



Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

9286th meeting

Friday, 17 March 2023, 3 p.m.

New York

Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Afonso	(Mozambique)
<i>Members:</i>	Albania	Mr. Hoxha
	Brazil	Mr. De Almeida Filho
	China	Mr. Geng Shuang
	Ecuador	Mr. Montalvo Sosa
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Gabon	Ms. Koumby Missambo
	Ghana	Mr. Boateng
	Japan	Mrs. Shino
	Malta	Mrs. Frazier
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Switzerland	Mrs. Baeriswyl
	United Arab Emirates	Mrs. Nusseibeh
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Kariuki
	United States of America	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield

Agenda

Maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine

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The meeting was called to order at 3.55 p.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 Denmark, Lithuania and Ukraine to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Martin Griffiths, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I propose to invite Ms. Daria Morozova to participate in this meeting.

Would any member like to comment on this proposal?

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): The United States requests a procedural vote on the participation of Ms. Morozova as a proposed briefer for this meeting. We regret having to call this vote, given that the majority of Council members already expressed serious concerns to the presidency yesterday and today.

Let me be clear, the United States strongly supports civil society briefers who can share their relevant experience and expertise with the Council. The perspectives of civil society participants are essential, and they enrich this Council's discussion.

However, we must note that a certain Council member proposed the addition of Ms. Morozova as "an ombudsperson of the Donetsk People's Republic". Following the Russian Federation's attempt last year to illegally annex Ukraine's internationally recognized territory, the General Assembly overwhelmingly adopted resolution ES-11/4. That resolution specifically called on all States and international organizations to not recognize any alteration of the status of the Donetsk region of Ukraine and to refrain from any dealings that might be interpreted as recognizing any such altered status.

Consistent with that General Assembly resolution, it is not appropriate for the Council to invite, in any

capacity, someone who purports to be the ombudsperson of the so-called Donetsk People's Republic. The invitation to that specific person is a blatant and transparent attempt to have the Council appear to legitimize the Russian Federation's illegal attempt at annexation and to implicitly extend recognition to illegitimate authorities. Simply removing references to their positions or titles does not alter that fact. Council members can and should draw their own conclusions about any attempts to draw reductionist parallels to other incomparable situations.

We regret that a procedural vote is necessary. We call on all Council members to act consistent with the relevant General Assembly resolutions and not support the proposed briefer's participation in the meeting today. The United States will not support any attempt to legitimize the Russian Federation's illegal attempted annexation of another United Nations Member State's territory and will therefore vote "no", and we urge others to do the same.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We insist on the participation of the briefer we have proposed to invite to today's meeting. Our delegation introduced the proposal to invite Ms. Daria Morozova based on the sole consideration of giving the Security Council an opportunity to receive first-hand information about the catastrophic humanitarian situation in the region of Donbas, which is inextricably linked to the humanitarian situation in Ukraine. Since 2014, the residents of Donbas have been forced to survive shelling by the Ukrainian armed forces, enduring such deprivation in the absence of any reaction whatsoever on the part of the international community. Our Western colleagues have scrupulously sidestepped that issue, in line with their policy to whitewash any crimes by Kyiv, regardless of how heinous they may be.

The briefer we proposed is a native of Donbas who has lived her entire life in that region and since 2014 has been engaged in active humanitarian work, helping those fellow countrymen and women who have suffered from Kyiv's aggression. She has been engaged in prisoner exchanges and previously participated in the work of the Trilateral Contact Group on the implementation of the Minsk agreements, among other things. Her experience and expertise are unique. Daria Morozova engages with ordinary people in Donbas on a daily basis and is willing to share her observations, which would give the Council an overview of the real situation on the ground. We believe that our briefer fully meets the

criteria set out in rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure. We propose that she be heard in her personal capacity as a humanitarian activist.

We call on the members of the Council to support the proposal to invite Ms. Daria Morozova to participate as a briefer in today's meeting. Contrary to the assertions made by Western delegations, members' support will in no way imply a recognition of any international legal realities whatsoever — those issues are completely unrelated. This is also a matter of freedom of speech. At the moment, we are talking merely about the invitation of a competent briefer to further advise the Council on the humanitarian situation, in line with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure. Otherwise, today's meeting will become yet another one-sided Western event that ignores the root causes of the Ukraine crisis.

Mr. Hoxha (Albania): The purpose of today's meeting is to draw the attention of the Security Council to the dire humanitarian situation in Ukraine caused by Russia's aggression and flagrant transgression of international law. Three General Assembly resolutions (resolutions ES-11/1, ES-11/2 and ES-11/4), adopted by an overwhelming majority of Member States, have made it clear that the Russian Federation is in blatant violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international law and is responsible for the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine and beyond, and that Russia should withdraw from Ukraine and respect its sovereignty and territorial integrity. The arrest warrant issued today by the International Criminal Court against Russia's Commander-in-Chief only affirms that responsibility. It is clear once again that with its attitude today, the Russian Federation is trying to do what it does best — divert the focus away from the issues at hand and refrain from taking responsibility by creating a smokescreen. That is yet another deplorable attempt to misuse the Council for narrow interests other than the *raison d'être* of this organ.

