost. The international community had to intervene to put an end to that madness.

Fast-forward, in 2022, after years of rhetoric denigrating Ukraine, on the eve of Russia's invasion of Ukraine the Russian President openly challenged the country's right to exist. He described Ukraine as an artificial creation of the Bolsheviks, called its leaders Nazis and decided that Ukraine should be de-Nazified. What followed, as we know, was a brutal war of aggression that has claimed more than 10,000 victims and resulted in millions of refugees and spine-chilling atrocity crimes, including executions; rape and sexual violence; indiscriminate bombardments, with entire cities reduced to rubble; deliberate attacks on shelters, evacuation routes and humanitarian corridors; sieges; and the forcible transfer of Ukrainians. It has also unleashed a severe food-insecurity crisis throughout the world.

What do these few meaningful examples have in common? They happened at different times, in different environments, with different actors, after all. Yes, but when the worst kind of hatred and incitement of violence is unleashed, it is only a matter of time before what begins with dehumanizing words ends in bloodshed.

High-level Russian officials and State media commentators repeatedly and publicly deny the existence of a Ukrainian identity, implying that those who self-identify as Ukrainians threaten the unity of Russia or are simply Nazis and therefore deserve punishment.

Worse, the accusation in a mirror technique has proved to be a powerful, historically recurring form of incitement to mass atrocities. One accuses another group of planning, or having committed, atrocities like those one envisions against them. Milosević sent his army to Kosovo under the false pretext of protecting the Serbian minority there; he ended up in prison and died behind bars as a war criminal.

The Russian propaganda machinery, including high officials, made the utterly false claim that Ukraine had committed genocide against the population in Russian-backed separatist-controlled areas as their pretext for invading Ukraine. That is an absurd accusation, as we know, which the International Court of Justice,

the highest world Court, termed unsubstantiated and dismissed as untrue with an order issued on 16 March that to date has remained unheeded.

What do soldiers do when they hear their leaders and commanders and carefully orchestrated State propaganda use such dehumanizing terms? They echo their content, and they end up committing atrocities. Reported statements by soldiers include threats to rape “every Nazi” in Ukraine, “hunting Nazis,” “liberate you from Nazis” and “cleanse you from the dirt”. That is what happened to the convicted Russian soldier who admitted in court to killing an innocent man.

It is no surprise then that the war of choice in Ukraine has further exacerbated the proliferation of disinformation, news fabrication, conspiracy theories, widespread misinformation and the incitement to violence and hatred. We see more and more language that demonizes and threatens people — not for anything that they have done but simply because of who they are.

For us, the freedom of expression, online and offline, is sacrosanct. No pretext can be used to curb liberties and freedoms. But we must stand firmly against genocide deniers, refuse history revisionists and reject extremists who deny the fundamental right of others and those who glorify criminals. We must refuse those who want to use words to incite the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and those who try to build a path towards concentration camps or mass graves.

Any failure to prevent and condemn such acts fuels a climate of fear and insecurity among the targeted population and, as we have seen, the denial of genocide and other atrocity crimes and the glorification of war criminals become a major obstacle to trust-building and reconciliation in post-conflict situations. For example, in my region, instead of facing the truth and working for reconciliation, inclusivity, peace and development, certain political leaders have chosen the easier path of transforming their countries into generators of hatred, as we have seen in Republika Srpska and elsewhere.

Incitement to violence contradicts the normative framework on human rights and undermines the rule of law, the functioning of democratic societies and the building of tolerant societies. It undermines core values since it promotes the way to destroy them by unleashing the worst human behaviour. We must be able to learn from the past in order to prevent atrocities in the future. We must make sure that younger generations see in their neighbour not the enemy but

a human being who deserves the same respect. We must challenge stereotypes and foster social solidarity and the inclusivity of marginalized and discriminated groups. Inclusivity creates strength; discrimination fuels hatred.

That is why we need better education, critical thinking, free and professional media for informed citizens and the responsible use of the Internet and social media. We should never sacrifice freedom, but if we misuse it we threaten it. It is therefore our common responsibility to prevent and protect. We can no longer say that we do not know where incitement to violence leads. We know that very well. We have seen it — and that is why we must act.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

**Mr. Mills** (United States of America): Let me start by thanking you and your delegation, Sir, for keeping a continued spotlight on accountability, in particular your focus on holding those responsible for committing atrocities to account. I also want to thank Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide Nderitu, Ms. Tsybulska and Mr. Cohen for their compelling, useful and deeply disturbing briefings today.

I believe those presentations provide another sobering look at how disinformation and the misuse of the Internet is fuelling the horrific suffering that Russia’s brutal and illegal further invasion of Ukraine is causing the people of Ukraine. I think it is clear from what we have heard and what we know instinctively that aggressors use hate speech and disinformation to foment mistrust, agitate division and ultimately fuel their violence, as we are seeing Russia do as it wages its premeditated and unprovoked war against Ukraine.

Let me be clear: we strongly reject Russia’s continued efforts to distort history for its own political purposes. The Security Council must do the same. The General Assembly has already rejected Russia’s false narrative and its disinformation with regard to Ukraine and other neighbouring countries, such as when it attempts to smear neighbours as “neo-fascists and “neo-Nazis”. Those lies are particularly egregious and harmful, as they really detract from serious critically important worldwide efforts to combat actual anti-Semitism and violent extremism.

We must all continue upholding peace and security, defending human rights and promoting the rule of law. That work must include condemning and combating real anti-Semitism in all its forms, as well as other forms of intolerance, discrimination, racism and xenophobia. We must uphold in the Council the Charter of the United Nations. We have a special obligation to do so and to respond to lies with truth. We cannot allow the rule of law to be replaced by the use of force. The Council must be clear that any attempts to change the internationally recognized borders of sovereign States through the use of force are unlawful, irresponsible and dangerous — a lesson drawn from the history of the Second World War.

Since Russia launched its illegal and unprovoked further invasion of Ukraine, credible reports from a broad range of sources of atrocities committed by Russia's forces against civilians have grown with every passing day. Bucha, Mariupol and Kherson will go down in history as the sites of horrific atrocities and human suffering. There are multiple credible reports, as we heard from our briefer, of Russia's forces torturing and committing execution-style killings of people found with their hands bound behind their backs. And as we have discussed in the Council, there is also a multitude of reports of women and girls being raped — some publicly — and children illegally taken away to Russia and put up for adoption. We also know that Russia's forces continue to deny safe passage to civilians fleeing violence, as well as the humanitarian organizations trying to reach those in need. Ukraine has suffered from Russia's aggression since 2014. Before then Ukraine was a country at peace. Sadly, the atrocities committed by Russia's forces have only multiplied since its full-scale invasion in February.

As you noted, Mr. President, Russia also continues to flagrantly disregard the 16 March order of the International Court of Justice for Russia to suspend immediately its military operations in Ukraine. We cannot remain silent. I say to my fellow Council members that we must seek and achieve justice for victims. The European Democratic Resilience Initiative, which President Biden announced in March, will provide up to \$320 million in new funding to support societal resilience and defend human rights in Ukraine. There will also be a particular focus on accountability for war crimes and the other atrocities committed by Russia's forces in Ukraine.

Similarly, the European Union, the United Kingdom and the United States have formed the Atrocity Crimes Advisory Group to advise the war crimes unit of the Office of the Prosecutor-General of Ukraine on the collection, the preservation and the analysis of evidence of atrocities to support the pursuit of justice for survivors and victims.

We are also supporting a broad range of international examinations of the mounting credible reports of atrocities in Ukraine, including the examinations conducted by the International Criminal Court, the United Nations human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine and the experts' missions under the aegis of the Moscow Mechanism of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, to name just a few. That effort includes supporting the establishment of the Human Rights Council's Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine.

I would like to note that, just today, the Attorney General of the United States, Merrick Garland, is visiting Ukraine in order to see how, in addition, the United States can help Ukraine preserve and ensure accountability for the crimes being committed on its soil.

Let me conclude by noting that some countries on the Council have called for the peaceful settlement of the conflict in Ukraine, while ignoring that one country, Russia, started this conflict by illegally invading and attacking its neighbour. Russia alone bears responsibility for this war. Russia alone started this war, and Russia alone can end it. I say to our Russian friends that they should silence their guns now, withdraw their forces from Ukraine's territory, speak truth and embrace diplomacy.

**Mr. Kariuki** (United Kingdom): Let me thank Albania for convening today's important discussion, and all our briefers for their compelling presentations.

As we said in the Council debate on identity and conflict (see S/PV.8877) hosted by President Kenyatta last year, history has shown us what happens when identity is weaponized. From the Holocaust to Rwanda to Bosnia, propaganda, disinformation and hate speech have paved the way for war crimes, atrocities and genocide. As the writer Anne Applebaum observed recently, while not every use of genocidal hate speech leads to genocide, all genocides have been preceded by genocidal hate speech. Russia's propaganda and rhetoric about Ukraine are therefore profoundly

disturbing, and Ms. Tsybulska has given us numerous examples of such rhetoric today. The State-controlled media in Russia are tightly governed by the Kremlin, which has for years repeated hate speech directed at Ukraine and Ukrainians. That has seen senior Russian figures deny that Ukraine has a right to exist or that Ukrainian identity is separate from that of Russia.