Furthermore, in extending such an invitation Russia is rubbing salt into the wound by inviting a representative of the so-called Donetsk people's republic in a desperate attempt to legitimize what can never be legitimized — the invasion and annexation by force of a territory of another sovereign country. While reaffirming our unwavering commitment to giving unhindered access to civil society briefers in the work of the Council, we reiterate our position that the Russian Federation's attitude is a deviation from that

principle. To allow the participation of an illegal entity in a Council meeting would set a dangerous precedent. We therefore do not consider the briefer proposed by the Russian Federation to be competent to the purpose at hand, as stipulated in rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure. Albania therefore opposes extending an invitation by the Council to the additional briefer proposed by the Russian Federation, and we kindly ask the other Member States of the Council to do the same — vote "no".

The President: In the light of the comments made by Council members, I propose to put to the vote the proposal, under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, to extend an invitation to Ms. Daria Morozova to brief the Security Council under the agenda item "Maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine".

I shall now put the proposal to the vote.

The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation): Could you please, Mr. President, specify which word — "yes" or "no" — means what?

The President: Those in favour of the proposal to extend an invitation to Ms. Daria Morozova will vote "yes". Those against extending an invitation to Ms. Daria Morozova will vote "no". Those abstaining will abstain. If that is clear, we shall proceed.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Brazil, China, Ghana, Russian Federation

Against:

Albania, Ecuador, France, Japan, Malta, Switzerland, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

Abstaining:

Gabon, Mozambique, United Arab Emirates

The President: The proposal received 4 votes in favour, 8 against and 3 abstentions. Having failed to obtain the required number of votes, the proposal to invite Ms. Daria Morozova to participate in the meeting has been rejected.

The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We deplore the fact that a number of delegations today voted against our proposed briefer. We see it as a display of egregious hypocrisy and double standards when representatives of Donbas, which for nine years has suffered thanks to the war unleashed on it by Kyiv, are denied the right to address the Security Council on far-fetched pretexts. It only confirms the fact that these members do not consider the residents of Donbas to be human beings and do not give a damn about their suffering. Our Western colleagues are afraid that if the voices of truth make themselves heard, all their efforts to whitewash their clients in Kyiv will be in vain. In attempting to avoid that they resort to procedural tricks in a petty, unscrupulous game. To be frank, it looks disgraceful.

I want to underscore that we have never stooped that low. We did not object when our Western colleagues proposed a briefer for the meeting that we convened on Russophobia (see S/PV.9280), even though his so-called briefing was a pack of lies and traditional Western narratives and the upshot was that he did not contribute constructively to the discussion in any way. What has happened today with Ms. Morozova is reason for us to think about how we should consider our colleagues' requests under rule 39 in future. Our United States colleague said that hearing briefers from unrecognized territories is unacceptable and constitutes a violation of Council resolutions. However, in that case, inviting representatives of Kosovo to the Council, for example, constitutes a clear violation of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). We will take our American colleagues' principled position on the matter into consideration, because otherwise we will see yet more double standards from the United States.

We regret that the Council's work has once again been taken hostage by the unscrupulous conduct of Western delegations openly seeking to advance their own opportunistic interests.

The President: The representative of Albania has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Hoxha (Albania): I will be very brief. I regret having to take the floor again, but after hearing what the Russian delegation had to say, I want to set the record straight, because this is very important.

Comparing two realities that have absolutely nothing in common is an entirely artificial exercise. The Republic of Kosovo and the prefabricated so-

called Donetsk republic, a territory of Ukraine that has been illegally annexed by Russia, have absolutely nothing in common. Regrettably, it is not the first time we have heard such comparisons, but desperate times call for desperate measures. Need I remind our Russian colleagues that the International Court of Justice issued an advisory opinion stating that the Kosovo declaration of independence, adopted in 2008, did not violate international law? That very same world court issued another opinion in March last year, and we know why. Need I remind our Russian colleagues that Kosovo's international recognition is well established, including among many around this table, while the so-called Donetsk and Luhansk peoples' republics are territories annexed by force and exist only in Russia's plans and dreams?

Finally, I do not need to remind our Russian colleagues that Kosovo and Serbia come here together and negotiate to find mutually agreed solutions to common problems, not with bombs and war but with words and dialogue. That is another big difference.

The President: The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): After listening to that passionate statement by our Albanian colleague regarding the presence of Serbia during meetings under resolution 1244 (1999), I wish to state that we have nothing against that. However, I would like to ask him a question, and perhaps he will venture to respond to it here in this Chamber, which is whether he views Kosovo as a territory recognized by the United Nations.

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Olaf Skoog, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

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

I give the floor to Mr. Griffiths.

Mr. Griffiths: When I spoke to the Council about the situation in Ukraine last month (see S/PV.9254), I highlighted the humanitarian impact of the full-scale war since it began a year ago. I spoke then of the death, destruction and hardship that the war has inflicted and continues to inflict on the people of

Ukraine. I shared facts about the resulting casualties; the families bereaved; the homeless and the destitute, with two out of every five people in Ukraine in need of assistance to survive; and the people forced to flee, including more than 8 million refugees displaced to neighbouring countries.

Today, if you allow me, Mr. President, I want to focus on the reverberations of this war around the world, a world already reeling before the war began in February last year from multiple shocks — hunger, conflict, the coronavirus disease, the climate emergency and the cost-of-living crisis. The war has had very significant implications for global food insecurity. As we all know, both the Russian Federation and Ukraine are leading suppliers of key food commodities. In addition, the Russian Federation is also a top exporter of fertilizer. The world relies on those supplies and has done so for many years — and so does the United Nations in providing help for those in need. The World Food Programme (WFP) sources much of the wheat for the global humanitarian response each year from Ukraine. Last February, when shipping operations were suspended from Ukrainian ports in the Black Sea, the ripple effects were immediate. By March, following uninterrupted increases dating from the second half of 2020, global food prices had reached record highs. The price of fertilizer has been impacted greatly and still remains more than 200 times higher than it was in 2019. In lower-income countries, some small farmers found themselves priced out of the market.

Reversing those trends, as we may all remember, was a matter of urgency for the international community — hence the Black Sea Grain Initiative and the parallel memorandum of understanding between the Russian Federation and the United Nations on the facilitation in that second agreement of Russian food and fertilizer exports. The signing of those agreements was a critical step in the broader fight against global food insecurity, especially in developing countries. As a result, markets have been calmed and global food prices have indeed continued to fall. Under the Black Sea Grain Initiative, close to 25 million metric tons of foodstuffs have been safely exported from Ukraine without incident since August. The World Food Programme has been able to transport more than half a million metric tons of wheat to support humanitarian operations in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Yemen. And right now, under the leadership of our Secretary-General, the United Nations is doing

everything possible to make sure that the Black Sea Grain Initiative can continue. We continue to engage closely with all parties. This week, foodstuffs have continued to be transported out of Ukraine through the maritime humanitarian corridors, under the oversight of the Joint Coordination Centre in Istanbul.

With regard to the parallel memorandum of understanding with the Russian Federation, my colleague the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Rebeca Grynspan Mayufis, and the Secretary-General of the United Nations are together sparing no effort to facilitate its full implementation. We have indeed made meaningful progress. Impediments remain, however, notably with regard to payment systems. There is more to do, and our efforts to overcome those remaining impediments will continue unabated. It is vital for global food security that both of those agreements continue and that they be fully implemented.

The world faces an unstable global economy. Poverty is growing. And when we look at where we want to be — the targets we set out in the Sustainable Development Goals — it is very clear that we are a long way off track. The scale of humanitarian needs, as discussed frequently in this Chamber, has vastly outpaced the resources available to meet those needs. Globally, almost 347 million people in 69 countries need humanitarian aid, a statistic so dire that it hardly bears repetition. An unprecedented \$54 billion is required this year to meet those needs, and millions will suffer if we fail to raise that amount. In 2022, Member States made significant financial efforts to meet the growth in needs as total humanitarian funding — thanks to the generosity of many Member States — reached a historic high of just under \$39 billion. We cannot be certain if that level of financing can be achieved again this year, yet it is clear that we need even more support than that — from Member States, from the public, from a generous humankind — so that we can deliver on our most sacred promise to protect the vulnerable and provide a future for them and their families.

We also need closer collaboration between the humanitarian and development communities and the international financial institutions. Together, we must seek sustainable solutions in order to provide the basic services that can be relied on by families across nations — sustainable solutions to the problems before us, to those spiralling humanitarian needs to which I have referred, to the debt crisis, and to the convergence

of other problems on the horizon. To name just one example, Somalia — of which we have often spoken in this Chamber — faces the extraordinary, unprecedented and tragic sixth consecutive failure of the rainy season. More than ever, in this context, we need a political solution to the war in Ukraine. The people of Ukraine deserve peace, first and foremost. They deserve to turn the page on this terrible war, as we all do.

The President: I thank Mr. Griffiths for his briefing.

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

Mr. Montalvo Sosa (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Before addressing the substantive topic of today's meeting, I would like to make it clear that Ecuador voted against the proposal to include Ms. Morozova as a third briefer, based on the original request of the Russian Federation to have her participate in an institutional capacity on behalf of a self-declared people's republic that my country does not and will never recognize. Moreover, with its vote, Ecuador facilitated the implementation of General Assembly resolution ES-11/4, which was adopted at its eleventh emergency special session, convened pursuant to Security Council resolution 2623 (2022) of 27 February 2022. Ecuador's vote is without prejudice to our position of openness towards the inclusion of diverse speakers from interested delegations, regardless of their origin or political position and, of course, from whatever territory under full or partial occupation.

I thank Mr. Martin Griffiths, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, for his briefing. I am also grateful for the invaluable work of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and its team on the ground.

On 6 February, at the briefing on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine (see S/PV.9254), Ecuador concluded its statement by acknowledging the contribution of the Black Sea Grain Initiative to alleviating the global impacts of food insecurity. On that occasion, we called on the Council to reiterate its support for the work of the Secretary-General and to give it effective expression. We believe that the Initiative's renewal and implementation should be automatic and unimpeded.

Today, 24 hours before the 120-day deadline for the extension of the agreement, I would like to focus on this central point, echoing Secretary-General António Guterres, who considers the Grain Initiative

to be a beacon of hope, possibility and relief. At the 17 March 2022 meeting (see S/PV.8998), exactly one year ago, Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo warned of the impacts that the conflict was already having on the world and, most severely, on the poor, having disrupted supply chains and driven the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Food Price Index to its highest levels. As host of the FAO Regional Conference held in Quito in March last year, Ecuador can confirm that, then and now, the impact of this war — beyond the borders of the country under attack — remains a major concern for Latin America and the Caribbean.

While grain exports alone do not constitute food aid operations, they continue to play a vital role in alleviating food insecurity and, thus, in the humanitarian situation in several regions of the world. Within this tragic war, the implementation of the Grain Initiative has worked to save millions of lives from hunger, particularly in the most fragile areas, by stabilizing prices, as has been repeatedly confirmed by the FAO and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

To this we must add the impact it has in terms of World Food Programme (WFP) operations, with benefits for girls and boys in Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia and Ethiopia, to mention but a few examples. That must not stop, and WFP's capacities must not be adversely affected. We know that in the coming days, three WFP vessels are scheduled to pick up 80,000 metric tons of wheat, amid the uncertainty of the agreement extension process — which is occurring despite the fact that the agreement text implied more room for automatic renewal.