There have been relentless false claims, notably by President Putin, that members of the Ukrainian Government are drug addicts and neo-Nazis. There has been hate speech from former President Dmitry Medvedev, who has said that Ukrainians are scum and freaks. There has been the gross falsehood from Foreign Minister Lavrov and other Russian diplomats that Ukrainians were carrying out a genocide in Donbas, an allegation that has no basis in fact. Time will tell the full human cost of Russia's invasion. The Council is already aware of reports of mass graves and summary executions in Bucha, Irpin and Mariupol, and there are widespread reports of sexual violence. Investigations into those atrocities are under way. International justice will determine who should be held accountable.

I want to conclude with two points. First, digital and social media platforms can be powerful vectors for propaganda, disinformation and hate speech. We note the efforts made by media companies to address that issue and we thank Mr. Cohen for his participation today. We call on them to strengthen their work in that regard. Secondly, article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights expressly prohibits any propaganda for war or advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence. Hate speech can also be a war crime. We call on the Russian Federation to comply with its obligations and to stop making such statements.

**Ms. Heimerback** (Norway): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's important meeting, and the briefers for their valuable and important remarks.

We are currently seeing reports of widespread and blatant violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law being committed in Ukraine, particularly in areas controlled or previously controlled by Russian forces. Many of those violations may amount to war crimes. We call on the Russian Federation to immediately end its unprovoked war and its relentless and brutal attacks on civilians. Russia's war is in

itself a violation of international law. The principles of the Charter of the United Nations are clear on the illegality of the acquisition of territory by force. In March, in its order on *Allegations of Genocide under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Ukraine v. Russian Federation)*, the International Court of Justice ordered Russia to immediately suspend its military operations in Ukraine. Russia must comply with that legally binding order. Yet it has continued its aggression and disinformation, including about genocide taking place in parts of Ukraine. The Russian leadership's rhetoric is not only false, but it is dangerous. Freedom of speech is explicitly not extended to the advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence, and for good reason. Incitement of violence is recognized as a warning sign, and as the Council has seen all too often, messaging that spreads hostility and hatred can trigger violence that may lead to war crimes, crimes against humanity and even genocide.

We need to prevent and counter all forms of incitement to violence, including through dialogue, knowledge-sharing, education and objective reporting. We must speak up against information that is false and deliberately created to harm. Disinformation and war propaganda reinforce insecurity, mistrust and hostility, and ultimately undermine the basis for future dialogue and peace. In countering that, we have no better ally than independent journalism and a free press. The press plays an essential role in providing real-time documentation of violations of international humanitarian law as well as human rights violations and abuses. When the time for accountability comes, that reporting will make it even more difficult for Russian leaders to claim ignorance of atrocity crimes being committed at their direction. It is essential, and required under international humanitarian law, that journalists and other media workers be protected. Yet the Committee to Protect Journalists has confirmed that at least 12 journalists have died while covering the war in Ukraine. In Russia, scores of reporters have fled the country or are facing prosecution as the country continues to crack down on independent media.

We would like to recall the Security Council's authority to refer cases to the International Criminal Court. There are ample indications of war crimes being committed in Ukraine. They must not be forgotten. Individuals at all levels must be held to account. There

must be accountability for the sake of the victims, the people of Ukraine and all countries with powerful neighbours. We must defend our international order, in which relations between States are determined by international law, not power.

**Mrs. Broadhurst Estival** (France) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I too would like to thank Ms. Alice Nderitu, the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, as well as Ms. Liubov Tsybulska and Mr. Jared Cohen, for their very insightful briefings.

Regrettably, hate speech and incitement to violence are nothing new. They have fuelled many conflicts and can lead to the commission of serious crimes, mass atrocities and genocide. We saw it in Europe during the Second World War. Today, new technologies create specific challenges to which we must respond together to ensure that they are tools for peace, not for conflict, hatred and crime. Free access and the instantaneous and massive spread of information online give citizens access to huge amounts of information and can contribute to the dynamism of civil society and democratic movements. New technologies and modern communication tools are now essential to ensuring that crimes and gross human rights violations are reported and denounced. We have seen that in Burma, Syria and now in Ukraine. However, the Internet and social networks are also vectors for the rapid and sometimes systematic spread of manipulated information, as well as hate speech and rhetoric.

We firmly condemn the war of aggression being waged by Russia on Ukraine, where the number of civilian victims increases every day and is supported by a campaign led by the Russian authorities to normalize hate speech and incite violence. The spread of such rhetoric, in particular through disinformation and the deliberate manipulation of information, as well as the harsh restrictions on freedom of the press in Russia, is extremely dangerous.

In line with General Assembly resolution ES-11/1, adopted on 2 March, Russia must stop this war and comply with international law. It must stop its massive dissemination of false information and outrageous propaganda.

The images of the atrocities committed in Bucha and other areas previously occupied by Russian forces, as well as in Mariupol, are absolutely unbearable and have shocked the entire world. France is firmly committed to standing by Ukraine and is providing its

full support to the relevant international and regional jurisdictions and mechanisms — as well as bilaterally, with the deployment of a forensic support mission — to ensure that those abuses are accurately documented, and their perpetrators do not go unpunished.

In that regard, we reiterate our call for support for the International Criminal Court and cooperation with it, as well as with all fact-finding missions and commissions of inquiry.

France will also continue working with Mexico to promote the initiative to prevent the use of the veto in cases of mass atrocity crimes.

**Mrs. Toroitich** (Kenya): I thank Ms. Nderitu, Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, for her briefing and the work she is doing on the important agenda of addressing hate speech. I also thank Ms. Tsybulska and Mr. Cohen for their presentations this morning.

We stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine, who are suffering due to the failure of the Security Council to carry out its mandate. We welcome the focus on the extensive hate speech and incitement that is linked to the many atrocity crimes perpetrated in Ukraine. It is clear that organized State and non-State actors are aggressively utilizing hatred and incitement to manage perceptions about the war. Even accusations about human rights violations and war crimes have been weaponized as part of the information war. The people of Ukraine, the victims and the survivors deserve better.

The surprise expressed in so many European forums that such a catastrophic war and violations could be happening in Europe signals a historical blindness that has helped escalate the risks that turned into this war. Europe, probably more than any other region, has experienced multiple genocides, with hundreds of years of repeated pogroms and large-scale atrocities due to ethnic, religious and racial hatred.

Based on the historical record, there is little doubt that hate speech and incitement are a precursor and catalyst for atrocities against civilians. Kenya has learned from its own history and from Europe's dire experience. We have therefore taken action to limit the threat to our democracy and security arising from hate speech and incitement. Our Constitution limits the right to the freedom of expression, which does not extend to war propaganda; incitement to violence; hate speech; or

advocacy of hatred that constitutes ethnic incitement, the vilification of others or incitement to cause harm.

On that constitutional basis, we have enacted laws against hate speech and established a national cohesion and integration commission to continuously work towards strengthening cohesion and challenging division and civic hatred. Just under one week ago, the commission launched its national action plan against hate speech. The timing was to ensure that our upcoming elections in August are not marred by that dangerous crime. Kenya's Chief Justice has responded to the moment by gazetting five courts to deal with hate speech prosecutions.

We provide those examples to emphasize our conviction that practical and bold action is necessary, not just in Kenya but worldwide. At a time when conflicts that have been sparked and intensified along the lines of identity are leading to protracted and deadly wars, we must act to inclusively manage diversity as a core State competence and priority.

At the top of such an agenda is combating hate speech and incitement. That was a consistent message from our delegation during our recent term in the Council, as reflected in the open debate presided over by His Excellency President Uhuru Kenyatta in October 2021 (see S/PV.8877) and the subsequent Arria Formula meetings on hate speech, which were mentioned by the representative of the United Kingdom.

Returning to the urgency of the situation in Ukraine, we strongly urge all leaders in the warring countries, as well as their allies and supporters, to cease using derogatory concepts about the people of Ukraine or any other peoples. They should ensure that their media outlets are held to a standard that demands accountability for hate speech and incitement. The leaders should also impress on their military and security personnel, particularly in the field, that they must not target civilians. They must also maintain consistent discipline against soldiers who abuse the human rights of civilians and captured personnel.

We also urge all mainstream media and social media outlets to remain vigilant in their due diligence, verification and dissemination processes to prevent the misuse of their platforms. It is important that efforts be pursued to contain the proliferation of provocation, misinformation and incitement. In that regard, Kenya calls on the United Nations to undertake a thorough investigation into the human rights violations being

committed in Ukraine. It should pay special attention to the misuse of accusations of genocide, which only weakens global resolve to prevent the occurrence of that greatest of crimes.