We are only two months away from the fifth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 2417 (2018), through which the Council urged all parties to ensure the proper functioning of food systems and markets in situations of armed conflict. In that same resolution, the Council recalled the link between armed conflict and food insecurity and urged all parties to protect civilians and the assets necessary for food production and distribution.

Ecuador therefore insists on the need to respect food and water supply systems and recalls the prohibition against attacking, destroying, removing or rendering useless the assets that are indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, including with regard to agricultural assets and crops.

We are not surprised, but we are concerned about the findings published by the FAO in December on the impact of this war on agriculture and rural livelihoods in Ukraine, with tens of billions of dollars in losses from households and the destruction of machinery, equipment, storage facilities, crops, and agricultural inputs and land. Ecuador deplores the fact that, thus far in 2023, attacks on critical civilian infrastructure, including energy, have continued in a recurrent manner.

Finally and preliminarily, I wish to express my delegation's grave concern about the contents of the report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, established by Human Rights Council resolution 49/1, circulated yesterday, which reflects the most cruel violations and abuses of human rights and the most atrocious violations of international humanitarian law. Ecuador will not tire of reiterating that nothing exempts the parties to the conflict from complying with their obligations under the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the other core instruments of international humanitarian law.

I conclude by recalling that yesterday marked exactly one year since the International Court of Justice ordered the Russian Federation to immediately suspend military operations in Ukraine. We therefore insist that the Court's order be complied with.

Mr. De Rivi re (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Griffiths for his briefing.

The Russian aggression against Ukraine is being carried out in violation of the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations and of all treaties protecting civilians. The General Assembly again condemned that aggression in a clear and strong manner on 23 February (see A/ES-11/PV.19).

For the past year, millions of Ukrainians have been victims of the abuses committed by the Russian armed forces and their Wagner supporters. They have killed, injured thousands of civilians, tortured and raped, forced millions from their homes, deported children and deliberately targeted civilian infrastructure, including schools, hospitals and energy facilities. The United Nations has documented those massive violations of international humanitarian and international human rights law.

France notes the arrest warrant issued today by the judges of the International Criminal Court, at the request of the Prosecutor's Office, against President Vladimir

Putin and Russian Commissioner for Children's Rights Maria Lvova-Belova. The Court believes there is sufficient evidence to establish their involvement in the deportation and transfer of Ukrainian children.

Russia sought to weaken the resistance of the Ukrainian people, especially as the country entered winter. Eighteen million people are now in need of humanitarian assistance. Nevertheless, the Ukrainian people continue to show admirable determination and courage. To support them, we organized the "Solidarity with the Ukrainian People" conference in Paris on 13 December, which raised more than €1 billion in order to meet their urgent needs.

Russia must allow humanitarian actors access to the civilian population, in accordance with international humanitarian law. Those responsible for abuses must be held accountable before the Ukrainian courts and the International Criminal Court, whose investigations we support.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine is having considerable negative repercussions on the world, for which Russia alone bears responsibility. By attacking Ukraine's agricultural infrastructure and restricting maritime exports, it seeks to exploit certain third countries' vulnerabilities to price fluctuations or to grain supplies.

To limit the worsening of global food insecurity and malnutrition due to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the Secretary-General allowed the Black Sea Grain Initiative to be concluded last July. This initiative has produced the expected effects. As the Secretary-General recalled last Monday, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Food Price Index, which had reached record levels in March 2022, has decreased for 10 consecutive months. Since its signing, the Black Sea Grain Initiative has resulted in the export of more than 24 million tons of grain. Some 55 per cent of these exports were destined for developing countries.

There should be no blackmail on extending the Initiative. Ukrainian maritime grain exports must continue unhindered in order to combat global food insecurity. In this regard, we welcome the commitment of the Secretary-General and the contribution of T rkiye.

France will also continue to work with its European partners to implement the solidarity corridors that have enabled the export of more than 29 million tons

of grain and other food products by land and sea. It also welcomes Ukraine's grain donations within the framework of the "Grain from Ukraine" initiative, to which we have contributed.

In the face of this aggression, which has had unbearable consequences for the civilian population, France's humanitarian, as well as military and financial, support to Ukraine will continue for as long as it is needed. We will continue to make the necessary efforts, alongside Ukraine, to achieve peace. That is what we mean by our support for the peace plan presented by President Zelenskyy at the Group of 20 summit, which constitutes a path towards a just and lasting peace in Ukraine.

Mrs. Nusseibeh (United Arab Emirates): I would like to join others in thanking Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for his informative briefing today. We support his strong message on the ripple effects of this conflict across the globe.

The war in Ukraine does not exist in a vacuum. Food insecurity is just one way the conflict manifests on the global stage, and it becomes a greater threat with each passing moment. We are meeting in the Security Council Chamber the day before the expiration of the Black Sea Grain Initiative, one of the few successes amid the tragedy of this conflict.

For the purposes of today's discussion, I will focus on the immediate humanitarian needs worldwide that Martin Griffiths has just outlined. Let us remember why the Initiative is so important, the good it has done, and why we support its full renewal.