We reiterate our call for a collaborative approach—not just to Ukraine but also globally—among Member States, the United Nations and major social media companies towards combating hate speech and incitement, in particular by developing a global code of conduct for companies and early-warning tools to detect escalation and facilitate pre-emptive measures. Such efforts should be located within a global Internet governance framework that addresses organized misinformation and disinformation.

History has taught us that accountability for past crimes constitutes a critical element of the prevention of future acts. Serious allegations by all parties should be treated with the seriousness they deserve by the Council and relevant United Nations bodies. The conflicting parties should agree and facilitate prompt, independent and impartial investigations of all allegations. The conflicting parties should also cooperate with the United Nations organs and agencies charged with the responsibility for preventing misinformation and hate speech. They should cooperate with investigations and abide by the findings thereof.

To conclude, I reaffirm Kenya's solidarity with the people of Ukraine and our support for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Ukraine.

**Ms. Byrne Nason** (Ireland): I would like to start by thanking all of our excellent briefers this morning for their very insightful contributions.

History has taught us repeatedly that atrocity crimes do not occur in a vacuum. An increase in language that marginalizes and targets people on the basis of their identity, race, religion or ethnicity, or on the basis of their sexual orientation, gender identity, disability or other status, is one of the first warning signs of violence. Incendiary language lamenting, glorifying or whitewashing the past and threatening consequences against those who see things differently harks back to darker times in history. Seeking to rectify perceived grievances by resorting to military action against another State to annex part of its territory has absolutely no place in the twenty-first century. This is why we call on the Russian Federation to stop its efforts to establish occupying authorities and its

attempts to change the functioning of the Ukrainian State, undermining its democratic foundations. Such steps are yet further deplorable violations of Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

We recall the importance of avoiding propaganda, hate speech and intentionally divisive language. Difference does not cause conflict; rather it is the stoking of divisions for political purposes that is the real driver of conflict. Russian accusations of genocide against Ukraine were, and are, utterly false, just as attempting to depict Ukraine as an existential threat to Russia has no foundation. These false claims cannot be used to justify the so-called pre-emptive strike back Russia launched against Ukraine.

We know that today is the 118th day of Russia's unprovoked war against Ukraine. Ukraine's cities continue to be pummelled by Russia's armed forces. Ordinary Ukrainians continue to suffer; ordinary Ukrainians continue to die for no reason. The loss of life, damage to critical infrastructure, trade disruption and outflow of refugees is having a devastating impact on Ukraine's economy, further impoverishing the Ukrainian people. We want to underline in this context that attacks directed against civilians and civilian objects, indiscriminate attacks and disproportionate attacks are all prohibited under international humanitarian law.

The mission of experts from the Moscow Mechanism of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe has reported a clear pattern of violations of international humanitarian law by Russia. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has said that Russia has not merely ignored international humanitarian law but has tossed it aside, and she expressed shock at the scale of the destruction and the numerous violations of international human rights law. The International Criminal Court investigation will prove important in ensuring accountability for any international crimes committed in Ukraine. We therefore call once again for compliance with international humanitarian law, including the obligations to attack only military objectives and to take all feasible precautions in attack.

At this table, we have repeatedly called for an end to the war against Ukraine and for the Russian Federation to withdraw its forces and engage in true dialogue and diplomacy towards peace. I will say it again: it is never too late to do the right thing. However,

while armed conflict continues, Russia must comply with its obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law. We will not tire of making that call — the people of Ukraine deserve no less from us.

**Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez** (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Undoubtedly, any incitement to violence and hate speech has the potential to result in the commission of crimes against humanity. As we have heard, reports on the situation in Ukraine suggest that we are indeed facing serious violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law. Images of the existence of possible mass graves and evidence of the alleged commission of war crimes and crimes against humanity could constitute “unimaginable atrocities that deeply shock the conscience of humanity”, as stated in the Preamble of the Rome Statute.

However, it will be up to the duly constituted tribunals to make the appropriate determinations. For this reason, Mexico has not hesitated to support the establishment of the International Independent Commission of Inquiry established by the Human Rights Council and the ongoing investigation by the International Criminal Court to try and punish those responsible for war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide, the prohibition of which constitute peremptory norms of international law. We call on all States to cooperate fully with these mechanisms. Accountability for international crimes must always be the norm, regardless of where they are committed. To be clear: all international crimes, wherever and whenever they are committed, are equally serious and must be punished in an equal manner.

For its part, the International Court of Justice will have to consider the application filed by Ukraine relating to the application of the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. The Security Council will be attentive to the decision of the Court, which will arrive in due course. In the meantime, Mexico urges Russia to fully comply with the Court's order of 16 March 2022, setting provisional measures that are fully binding.

With each passing day and week, the humanitarian needs become greater. As the conflict persists, it is the civilian population that continues to pay the price, with multiple immediate effects, as well as for generations to come. On the humanitarian front alone, figures provided by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian



Affairs, the World Food Programme and UNICEF show the scale of the challenge. Nearly 16 million people are in need of humanitarian aid, while access to food, clean water, health services, education and electricity is shrinking exponentially, and funding has only reached 70 per cent of needs. In addition, residential areas and civilian infrastructure continue to be unjustifiably targeted in violation of international humanitarian law. For its part, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reports that there are some 5 million refugees and more than 7 million internally displaced persons.

There is also a growing recognition that the consequences of the conflict are no longer confined to Ukraine or Europe. As my country mentioned last week, the global rise in food prices and its consequences for food insecurity affect the whole world, but especially developing countries, first and foremost the African continent. We are waiting for an agreement on safe routes for the exit of grain and for the Council to lend its support in following up on what is agreed upon, hopefully in the very next few days.

For all these reasons, Mexico believes that the Security Council should not lose sight of the most pressing needs and support the efforts of the United Nations and other mediators towards a negotiated solution.

My delegation will continue to very clearly stress the fact that people need to be at the very centre of the Council's action and the urgent need to stop the hostilities, as the International Court of Justice ordered in its provisional measures.

With the goal of seeing diplomacy recover its rights over and above mutual accusations, which only escalate the lack of understanding and the confrontation between the parties, Mexico will continue working toward the full operation of the collective security system established by the Charter of the United Nations. For that reason, together with France and more than 100 other Member States, we will continue promoting the initiative of refraining from the use of the veto in the case of mass atrocities.

**Mr. Abushahab** (United Arab Emirates): At the outset, I would like to thank Ms. Alice Nderitu for her informative briefing, and we listened carefully to Ms. Liubov Tsybulska and Mr. Jared Cohen.

Today we are reminded once again of this war's terrible human cost, with thousands of people killed,

millions displaced and tens of millions around the globe facing increased food insecurity. As the conflict extends into its fifth month, it is clear that the humanitarian needs are immense and will require a prolonged response. Last week, the United Arab Emirates delivered 27 tons of food and medical supplies to assist those fleeing the conflict.

With the intense fighting in eastern Ukraine, there are increasingly alarming reports of civilian casualties and diminished access to necessities such as food, clean water, electricity and sanitation. We express our deep concern for the civilians trapped in Severodonetsk, including at the Azot chemical plant. We are dismayed that amid heavy combat there have been no significant improvements in the delivery of humanitarian aid to those in need.

The unimpeded delivery of humanitarian assistance to civilians and allowing safe and voluntary passage to those seeking safety remain an absolute necessity and should be at the forefront of the Council's considerations. We stress once more that all parties must abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law.

As has been noted repeatedly in this Chamber, preventing incitement to violence is a key component of protecting civilians. Recognizing this, the international community has sought to take steps to counter hate speech. Indeed, yesterday the General Assembly marked, for the first time, the International Day for Countering Hate Speech. Nevertheless, we continue to see a rise in incitement globally. In that regard, I would like to highlight the following points.

First, we condemn in the strongest terms all forms of hate speech and incitement. The United Arab Emirates has consistently taken a strong and principled stand, both domestically and internationally, against hate speech and intolerance. Hate fuels extremism and threatens peaceful coexistence. Constructive dialogue is vital to fostering tolerance and can serve as a basis for reconciliation. Women in particular are critical to long-lasting, peaceful solutions and therefore must be full, equal and meaningful participants in all peace efforts, including mediation and dialogue.

Secondly, the Council must redouble its efforts to address the malicious use of technology to spread hate speech. The use of digital technologies to propel the spread of misinformation, disinformation and hate speech poses a particularly serious challenge in conflict zones. Threats to humanitarian workers are

particularly insidious given the multiplicative effect on the civilians they are trying to assist. To counter the effects of incitement, we need to identify and employ effective counter-narratives, support media literacy and engage more closely with the private sector.

Thirdly, we believe that thorough investigations and data collection are essential for accountability. There are a number of ongoing investigatory and fact-finding efforts, including the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine established by the Human Rights Council, with a mandate to investigate all alleged violations and abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law. Impartially establishing facts and circumstances is fundamental to achieving justice for victims and survivors as well as to combating impunity more broadly. It is therefore essential that appropriate mechanisms be given the time and space necessary to carry out their activities.

Finally, the violence in Ukraine is a stark reminder that the Council must prioritize conflict resolution and de-escalation. Our focus must be on finding a diplomatic solution that will ease human suffering. We welcome the efforts of the Secretary-General and others in trying to bring the sides together. We also welcome their efforts to mitigate the broader impacts of the conflict, including by seeking to facilitate grain exports from Ukraine to help ease global food insecurity. Ultimately, however, what is needed is an immediate cessation of hostilities throughout Ukraine. Bringing peace must be our ultimate objective, and the Council must spare no effort to achieve that goal.

**Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to thank the Albanian presidency for having chosen this very pertinent topic for today's meeting. Unfortunately, Ms. Tsybulska, one of our briefers, spoke about sexual violence, repeating what Lyudmyla Denisova, the Ukrainian Ombudsperson, said. The desire of Ukrainian propagandists to demonize Russia at any cost is astonishing.

Also remarkable are Mr. Cohen and his fantastical tales showing that the Nazis in Ukraine were created and embedded into the public consciousness by Russian hackers. Mr Cohen must have forgotten to mention that our hackers have learned how to remotely make innocent Ukrainians get Nazi tattoos, chant Nazi slogans and torture and kill Russian-speaking Ukrainians.

The ideology of hatred and violence, inter alia against one's own people, is the basis of the State policy

of the current Government of Ukraine. That ideology provoked the horrific attacks committed by the Kyiv regime against its own people and was one of the key reasons for the current crisis in Ukraine. We should recall that Russia had already raised those issues in the Security Council last May, when we held an informal Arria Formula meeting on neo-Nazism and radical nationalism in Ukraine.

Today's meeting is a good opportunity to determine why the current Ukrainian leadership and its hate-filled rhetoric are essentially inextricably linked.

When the Soviet Union collapsed, Ukraine, as a sovereign country, just like other post-Soviet republics, had the opportunity to build an independent statehood. Ukraine had total free will to make its own geopolitical choices. However, the choice of the elites who came to power, with the prompting of the foreign Ukrainian diaspora, favoured out-and-out nationalism and the glorification of its legacy and gave credit to Hitler's accomplices, the leaders of the organization of the Ukrainian nationalists, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army. That quite naturally determined the path taken by the new Ukraine vis-à-vis its neighbours.

There are always attempts to make us believe that neo-Nazism and nationalism in Ukraine are marginal phenomena. But, in fact, ultra-nationalism is the mainstream policy of the Ukrainian authorities. We do not have time to lay out the genesis of Ukrainian nationalism and to quote all its founding fathers. We just want to say that one of its founding fathers, Dmytri Dontsov, put together the theory of integral nationalism, which he borrowed from Charles Maurras, the Frenchman who in 1899 set up a unit of nationalists. I shall not go into detail here, but I will just say that this theory is based on the ideology of hatred and favours a caste-based society, the immoral achievement of aims through brutality and cruelty, the dominance of an active minority over and the overall majority and the superiority of the Ukrainian race. Of course, all that is leading to hatred towards Russia as the "kingdom of darkness" and towards the Russian people. But we will still find a way to alert members to all the details of Ukrainian nationalist theories.

One of the ideologues of Ukrainian nationalism, Mykola Mikhnovsky, monuments to whom can be seen all over Ukraine, left to posterity his concept of "Ukraine for Ukrainians," whose essence he himself articulated as "All people are your brothers, but Moskals,

Polacks, Romanians and Yids are the enemies of our people". And those were not empty words. For example, during the war the militants of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army murdered hundreds of thousands of Poles, Jews and Russians, with a level of cruelty that appalled even the country's Nazi occupiers. Is it any wonder that antisemitism, racism, and Russophobia are currently flourishing in today's Ukraine?

However, given the fact that when Ukraine became independent, Russians and Russian speakers made up at least 60 per cent of the population, the Ukrainian authorities had to postpone the realization of their Russophobic agenda. The denial and soon the denigration of the historical past they shared with Russia, and the hatred of everything Russian, were introduced into society gradually, year by year.

It is important to point out that the United States and its Western allies were very interested in the establishment of this Russophobia-based Ukrainian nationalism, which they saw as an excellent opportunity to sever the historical ties between Ukraine and Russia in the service of their geopolitical needs. As a result, the new statehood of once-multicultural Ukraine was modelled according to Western bidding on a foundation of primitive Russophobia, and therefore imbued with the ideology of hatred from the very start. Against its own national interests, Ukraine chose the path of becoming an anti-Russian geopolitical project instead of genuine sovereignty. That was not easy to achieve in the essentially Russian and Russian-speaking south-eastern region of Ukraine. The vain attempts of a well-known Russophobe and multi-term Verkhovna Rada deputy, Iryna Farion, who repeatedly declared that all Russians were mentally retarded, are a case in point. Following the Maidan anti-constitutional coup, this Russophobe, who as it happens was in charge of language and humanitarian issues in the Ukrainian Parliament, complained in an interview,

"Fourteen per cent of Ukrainians say that Russian is their native language. That means we have 5 million degenerate Ukrainians who must be saved, even if we have to isolate those who do not speak Ukrainian".

I am citing this to explain how Russian-speaking residents of Ukraine were treated following the Maidan coup in 2014. The Kyiv junta's very first steps were a direct incitement to violence against the Russian-

speaking population. The entire population of the country was divided into first- and second-class citizens. Everyone who identified either as an ethnic Russian or simply a Russian speaker fell into the second category. A series of laws infringing on their rights were enacted. In the post-Maidan years, with the help of Russophobes such as Iryna Farion, whom I just mentioned, the Kyiv authorities cultivated and institutionalized as State policy a hatred of everything Russian, including its culture, language and civilization itself, along with those who embodied it, including Ukrainian citizens. Kyiv called anyone who opposed the unlawful Maidan authorities terrorists, separatists, puppets and inhuman. Intolerance accompanied by violence became the Kyiv regime's calling card. One example was Borys Filatov, a Verkhovna Rada deputy and later mayor of Dnipro, who in March 2014 in his capacity as an official in the Dnipropetrovsk administration said,

"In my opinion, there is nothing terrible in expanding Crimea's autonomy and making Russian one of the official languages. It will help to avoid an escalation of tensions and safeguard Ukraine. [...] We have to give these scum these kinds of promises and guarantees and make whatever concessions are necessary. Then we hang them. We hang them later".

Those were not empty threats either. Suffice it to recall the more than 40 Russian-speaking activists who were burned alive in Odesa in May 2014. The inhabitants of long-suffering Donbas are also well aware of that. In August 2014, the pro-Maidan journalist Bogdan Butkevich called the residents of Donbas "superfluous people." He said,

"Donbas is not just a depressed region. There are a massive number of useless people there. [...] There are about 4 million people in the Donetsk region, and at least one and a half million of them are superfluous."

The story again did not end with calls to "slash the Moskals" and "waste the Russkies" — I apologize for the unsuitable language, but I am quoting. With the support of the West, the Kyiv authorities decided to put those words into action. In 2014, first Oleksandr Turchynov and, subsequently, President Poroshenko, instead of launching a dialogue about the place of Russian culture and language in Ukraine, attacked their own people, the Russian-speaking population of Donbas, ordering air strikes and bombing peaceful

cities. Poroshenko made clear the fate that was in store for the residents of Donbas when he said,

“We will have jobs; they will not. We will have pensions; they will not. We will have support for people, for children and pensioners; they will not. Our children will go to schools and kindergartens; theirs will be sitting in basements. [...] That is how we will win this war”.

With her call to “destroy Moscow”, Iryna Faron, as a member of the Freedom party in the Verkhovna Rada in 2014, stated the main goal of this war:

“This is what we live for and why we came into the world, to destroy Moscow, not just the Moskals on our lands” — meaning Russian-speaking Ukrainian citizens — “but the black hole in European security that should be wiped off the world map.”

Speaking at a concert for fighters in the nationalist battalions participating in Kyiv’s punitive operation against Donbas, then-comedian Volodymyr Zelenskyy cried out in ecstasy, “Guys, hats off to you for protecting us from that scum.” His rhetoric remained the same when he became President, and in November 2021 he declared, in reference to the people of Donbas, “There are representatives of people, but not all representatives of people are human beings — there are other species as well, I believe”. Following in his leader’s footsteps, Mykhailo Podolyak, Adviser to the President of Ukraine, said that the Donetsk and Luhansk People’s Republics are inhabited by “dirty, worthless individuals”, “bandits and tiny dwarfs who are a complete waste of space”. In April 2019, Andrei Reva, Ukraine’s Minister of Social Policy, said about the citizens of Donbas, “I feel no pity whatever for any of them. I feel pity for the soldiers and officers with families who died there for that scum.”