Looking back at the outset of the conflict last year, a spike in food prices threatened to send tens of millions into extreme poverty around the world. Within a week, prices of wheat futures had jumped almost 60 per cent. As the global humanitarian system struggles to respond to the overwhelming need around the world, it is forced to contend with the further strain of these price rises — all of which is taking place against the backdrop of an already stressed post-pandemic global economy.

But there is cause for some hope. The impact on global markets has been cushioned by the Black Sea Grain Initiative. The United Nations estimates that the reduction of prices for staple foods, as a result of the Black Sea Grain Initiative, has indirectly prevented some 100 million people from falling into extreme poverty. Some 24 million tons of grain and over 1,600

secure-vessel voyages have made it through the Black Sea thanks to the agreement, and 55 per cent of these food exports are going to developing countries.

These movements represent more than simply the grain being shipped. Injecting more food into the global market brings food prices down. Therefore, even though exports may not be going only to the poorest countries, they are positively benefiting global market prices for all, and they need to be preserved. Accordingly, we strongly support the Secretary-General's and Türkiye's continued engagement with Russia and Ukraine to ensure the Initiative's full renewal and address any issues that impede its implementation. We also note that relevant international humanitarian law obligations with regard to civilian vessels remain in force, even if the Black Sea Grain Initiative lapses.

The United Arab Emirates also urges the full implementation of the memorandum of understanding on Russian fertilizer and food products. We encourage good faith efforts to address any ongoing issues related to insurance, financial and logistical infrastructure, and we stand ready to support this in any way.

Yet even if implemented in full, the contagion effect of war will continue to affect agriculture. Blackouts across Ukraine, financial constraints for Ukraine's farmers and once-fertile land that now sits fallow all contribute to a new, more difficult, reality for food production. In 2021, Ukraine saw record levels of grain harvested. Within just one year, that was estimated to drop more than 40 per cent, and areas available to grow corn have fallen by 30 per cent since the outset of war.

Energy is another area that has been thrown into turmoil as a result of the ripple effects of this conflict. The United Arab Emirates remains committed to working with the international community on this and to be a responsible partner.

Even though the negative impacts of the war extend far beyond this conflict, they cannot compare to the dismal humanitarian situation on the ground. The impact on children in Ukraine alone is horrifying. Every day this conflict goes on, more children are exposed to the risk of injury and death. We underline the absolute importance of the protection of children in armed conflict as an irrefutable obligation.

The United Arab Emirates is now working on the delivery of a \$100 million assistance package to Ukraine to ease the suffering on the ground. But as we have said

before in this Chamber, another year of this conflict will mean another year of lives lost, of communities destroyed and of global division.

Now firmly in its second year, the war is no longer a tragedy of a time and place, but risks becoming a protracted, immutable conflict with no end in sight. The continued pursuit of a complete military victory is a barrier to securing a just and lasting peace. We welcome efforts by China, among others, to try to bring the two sides together for mediated talks.

The Security Council must work to find solutions to the ongoing conflict, and we all need to maintain our focus on resolving conflicts in other countries and regions that also remain in dire need, working together as a Council on those contexts as well in the coming period.

The ravages of war are giving rise to a humanitarian crisis both within and beyond Ukrainian borders. We therefore share a universal, clear and urgent interest in bringing this war to a peaceful, just and enduring end.

Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Allow me first to comment on the vote at the beginning of today's meeting on the request for a briefer to participate. My country would like to stress that, in principle, we welcome the possibility for the Security Council to invite briefers that it considers qualified under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure. We believe that they can bring an important perspective to issues within the Council's competence. Today Switzerland voted against the proposal to invite a proposed briefer because we believe it is imperative to consider General Assembly resolution ES-11/4 in making this decision. In that resolution, all States are called upon to refrain from any action or contact that could be interpreted as recognizing a change in the status of the Ukrainian regions declared annexed by Russia.

I thank Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths for his briefing and underline Switzerland's appreciation for his efforts, in particular those aimed at extending the Black Sea Grain Initiative.

As has been said many times in this Chamber: civilian persons and objects are not a target, and international humanitarian law and human rights must be respected. The humanitarian situation in Ukraine continues to deteriorate. Switzerland is troubled by the report and conclusions of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine that were published

this week. We reiterate our support for the mandate and the continuation of the work of the Commission.

We call on Russia to immediately begin to de-escalate, cease all combat operations and withdraw its troops without delay from all Ukrainian territory. The humanitarian consequences of the war are being felt throughout the world. Food and energy insecurity has increased. That is particularly acute for people who are suffering the consequences of armed conflict or who live in extreme poverty. I would like to focus on three points.

First, Switzerland condemns the continuing strikes on civilian infrastructure, including Russia's indiscriminate attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure. Switzerland reiterates its call that international humanitarian law must be fully respected. Nothing can justify targeted attacks against civilian persons and objects.

Secondly, Switzerland demands that humanitarian workers be given unhindered access to the nearly 18 million people in need in Ukraine, including those in the areas occupied by Russia.

Thirdly, we reiterate the fact that the Black Sea Grain Initiative, along with the memorandum of understanding on the export of Russian agricultural products and fertilizers, is critical to global food security. Facilitated by the Secretary-General and Türkiye, the Initiative has allowed the export of 24 million tons of grain and more than 1,600 secure vessel voyages through the Black Sea. The Food Price Index of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations has been falling for the past 10 months, after reaching record levels in March 2022.