I would like to point out that those are not statements by some kind of marginal radicals. They are members of the country’s senior leadership and prominent politicians. Like their idols in the Third Reich, Ukrainian nationalists see the solution to the Donbas issue as freeing up living space. For example, in May 2019, Semen Semenchenko, a former Verkhovna Rada deputy and participant in the punitive Donbas operations, said, “As I see it, Ukraine needs a strategy for depopulating Donbas”. And once again, that call was not just on paper. It is being implemented by nationalist neo-Nazi groups such as the Azov Battalion, the Aidar Battalion and others when they shell civilian neighbourhoods in Mariupol, Kharkiv

and Severodonetsk, to which there are hundreds and hundreds of witnesses. The only way one can act like that is if one hates the people of Donbas, and Russians generally, with all one’s heart — just like the politicians I mentioned.

The world learned from Petro Poroshenko’s recent revelations that Ukraine never intended to implement the package of measures for implementing the Minsk agreements, which the Council has been trying to achieve for seven years based on its resolution 2202 (2015), but simply used it to gain time to make military preparations against Donbas and Russia. And it did so with the patronage of our Western colleagues, using the time to put together new Russophobic actions and projects, including a totally discriminatory law on the Russian language, the persecution of the Russian-language media and the pursuit and murder of Russian-speaking politicians, journalists and public figures, hundreds of whom have suffered all over Ukraine during the post-Maidan years.

The Ukrainian authorities, encouraged and goaded by our Western colleagues, had no intention of stopping there. On the eve of the start of our special operation, we received reliable information that Kyiv had completed preparations for a new large-scale offensive in Donbas. Those plans were thwarted.

We could speak at length about Ukrainian nationalism and its hateful rhetoric. We decided to save time and prepared a selection of statements by representatives of the official authorities of Ukraine and well-known and popular public figures there. We will distribute them shortly as an official Security Council document so that members can understand what real hate speech is in Ukraine today and how it is used to justify violence against the Russian-speaking population. I will just share some of the most recent Russophobic steps taken by Ukrainian authorities — a ban on receiving an education in Russian, on imports of Russian books and on studying Russian literature, even as foreign literature, in Ukrainian schools and universities. Some members will say that Russia has only itself to blame. However, in the light of what I have already said, those steps look like a logical continuation of the policy that the Ukrainian authorities have consistently followed since the Maidan coup d’état. It is just happening faster now.

In conclusion, I want to underscore that, despite the surge of primitive Russophobia and racism in

Ukraine — behaviour that our African colleagues also experienced as they tried to organize the evacuation of their students during the first few days of our special military operation — our positive attitude to the Ukrainian people, culture and language has not changed. Ukrainians are our brothers and friends. It is just that Ukraine's current leaders have been implementing someone else's geopolitical agenda that is foreign both to us and to the Ukrainian people. Today we heard accusations that we deny the Ukrainian people their identity and want to obliterate Ukraine and cauterize everything Ukrainian. That is absolutely not the case. What we want to cauterize in Ukraine is its burgeoning neo-Nazism and nationalism, which has steadily turned the country into the anti-Russia and into a direct threat to us and the inhabitants of Donbas. And regrettably, our Western colleagues are directly involved in that Ukrainian tragedy. What we are seeing is genuine incitement to violence and Russophobia in Ukraine. Western sponsors pulled the Kyiv negotiations team out of the diplomatic dialogue aimed at finding solutions and began competing with one another to convince themselves and the whole world that a solution could be found only on the field of battle with Russia. The originator of one of those phrases, the European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell, spoke last week in the Council (see S/PV.9065).

Furthermore, the West has been providing Ukraine with weapons, even long-range artillery, for targeted strikes on Donbas and the destruction of the Russian-speaking civilian population. The United States, Austria, Australia, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Türkiye, Sweden and the Baltic countries are not even the entire list of the main suppliers of military equipment, worth billions of dollars, to the Ukrainian regime. Just last week, European and American weaponry aimed at Donbas killed six civilians and injured more than 30. Each of those countries has a direct responsibility for prolonging the Ukrainian crisis and for the death of civilians and Ukrainian soldiers, shoved to the front by corrupt Ukrainian officials as cannon fodder.

Those countries are spending billions on a proxy war with Russia till the last Ukrainian standing, which is in itself a true incitement to violence. They also

pander to rampant Russophobia in their own countries, thereby indulging the Poles, Czechs and Baltic peoples who have participated in that for so long. There are anti-Russian posters in some of their shops and bars saying that they will not serve Russians. How is that different from racism if we replace the word "Russians" with the words "black people" or "Jews"? Why are they so uncomfortable with those kinds of associations but not when it comes to Russians? And if they do not feel that way, why are they supporting the Cancel Russia boycott campaign launched by Ukraine's political technocrats against Russian writers, musicians, artists and sportsmen and women? Is that not hate speech and policy?

Incidentally, we regularly hear that from the representative of the Kyiv regime in Security Council meetings, who with Western countries' support insults our country and our President and spews threats at Russian diplomats. And none of Kyiv's Western supporters restrain him. But however hard they try, the agony of the criminally Russophobic and neo-Nazi Kyiv regime can only be prolonged, not stopped. The regime was doomed in 2014 when it launched its criminal war on its own people. Millions of Ukrainians are waiting to be liberated from it, as the attitude to Russia's army of the people in the liberated territories shows. Our special military operation will be completed and its aims will be fully realized.

**Mr. De Almeida Filho (Brazil):** I thank the briefers for their presentations.

The conflict in Ukraine is well into its fourth month and its humanitarian costs are mounting. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the estimated number of civilian casualties is more than 5,000, including 300 children. More than 4,000 have had severe injuries due to the conflict. The number of soldiers killed in action is estimated at between 25,000 and 30,000. As many as 60,000 soldiers could be wounded, and those are conservative estimates. The actual toll may be much higher.

Deliberate attacks on civilian targets and indiscriminate shelling in densely populated areas are unacceptable, especially in the case of strikes on civilian buildings such as houses, hospitals and schools. The use of explosive weapons in populated areas, such as the city of Mariupol, is also cause for concern. Attacks on infrastructure such as power generators and

water stations can further deprive large segments of the population of basic services. We reiterate our call for the full protection of civilians to be observed by all parties, in accordance with the principles of international humanitarian law of distinction, proportionality, precaution and humanity.

Furthermore, all the parties should be committed to the protection of vulnerable groups, especially women, children, the elderly and people with disabilities. Women and girls in particular face serious risks due to sexual and gender-based violence, as well as the threat of human trafficking. Those crimes are abhorrent and should be firmly repudiated by the international community. The reports of torture, summary executions, forced deportations of civilians and systematic and mass sexual violence, including the rape of children, are worrisome and deserve broad, independent and impartial investigation.

Humanitarian corridors are not being fully protected. While a number of attempts have been made to establish safe passage in order to evacuate civilians fleeing from embattled areas, those corridors have failed due to shelling and bombing. We reiterate our call on all parties to ensure safe, timely and unimpeded access for humanitarian personnel. Nevertheless, we are cognizant that only a nationwide ceasefire will enable the civilian population to be effectively protected. We should bear in mind that nearly one fourth of Ukraine's population has been forcibly displaced since the beginning of the war — a figure that is testimony to the intensity of the conflict and the degree of disruption to normal life that it inflicts on people. Around 7.2 million Ukrainians are now living as refugees in other countries, especially Ukraine's neighbours. Those countries have displayed remarkable solidarity in receiving the refugees, but we should not underestimate the psychological impact of their situation on its victims and in the case of children, on their prospects for the future.

The conflict has worsened the global food crisis, with devastating effects for highly vulnerable people all over the world. The destruction of Ukraine's productive capacities on one hand, and unilateral economic sanctions on the other, have contributed to the surge in food and energy prices. For developing countries in particular, which were still struggling with the socioeconomic consequences of the coronavirus disease pandemic, higher food prices have been a severe blow. In such dire circumstances, it is high time for all the parties involved to seek an avenue for ending this

conflict before more atrocities are committed against the civilians in the region and further humanitarian crises ensue.

**Mr. Biang** (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the Special Adviser, Ms. Alice Nderitu, for her informative briefing, as well as Ms. Liubov Tsybulska and Mr. Jared Andrew Cohen for their contributions to today's debate. I welcome the participation at this meeting of our colleagues the Ambassadors of Ukraine, Lithuania and Slovakia.

A defining characteristic of the wars of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has undoubtedly been the general public's ability, through the use of media, to follow on-the-ground developments in conflicts on a daily basis. Advancements in technology and social media have given us not only the ability to see images in real time but also a near-limitless platform on which to disseminate a cacophony of ideas and points of view, including every kind of hate speech, as well as propaganda and the rewriting reality.

In many ways, the war in Ukraine is a litmus test for new ways in which the international community can assess and deal with armed conflicts. There has undoubtedly been a step forward in that regard, beginning with the Gulf Wars, since which time the general public has had access via television to images of the battlefields and the reality of war — with the fraught challenge of being able to distinguish between information and disinformation. Hate speech, especially via social networks, fuels hostilities, both before conflicts emerge and while they are active. It is clear that those who engage in such rhetoric fuel belligerence, jeopardize the future and undermine the prospects for peace.

We welcome the fact that the International Criminal Court has opened an investigation into crimes committed in Ukraine by all parties to the conflict. In addition, a number of investigative teams have been engaged in Ukraine since the early days of the conflict to gather evidence and document allegations of war crimes. Justice must take its course in a transparent, impartial and independent manner. Those responsible for committing crimes must ultimately be held accountable.

The Security Council has on several occasions addressed the increased risk of displaced civilians — women and children — being trafficked into sexual slavery and illicit labour. We must thoroughly

investigate, without applying pressure or ideologies, the crimes alleged to have been committed, including the crimes of forced adoption and sexual violence against women, girls and boys.

At the same time, the situation of African nationals who are victims of violence, abuse or discrimination should also be taken into account. The extent to which the suffering of its people is recognized will influence the judgement that Africa makes of the sincerity of the paradigm shift in the understanding of war.

Being at war does not nullify the rule of law. Parties to conflicts must respect the international conventions protecting civilians in wartime, especially the Geneva Conventions and their Protocols Additional, as well as the relevant resolutions of the Council. We reiterate that the best way to stop the climate of violence, crimes and atrocities is to prevent or stop all wars from occurring. Having never experienced armed conflict, my country fundamentally opposes war.

We are worried about the many signs pointing to a stalemate in the conflict in Ukraine. We remain convinced that the international community has the means to galvanize the war's major actors to engage in genuine, good-faith discussions to bring about a cessation of hostilities and the prospects for peaceful coexistence. We must urgently curb the humanitarian crisis caused by the war in Ukraine, as well as its wider impact. If we delay further, we could risk seeing more innocent people shot, more civilian infrastructure destroyed, more families shattered and thousands more children orphaned by war.

I would like to conclude by reiterating my country's support for the humanitarian actors who are engaged in the operations on the ground, as well as our deepest sympathy for the people of Ukraine. My country calls for a ceasefire and the opening of humanitarian corridors in all localities in order to provide humanitarian aid in the safest possible way.

**Mr. Dai Bing** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): On 18 June, we marked the first International Day for Countering Hate Speech, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 75/309. Hate speech — the incitement to discrimination, hostility and violence — often leads to political tensions and may even aggravate armed conflict. Regardless of the circumstances, we should condemn and put an end to discrimination and violence against specific countries, ethnic groups and religions; make every effort to dispel hatred, division and distrust;

and advocate a culture of peace underpinned by reason, inclusivity and solidarity.

The conflict in Ukraine has lasted nearly four months. The ever-increasing casualties and displacements are heart-wrenching. International humanitarian law has laid out the boundaries for wartime violence, and all parties to the conflict should earnestly uphold them by ensuring maximum protection for civilians and civilian infrastructure and facilitating evacuation and humanitarian access. The international community and humanitarian agencies should continue to scale up humanitarian aid to the Ukrainian people and spare no effort to mitigate the harm caused by this violent conflict.

The circumstances and causes of any violations of international humanitarian law must be ascertained. Any allegations should be based on facts. Pending the final findings, all parties should avoid unwarranted accusations. Sending in more lethal weapons will only fuel animosity, exacerbate conflicts, trigger a wider humanitarian crisis and claim more innocent lives.

Social media must never become a lawless space in which to spread hatred and incite violence. Certain social media platforms have adapted their policies for political ends, permitting one-way hate speech. Such a practice is extremely dangerous. It is imperative to strengthen Government oversight over social media platforms, which should not be given free rein.

Prolonged and enlarged conflicts bring greater security risks and spillover effects, from which no party can benefit. The members of the international community should work together to de-escalate the situation, defuse the crisis and facilitate peace talks in order to create the conditions for the parties to resume negotiations and achieve a ceasefire without further delay. We advise certain countries to refrain from adding further fuel to the fire to serve their own geopolitical self-interests or forcing other countries to take sides, which intensifies divisions and antagonism within the international community.

As Secretary-General Guterres noted in his speech marking the International Day for Countering Hate Speech,

“[H]ate speech incites violence, undermines diversity and social cohesion and threatens the common values and principles that bind us together”.

Hate speech among countries can also poison the international political climate, to the detriment of world peace and stability.

In the context of the conflict unravelling in Ukraine, antagonism has been permeating the international community for some time, seriously disrupting the work of the United Nations in various areas and calling into question the authority and effectiveness of the Security Council. Such a political climate is not conducive to the proper settlement of the Ukrainian crisis and may lead to the failure of global governance mechanisms, plunging the world into greater division and turmoil, which is not in the interests of any party.

We are all in the same boat. We have a stake in each other's security. The Cold War mentality, the logic of hegemony and bloc politics have long outlived their relevance. We must substitute dialogue for confrontation, consultation for coercion, partnership for alliances and mutual win-win situations for zero-sum games. The Security Council in particular should shoulder its responsibilities, manage differences and be an active force for the facilitation of peace talks, mediation and good offices.

**Ms. Oppong-Ntiri** (Ghana): At the outset, I would like to thank Ms. Nderitu for her briefing to the Security Council. Incitement to violence is a major concern, as it invariably leads to atrocity crimes. In the case of the war in Ukraine, it is important that we remain alert to such risks before the nature of the conflict becomes even more horrible than what we are dealing with at present. We also thank the civil society briefers for their contributions to the Council's discussions.

While reiterating our deep concerns about the protraction of the war in Ukraine, as well as the needless loss of lives and destruction of livelihoods and properties, Ghana is equally alarmed by the acerbic rhetoric and narratives that have accompanied segments of the war in Ukraine. No country or leader can claim to be unaware of the dangers of unrestrained words spoken in anger or with hatred.

Throughout history, including during the Second World War, in Rwanda in April 1994, in Bosnia and Herzegovina in July 1995 or in other parts of the world, such as Myanmar, we have often witnessed the calamitous and tragic consequences of deliberate actions that incite one group of people against another. Indeed, such actions, born of one group's false feeling of superiority over others, has been the bane of our

common human existence throughout the ages. Whether during the eras of slavery, colonialism or apartheid, that false feeling has been the main propeller that evil men have used to manipulate their kind to commit atrocities against others.

In the pursuit of its fundamental responsibility to promote and maintain international peace and security, the Council must therefore remain vigilant to incitement and hate speech, which have a tendency to instigate or intensify the commission of atrocity crimes. We must act in unison to uphold our promise of "never again" to people everywhere — and most pressingly to the people of Ukraine.

The killing of tens of thousands of innocent civilians in Bucha, Irpin, Mariupol and several other cities, as well as the emerging evidence of mass graves and systemic and gross violations of human rights in Ukraine, including gender-based sexual violence against women and girls, are intolerable acts that should galvanize us to take serious action in order to prevent further atrocities and seek accountability for the atrocity crimes that are being committed.

In that regard, Ghana expresses its support for the conduct of independent and impartial investigations to gather evidence and establish a basis for ensuring accountability for any atrocity acts established to have been committed in Ukraine under the guise of war. Accountability is a critical element of deterrence. Universal jurisdiction for the prosecution of almost all atrocity crimes means that none can escape justice, regardless of the limitations that appear to exist within institutions of international justice.

We are concerned by the intensified fighting in Severodonetsk, which poses a humanitarian threat as more civilians come under the barrage of crossfire and are forced to flee their homes or shelter in bunkers, with limited access to food, clean water and basic needs.

We reiterate the fundamental importance for the warring sides to conduct themselves in accordance with the requirements of international law and international humanitarian law as it relates to the treatment of civilians. We urge them to take due steps for the protection of civilians, humanitarian aid workers and civilian infrastructure. We continue to call for the creation of, and respect for, humanitarian corridors for the safe passage of civilians escaping from the cities under siege and the delivery of humanitarian aid and assistance.



The need for a peaceful resolution is urgent and can be attained only by following the path of dialogue and diplomacy. In that regard, we urge greater efforts on the part of the global community and regional partners in support of the resumption of talks between the parties, which have stalled since March. Ending the war now is crucial, both for preserving the lives of the Ukrainian people and mitigating the conflict's wider ramifications, which have visited economic hardships on other parts of the world away from the theatre of war.

In conclusion, we believe that nothing justifies the commission of atrocities. In that vein, we strongly urge for the tempering of rhetoric and hateful narratives that stoke an atmosphere of deep resentment and instigate the commission of violent acts against others. Ghana reaffirms its support for the sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine and expresses its commitment to working with all others to find an early end to the war and restore peace and stability in Ukraine.