The Initiative must continue. We call on all parties to redouble their efforts to find a lasting solution to alleviate the consequences of the war. We note the importance of a long-term perspective that allows for greater predictability. That is essential for the Initiative's planning and implementation. Switzerland welcomes the good offices of the Secretary-General in that regard and stands ready to provide its support, particularly in its role as host State.

The international community continues to send clear signals in support of solidarity and against divisions, in support of dialogue and against violence and in support of peace and against war. We all are called on to contribute to a comprehensive, just and

lasting peace in accordance with international law. Until the Ukrainian population can enjoy such peace, we will emphasize as often as necessary that civilian people and objects are not a target.

Mrs. Shino (Japan): I thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for his informative briefing.

Regrettably, Russia's aggression against Ukraine, in clear violation of international law, persists despite the widespread calls to halt it on its one-year anniversary last month. Russia's unlawful aggression has exacerbated the humanitarian situation in Ukraine and in the world at large, which is deplorable.

The humanitarian crisis has worsened in 2023, with 222 million people in 53 countries unsure if they will have access to food. Approximately 1 million individuals in developing countries face extreme hunger. Russia's aggression against Ukraine has damaged the global food supply and worsened the humanitarian situation.

In such times of precarious global food supplies, the role of the Black Sea Grain Initiative has become more critical than ever before. The Initiative has enabled the export of 24 million metric tons of grain from Ukrainian ports and more than 1,600 secure vessel voyages through the Black Sea, with 55 per cent of food exports going to developing countries. The Initiative has been indispensable in decreasing the worldwide cost of food and has provided vital assistance to those who have been significantly affected by the war, particularly in developing countries.

Japan commends the Secretary-General and his team, including the relentless efforts of Mr. Griffiths, along with those of Ms. Grynspan, to safeguard the continuity and integrity of the Initiative by engaging with the parties, including through the visit to Ukraine and the meeting with the Russian Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs. Japan strongly supports an automatic extension of the Black Sea Grain Initiative for the same period and its further expansion and urges the parties involved to collaborate in that regard.

Russia's aggression has severely harmed Ukraine's agricultural sector, accounting for 10 per cent of its gross domestic product and 25 per cent of exports. It is vital to restore Ukraine's agricultural production capacity, not only for economic stability but also to boost the global food supply. Last week, prioritizing women and young farmers, Japan gave sunflower and corn seeds to 400 smallholder farmers in Kharkiv,

where agricultural production and farm income have decreased owing to the war.

In addition to the \$200 million already committed to improve global food security after Russia's aggression last June, Japan decided to provide \$50 million in food-related aid to countries in need in Asia, the Middle East and Africa, and Ukraine.

The suffering in Ukraine and its ramifications for global food security must come to an end. Japan reaffirms its unwavering commitment to providing the utmost support and standing in solidarity with the people of Ukraine. For its part, Japan will continue to actively pursue efforts to secure the global food supply, thereby contributing to the maintenance of international peace and security.

Mr. Hoxha (Albania): Let me thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for his update and for his tireless efforts.

After 13 months of the continued "marry me or I will kill you" approach of Russia in Ukraine, there is little doubt that this war is a turning point in modern history. It continues to challenge European security. It has brought back nuclear sabre-rattling, and it has disrupted the global economy, leaving energy and food crises in its wake. But it has also been a moment of awakening, reminding everyone that, for as long as there are authoritarians around, peace should never be taken for granted.

While the reality on the ground has revealed the limits of this modern madness, persistent waves of deadly missile strikes across Ukraine — the Russian death signature — continue to destroy civilian infrastructure, with no end in sight. They constitute crimes.

For months, we have heard here that Russia does not attack civilians. But the reality — the hard and painful reality — is completely different. More than 20,000 civilians have been killed or wounded; 14 million people have been uprooted from their homes; 18 million people require humanitarian assistance and protection; and approximately 40 per cent of Ukrainians are unable to afford or access enough food.

For months, we have heard here that Russia does not commit crimes. The hard reality, which we know and have denounced here, is now confirmed by the report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, an independent and impartial expert body.

The Russian authorities have committed a wide range of violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law in various regions of Ukraine, many of which amount to war crimes. Everything in the horrifying book of crimes is there: attacks on civilians and energy-related infrastructure, wilful killings, unlawful confinement, torture, rape and other sexual violence, as well as the unlawful transfer and deportation of children. Those facts show the depth of depravity of the aggression — a total disregard for civilians and the sanctity of human life.

The Ukrainian war poses one fundamental question for all of us: what kind of world do we want to live in? The current rules-based world order is the one that emerged from the ashes of the Second World War, one in which powerful autocratic regimes would no longer be free to devour their neighbours, one in which more democracies than ever have been able to flourish, and one in which free markets and open trade have lifted more people out of poverty than at any other time in the history of the world.

It is that order that gave us almost 80 years without wars of aggression capable of destabilizing the whole world, wars such as the one that is happening now in Ukraine. It is an order that is based on international law and rules that are imposed by no one and agreed to by free nations. It is an order that has ensured that when there are transgressions there are consequences, such as the arrest warrants issued today by the International Criminal Court. The man who started this war of choice — the man who is responsible for its continuation and all the terrible consequences — is now wanted by international justice. That is a first victory for accountability. It is a first wakeup call — for all who are fighting an unjust and illegal war in Ukraine — that the impunity that has emboldened the perpetrators during these long months of war has lasted far too long.