**Mr. Ragutthalli** (India): Let me begin by thanking the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Ms. Alice Nderitu, as well as the civil society representatives, for their respective briefings.

Incitement to violence destroys peace, tolerance and harmony. India has always believed that societies that are based on the principles of democracy and pluralism create an environment that enables diverse communities to live together. The legitimate exercise of the right to the freedom of opinion and expression within a constitutional framework plays an important and positive role in strengthening democracy, promoting pluralism and combating intolerance.

There can also be no doubt that terrorism targets all religions and cultures. We need to collectively combat both radicalization and terrorism. The United Nations has the responsibility to ensure that the countering of hate speech and discrimination is not limited to a select few religions and communities, but rather encompasses all those affected.

The Ukraine conflict has impacted not only Europe but the entire world. Its destabilizing effect has broader regional and global implications. India continues to remain deeply concerned about the worsening situation in Ukraine and reiterates its call for the immediate cessation of violence and an end to hostilities. We support all diplomatic efforts to end the conflict, especially talks between Ukraine and the

Russian Federation. As we have said before, we endorse the call by the Secretary-General for an independent investigation into atrocities in Ukraine.

The increasing fuel prices and shortage of food grains and fertilizers are having a disproportionate impact, particularly on developing countries. In that context, it is necessary for all of us to adequately appreciate the importance of equity, affordability and accessibility when it comes to food grains. Open markets must not become an argument for perpetuating inequity and promoting discrimination.

India is committed to working constructively to mitigate the adverse impact of the conflict on food security. We have been providing financial assistance and supplying food grains to neighbouring countries that are facing the consequences of the Ukraine conflict.

Let me conclude by reaffirming that the contemporary global order was built on the Charter of the United Nations, international law, and respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States.

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

I now give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

**Mr. Kyslytsya** (Ukraine): As I address the members of the Security Council today, as usual, I also recognize the representative of Putin's regime, occupying the permanent seat of the Soviet Union. Putin's Ambassador has again taken advantage of that seat to shift responsibility for the war onto everyone but Russia. I have already drawn attention more than once in the Chamber to Russia's widely used tactic of aggressive mimicry, whereby a predator gains an advantage by presenting itself as a victim. Such a dynamic is akin to victim blaming, whereby a rapist blames the victim for provoking them to commit their crime.

Putin's envoy follows the example of his boss, Minister Lavrov, who uses the same tactic when claiming that Russia has not invaded Ukraine and that it declared a military operation because it "had absolutely no other way of explaining to the West that dragging Ukraine into NATO was a criminal act". That is indeed quite a confession, and it is now on the record. Aggressive mimicry is a common defensive tactic of

criminals. A rather useless tactic, as Putin's envoy will understand once he takes another seat — on the bench of a future tribunal for Russian war criminals.

My statement today will not be brief, owing to the complexity of the issue. The information brought to our attention has again proved that there is no other option for ending this war than to bring the aggressor to account, just as Nazis were brought to account in Nuremberg. The materials of the Nuremberg trials contain a thorough examination into the genesis of Nazism and its deadly nature. I believe that future trials will provide us with equally comprehensive answers as to how Russia turned into an aggressive and inhumane regime.

But let me now remind the Council of some important milestones, including with respect to the incitement to violence. The obsessive desire of Russia's leadership and army generals with killing and destruction did not appear out of nowhere. Since the 1990s, Russian politicians and media have developed their warmongering rhetoric and hate speech, which are flavoured with imperial sentiments.

To paraphrase Benito Mussolini, the press of Russia is free, freer than the press of any other country, so long as it supports the regime. Russia's main targets may have changed from time to time, but its focus has always been on democratic nations and nearly every one of its neighbours. That was the case for Mussolini, and it is also the case for Putin. Both dictators hoped that eventually their ideology would spread far beyond Europe and penetrate into America.

Unfortunately, the world overlooked that dangerous trend, which can only encourage Russia to consolidate its aggressive propaganda. Moreover, the Kremlin received so much proof over 30 years of the world's de facto apathy towards Russia's violations and subsequently of its impunity for them that it was only a matter of time before it launched a full-fledged war.

It was an event held in this very Chamber in December 1991 that triggered the sequence of tragic events to follow. The meeting on the last day before Christmas Eve (see S/PV.3024) having been adjourned by the President of the Council, Soviet Ambassador Vorontsov, lo and behold, the following meeting (see S/PV.3025) was opened by the very same person but as a representative of another country — the Russian Federation.

It was a country that was at that moment absent from the Charter of the United Nations and the list of the Organization's membership in general. There was no vote in the Security Council. There was no vote in the General Assembly. There was no formal decision of any body — and not because of the Christmas break. President Yeltsin simply notified the United Nations of his decision, and someone accepted it for executive purposes, with no public debate or vote.

In December 1994, Russia launched the war in Chechnya. The city of Grozny was razed to the ground — as many Ukrainian cities have been today — and not without the participation of Akhmad Kadyrov's thugs. The number of casualties among the civilian population in Chechnya reached tens of thousands, reaching as high as 80,000 to 100,000 according to Alexander Lebed, then Secretary of Russia's own National Security Council. And what happened in response to Russia's cruelty and barbarism in Chechnya? After taking a short face-saving pause, the Council of Europe, which was designed as a stronghold if not a temple of human rights, invited Russia to become a member, which it subsequently did.

In 1991, at the behest of its, President Russia imposed itself in the Security Council, and five years later another Council — the Council of Europe — invited the blood-soaked Russian regime to join its club. And that is not all — everyone should brace themselves for more. As if to humiliate the Helsinki Final Act, at their meeting held in the Finnish capital in 2019 the Ministers of the Council of Europe decided to return Russia's voting rights in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. That was incitement to violence — was it not? The clock had been ticking, the imminent full-scale invasion of Ukraine was closer and closer, and yet appeasement remained the script.

Two decades before, in 1999 at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) summit held in Istanbul, Russia made a commitment to withdraw its troops from Moldova and Georgia. As always, the Russian commitments turned out to be merely empty promises. Today, 23 years after that summit, Russian troops are still deployed in Transnistria, Moldova. The world also failed to respond adequately to Russia's aggression against Georgia in 2008. And that time it was not because of a Christmas break — Europe merely went on summer holidays in August — and by the time officials came back to their offices, including in the

OSCE, it was already a new reality for many, and they carried on with their business.

The attempted annexation of Crimea six years later and the conflict in Donbas are a logical progression of Russia's strategies aimed at undermining international law and the rules-based order. Those events, too, failed to become a turning point for the world's relations with Russia, as did Russia's war crimes in Syria. Instead, intoxicated by the illusion of business as usual, the world continued to believe that the most efficient way to bring Russia back onto the track of normalcy was complacency, while Minister Lavrov literally laughed in the face of his Western colleague in Geneva when the word "reset" in the term "reset button" was erroneously translated as "overcharge". Less than one year later, Russia invaded Georgia. The Nord Stream 2 pipeline deserves a separate chapter in this saga of addictive gas rapprochement with the Kremlin dictator.

Those developments have inevitably led Russia to its current standing as an aggressive, fascist State with no limits to its criminal behaviour. One can find the conclusions of many scholars on the matter, including those of Timothy Snyder, a well-known historian and professor at Yale University, who recently described the criteria of fascism, which today's Russia meets.

It has a cult around a single leader. It has a cult of the dead, organized around the Second World War. It also has a myth of a past golden age of imperial greatness, to be restored by a war of healing violence — the murderous war on Ukraine. Fascist aesthetics are easily traceable in the promotion of the "Z" symbol, the organization of mass rallies, the consolidation of war propaganda and the incitement of hatred towards Ukraine and Ukrainians.

The theft of Ukrainian resources from the occupied territories and attempts to annex those territories demonstrate that imperial and neocolonial-style thinking is a guiding principle in the Kremlin's policy on the international stage. We should not be deceived by Russia's anti-fascist and anti-Nazi rhetoric. It is just another manifestation of the aggressive mimicry that has extended further, with Russia labelling Ukrainians as neo-Nazis in order to dehumanize them and make them a legitimate target for Russian soldiers.

Meanwhile, Putin wants more territories, comparing himself to the eighteenth-century Russian Czar Peter. Speaking about newly independent countries, Putin

said "[I]t is also our lot to return", claiming "basic values" that "form the basis of [Russian] existence".

My question is, where will a regime proclaiming three-century-old imperial ambitions as its basic values stop? In identifying himself with the Russian Czar, Putin does more than raise questions concerning his mental state. The dictator publicly speaks of his determination to act and behave as an eighteenth-century ruler. And we preach to him with quotes from the United Nations Charter. Seriously?

As Ukraine is bleeding, fighting for its right to exist, there is no place for the dilemma of appeasement versus accountability. Opting for appeasement would only put the darkest times ahead of us. Russia will stop at nothing in its invasion of Ukraine and use any pause to make newly occupied territories its strongholds and gather more cannon fodder to renew its attacks on Ukraine.

I find it preposterous that some politicians invite Ukraine to consider calls for concessions to Moscow, in a country whose Secretary of State, Mr. Henry Kissinger, half a century ago advised his President that, "if they put Jews into gas chambers in the Soviet Union, it is not an American concern". Today some pundits of the same school believe that the tens of thousands of Ukrainians killed by the dictator in Moscow are not a concern. That is the art of diplomacy, is it not? Or is it the art of incitement? Mr. Kissinger's family literally fled fascism, Nazism and most probably gas chambers in Europe, when it was about to be invaded by Hitler, and now he pushes us to be strangled by "Putler" and someone dares advise us to listen to him?

It therefore came as no surprise that today's review in *The Guardian* of London of yet another bestseller by a stupendous liar with a remarkable memory finishes with a reminder that to his critics he will always be the man who told Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet that he was sympathetic with what he was trying to do. Just one week ago, Putin claimed that the former Soviet Union was historical Russia. What is next? Will it be a request from Putin's envoy to swap nameplates again in the Chamber — this time from "Russian Federation" to "Soviet Union"? After all, it would be in total compliance with the Charter as it stands — since the Soviet Union is still in it. Is it not?

Predators attack those who are or appear to be weaker, and after such attacks they may develop a taste for human blood and become serial killers. Russia's

conversion into an aggressive fascist regime has already been demonstrated by its inability to refrain from attacking those it considers to be weak prey. It must be stopped by all of us — the sooner the better.

Ukraine, which is now on the front line, has the necessary will of its leadership, the resoluteness and the bravery of its army and its people and unprecedented international solidarity. If we let Putin or his successor on the Kremlin throne regrow their chopped-back claws soaked in the blood of Ukrainians, the next war will be imminent — and the civilized world will pay three times the price of what is being paid today. Let us finish off Russian fascism now.

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

**Mr. Paulauskas (Lithuania):** I deliver this statement on behalf of the three Baltic States — Estonia, Latvia and my own State, Lithuania. I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this timely meeting. I also thank the briefers for the information they provided on this very important topic.

We support all the United Nations efforts to take prompt and effective action in response to situations in which populations are at risk of atrocities or crimes are being committed. States have the responsibility to address and counter incitement to violence and mitigate the risk of atrocity crimes.

Unfortunately, today we are witnessing Russia's unprovoked, large-scale military aggression against the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of the democratic State of Ukraine, with the support of the co-aggressor, Belarus. For years, Ukraine has been among the key targets of pro-Kremlin disinformation, which attempts to build justification for the Russian invasion.

Furthermore, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has been guided by Russia's highest officials, along with the use by the Kremlin-owned and Kremlin-controlled media of radical and toxic language to describe Ukraine and Ukrainians, leading to atrocities committed by Russian forces and their toleration by Russian society.

High-level Russian officials and State media commentators have repeatedly denied the existence of a distinct Ukrainian identity. A range of false narratives have been employed that imply that those who identify themselves as Ukrainians threaten the unity of Russia

or are Nazis, and are therefore deserving of punishment or even elimination.

President Putin and Russian officials have been employing so-called mirroring tactics by accusing their victims of the very crimes they themselves are committing. False claims have been made that Ukraine had committed genocide or exterminated the civilian population in Russian-backed separatist-controlled areas, which was used as a pretext for invading Ukraine. Russian officials and State media have repeatedly invoked denazification as one of the main goals of the war that Russia has been waging against Ukraine.

Russia's authorities have not only denied the atrocities committed by its forces but also rewarded the soldiers suspected of mass killings in Ukraine, enabling soldiers to commit — and Russian society to condone — further atrocities, including mass executions; the killing of civilians; the shelling of residential areas, hospitals and kindergartens; the use of prohibited weapons; the destruction of critical infrastructure; sexual violence; the use of rape and torture as weapons of war; and forced deportations of civilians, including Ukrainian children, to Russia.

All those atrocities display clear signs of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. We condemn those crimes in the strongest terms and urge Russia to immediately and unconditionally withdraw all its troops and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

Russia's bellicose rhetoric unveils its true imperialistic intentions. If there is no clear and strong international response to stop it, the aggression against Ukraine will be just the beginning. The Kremlin talks openly about land grabs and threatens to take back the territories of neighbouring countries. Russian authorities are directly inciting the public by funnelling and amplifying their propaganda through a controlled media and extreme censorship around the war. Highly influential political, religious and State-run media figures are used for propaganda and incitement to violence.

The audience of Russian propaganda is twofold: Russian society and the global audience. The messages to Russian society seek to increase the hatred towards other nations, inviting and justifying violence and aggression. The independent media, journalists and media workers in Russia and Russian society are left

in the abyss of the Russian propaganda, owing to heavy repression and the crackdown on civil society.

Russia's information manipulation and interference also has global effects. Russia's aggression has been causing growing food insecurity in the world. Cynically, such actions are also accompanied by a global disinformation campaign that aims to deflect attention from Russia's responsibility for destabilizing food markets and undermining global support for Ukraine. It is important that we set the facts straight: it is the Russian blockade of Ukrainian ports and the Russian shelling of arable land and food storage sites in Ukraine — and not the Western sanctions — that are causing the food shortages.

Let me reiterate that, amid that despicable war, we stand in solidarity with Ukraine. The Baltic countries will continue to provide strong support to Ukraine, including humanitarian and other material support, to withstand Russia's aggression.

Those who incite and commit atrocity crimes in Ukraine must and will be held accountable. We will continue to engage in accountability mechanisms to address the mass atrocities being committed in Ukraine.

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

**Mr. Mlynár (Slovakia):** At the outset, I would like to thank the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, Ms. Alice Wairimu Nderitu, as well as the representatives of civil society for their valuable briefings.

This is indeed a good opportunity for us to refocus our attention on the issue of atrocity crimes in particular.

The Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes contains explicit references to the incitement to violence, discrimination, intolerance and hatred as a common risk factor of atrocity crimes, as well as a specific risk factor related to crimes against humanity, genocide and war crimes. Sadly, looking at the situation in Ukraine since 2014, and particularly in 2022, all those risks have been massively present in the rhetoric of Putin's regime. Even more sadly, the Russian State-orchestrated incitement led to numerous horrific crimes committed in Ukraine, with heinous pictures of mass killings, mass graves and other atrocity reports coming from various places across Ukraine.

Moreover, awarding the soldiers who might be directly responsible for international crimes committed in Bucha and other Ukrainian villages is not only a mockery of the innocent victims but also a striking endorsement by Russia of the culture of impunity.

Slovakia has been gravely concerned by the Russian war propaganda defending its unjustified and unprovoked aggression against Ukraine under the false pretexts of "de-Nazification" and the genocide or extermination of the civilian population in Russia-backed separatist regions allegedly committed by Ukraine.

Those false pretexts significantly resemble the patterns we have seen in the past, which also included so-called accusation in a mirror tactics and the framing of targeted groups as an existential threat in order to justify the atrocities and portray the war as defensive and inevitable. What we are witnessing now in Ukraine is similar rhetoric and, very sadly, similar conduct by Putin's regime, amplified by its constant denial of Ukraine as a sovereign nation and an independent State.

That is simply unacceptable and a blatant contradiction of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, Russia's obligations under article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and article III of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, if genocidal intent is proven. Needless to say, incitement to war crimes or crimes against humanity is equally punishable under customary international law.

In the context of the alleged genocide committed by Ukraine advanced by Russia as a false pretext for its invasion, Slovakia recalls the legally binding decision of the International Court of Justice of 16 March and strongly urges Russia to comply with the provisional measures ordered therein.

The incitement to violence that I have just described has since 24 February evolved into the commission of atrocities in Ukraine on an almost daily basis. Justice for those crimes must be served. As a neighbouring country that has accepted hundreds of thousands of refugees from Ukraine, among whom are potential witnesses and victims of atrocities, Slovakia has therefore contributed actively and in the best possible spirit to efforts to properly investigate and prosecute the perpetrators of the crimes committed in Ukraine at the national, bilateral and regional levels, as well as at the international level.

Just to provide a few brief examples, Slovak authorities have launched national investigations into the crimes against humanity and war crimes allegedly committed in Ukraine. We sent our experts to assist Ukrainian investigation efforts. We became part of the joint investigative team set up with the support of the European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation. And we joined other States in referring the situation in Ukraine to the International Criminal Court.

Slovakia also supports other initiatives aimed at finding facts and investigating international crimes and

human rights violations in Ukraine, as well as proper coordination among all of them. We have been steady in our firm stance against the culture of impunity for such crimes in Ukraine, as well as in other parts of the world, no matter by whom they are perpetrated, and we will remain firm in that regard.

Last but not least, allow me to reiterate our calls for an immediate cessation of Russian military activities in Ukraine and the unconditional withdrawal of all Russian troops from the whole territory of Ukraine.

*The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.*