What happens in Ukraine today will concern all of us tomorrow. That is why supporting Ukraine goes beyond mere solidarity with people in need. It is an urgent call for a world in peril. The Black Sea Grain Initiative — a lifeline for dozens of countries around the world — should be extended not with fixed deadlines but indefinitely, because, as Under-Secretary-General Griffiths clearly explained, the needs of hundreds of millions of people for their daily food depend on it.

Every day of the war is making the world a more and more dangerous place, without any reason and by

one man's choice. It will therefore never be too late for Russia to come to its senses, cease all hostilities and unconditionally, completely and immediately withdraw all its forces and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. Russia can earn its respect back not by committing more crimes but by returning to peace. Until then, we will continue to stand with Ukraine and its people in their just struggle to repel aggression and restore their territory, independence and sovereignty.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Thanks to our former Western partners' shameful and cowardly action preventing a briefer from Donbas from speaking, today the Council will have to listen to a statement by us that will be longer than usual.

Our discussions at the Security Council on the humanitarian aspects of the Ukrainian crisis have invariably followed the same script. The Western countries emphasize the destruction of Ukraine's civilian infrastructure while ignoring the fact that if the Kyiv regime had complied with the norms of international humanitarian law, particularly those regarding refraining from positioning heavy weapons and air-defence systems in residential areas, civilians would not have ended up in strike zones, since our army exclusively targets energy and transport infrastructure with high-precision strikes. We are doing that to degrade Ukraine's military potential, which the collective West is doing everything in its power to strengthen by resupplying it with weapons.

We have already held more than one meeting in which the staggering profits that Western arms corporations are making from supplying weapons have been discussed. Of course they are not interested in ending hostilities, and the politicians are slavishly serving their interests. Only yesterday, when asked about the Chinese peace plan for Ukraine, the United States Defense Department spokesman John Kirby said that a cessation of hostilities in Ukraine "would be another continued violation of the Charter of the United Nations". But at the beginning of March, Secretary Danilov of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine complained that more and more people in his country were advocating peace talks with Russia. In other words, the Kyiv regime is upset that Ukrainian citizens want peace with our country. As they say, no comment is necessary. What is important is ensuring that developing countries understand the true goals of Kyiv and its Western partners as they once

again attempt to mobilize support for new anti-Russian initiatives in the General Assembly. At the same time, the Western countries continue to ignore the Armed Forces of Ukraine's systematic and deliberate shelling of civilian objects in Donbas, which has gone on for nine years. We therefore believe that in order to show the full picture, our job today is to focus on what our Western colleagues will not say.

Daria Morozova, our briefer today, the prospect of whose statement so frightened our former Western partners, had planned to provide a retrospective of the devastating internal Ukrainian conflict and the subsequent humanitarian crisis provoked by the anti-constitutional coup d'état in Kyiv in February 2014. It would have been easier for her, as a native of Donbas, to do, but she has asked us to share with Council members some of the themes from the briefing she prepared.

Mass peaceful protests in majority-Russian-speaking regions became a natural response to the new authorities' unconstitutional measures. People took to the streets in the hope that they would be heard. All they asked was to meet with Kyiv's representatives. Instead, in violation of article 17 of Ukraine's Constitution, which prohibits the use of its armed forces and illegal armed groups to restrict the rights and freedoms of its citizens, the Kyiv regime sent the army to suppress the peaceful protests with its air assets, artillery and massively lethal weapons. Its justification for its war crimes was that it was conducting a so-called counter-terrorism operation, a decree for which was signed on 14 April 2014 by a person who was illegally granted constitutional presidential powers. However, during the entire conflict in south-eastern Ukraine neither of the Luhansk and Donetsk people's republics had been officially recognized as a terrorist organization, and therefore did not fall under the international criteria that would have designated them as such. As early as 2014 the International Committee of the Red Cross recognized the conflict in Ukraine as an internal one, that is, a civil war.

In addition to open hostilities, Kyiv began its brutal repression of the civilian population by instituting socioeconomic restrictions. The region was subjected to an economic blockade. The disbursement of all social benefits, including pensions, and banking services for personal and business accounts was stopped. There was a food blockade, with supply logistics for delivering food, medicines and essential goods blocked, and a

transport blockade. There was an information blockade, with genuine information on what was happening in Donbas replaced by nationalist propaganda on a massive scale. On top of that, Ukraine terminated the work of all Government bodies, agencies and organizations in the region, depriving local residents of basic Government services, social assistance and the issuance of vital documents such as passports and birth and death certificates, which meant that they were completely unable to obtain confirmation of their status as citizens.

In December 2014 and March 2017, the socioeconomic restrictions regarding the region were enacted into law, by which Kyiv legalized its measures against its own population. Those steps have had irreparable consequences. Since the beginning of the conflict and as of 24 February 2022, 4,374 people, including 91 children, had been killed as a result of Ukraine's armed aggression in the Donetsk people's republic. Almost 8,000 civilians had injuries of varying degrees of severity, including 323 children, at least 27 of whom were disabled as a result. By the time the special operation began, fire from Ukrainian armed groups had destroyed more than 23,000 private homes and approximately 5,000 apartment buildings. Some residential areas were wiped off the face of the earth. Around 850 educational centres, 350 health-care facilities and 800 housing and utility service facilities that had supplied consumers in Donetsk with gas, water, heat and electricity had been destroyed.

Between 2017 and 17 February 2022 alone, more than 339,000 pieces of ammunition of various calibres were fired into the territory of the Donetsk People's Republic. The international community did not provide an objective response to the actions of the representatives of Ukraine aimed at sabotaging the Minsk process. Over the past few years, through the fault of Kyiv, not a single clause of the Minsk Protocol or the Minsk package of measures was implemented. The official representative of the Donetsk People's Republic in the Trilateral Contact Group with responsibility for humanitarian issues, Daria Morozova, has assured us that the representatives of Kyiv did not focus on implementing any agreements whatsoever. Moreover, they sabotaged any progress that could have stopped the bloodshed — and I would add in my own capacity that their Western patrons encouraged them to do so.

Given the absence of peaceful objectives in the negotiation process at the beginning of 2022, tensions

grew along the line of contact, and there were blatant provocations by Kyiv. In the week that preceded the announcement of mass evacuations in Donbas alone, in violation of the ceasefire agreements, Ukrainian armed formations fired nearly 100 shells — which had been prohibited under the Minsk agreements — into the territory of the Donetsk People's Republic. In addition, Ukrainian soldiers received a direct order from Valery Zaluzhny, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, to open fire at will and at their own discretion. The use of drones carrying improvised explosive devices to launch strikes against civilians has been established as a fact. On the eve of the special military operation, Ukraine had begun reinforcing its positions on the front, not only in terms of manpower but also in terms of the accumulation of weapons of mass destruction. Kyiv was preparing for a full-scale military operation in Donbas, which it had planned to launch in early March 2022. That had become clear from the significant escalation and increase in the military activity of Armed Forces of Ukraine in the zone.

Since the beginning of the special military operation that was the result of the described events, when the cities of Donbas were liberated, increasing evidence of large-scale war crimes committed by the Ukrainian authorities has emerged, and its volume is increasing as the front line advances. Numerous testimonies of civilians have been recorded, confirming that the Ukrainian armed forces prevented civilians from evacuating combat zones. People were used as human shields, for example, in the cities of Mariupol, Volnovakha and Soledar. When the Ukrainian army retreated, it deliberately destroyed civilian infrastructure facilities and residential buildings that had survived the fighting.

In the year of the special military operation, more than 15,500 instances of shelling by the Armed Forces of Ukraine were recorded within the borders of the Donetsk People's Republic that had existed before the special military operation was launched, more than 15,000 of which involved the use of heavy artillery. The enemy fired more than 100,000 munitions of various calibres into the Donetsk People's Republic, including 39 Tochka-U missiles, more than 220 HIMARS missiles, 250 BM-27 Uragan missiles, 13,000 122-millimetre multiple-launch rocket system missiles and 21,500 155-millimetre shells. Since July 2022, the Armed Forces of Ukraine have employed “*lepestok*” anti-personnel mines — known as

“butterfly mines” — against the civilian population of the republic. Ukraine has planted those mines remotely in densely populated residential areas of the Donetsk People's Republic, thereby injuring more than 90 civilians, including nine children; one of the victims died in hospital as a result of his injuries, and many others suffered traumatic limb amputations.

In its attempts to generate a humanitarian disaster in the region, Kyiv has committed terrorist attacks and provocations targeting key infrastructure in Donbas, in particular targeting water supply and energy infrastructure. As a result of those terrorist acts, the supply of water to the territory of the republic from the main artery, the Seversky Donets-Donbas Canal, was cut off completely, so that today most towns in the Donetsk People's Republic have only a centralized water supply, through which only utility water is supplied once every three days for just a few hours. People are forced to buy drinking water or receive it in the form of humanitarian aid.

Cases of mass torture and execution of prisoners have also been recorded in Ukraine. Civilians in Kyiv-controlled territories are subjected to political persecution and repression on ideological grounds by the security services. Acting in that particularly cynical manner, Ukraine has not only violated all the existing provisions and norms of international humanitarian law but also demonstrated a disregard for the fundamental principles of humanity, decency and mercy. Moreover, both the residents of the people's republics of Donbas and the residents of territory that had been controlled by Kyiv before the start of the special military operation have been subjected to neo-Nazi hatred. The information I have just provided was part of the briefing that Daria Morozova was supposed to deliver, which is effectively a direct statement from the residents of Donbas, whom the West stubbornly seeks to ignore — it was in order to save their lives above all that the special military operation was launched a year ago.

For my part, I note that in the past month, we have once again witnessed the terrorist and inhumane nature of the Kyiv regime. On 2 March, the Ukrainian armed formations perpetrated a terrorist attack in two villages of the Bryansk region of Russia, during which they attacked a vehicle that was taking three children to school, murdering the driver and wounding an 11-year-old boy named Fedor. He was nevertheless able to climb out of the vehicle and helped two first-grade schoolgirls out as well. Fleeing the terrorists, the three children

then began to seek shelter in a nearby wooded area. The wounded boy proved himself beyond any doubt to be a real man. The same cannot be said for the Ukrainian fighters, who, in a cynical attempt to leave no witnesses, fired at the backs of the children as they fled into the woods. That is exactly how Ukrainian nationalist battalions fire at the Russian-speaking people in the towns of Donbas, attempting to pass off their actions as crimes of the Russian army. Our investigative bodies have already gathered plenty of evidence of that kind.

The attack was a planned, deliberate attack on civilians in villages in which there are no military facilities. In other words, the Bryansk attack was a true terrorist attack. Its perpetrators are members of a so-called Russian Volunteer Corps, which is a subdivision of the foreign legion of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and acts on orders from the military leadership of Ukraine. Zelenskyy's regime even tried to deny that subversive attack, since such crimes are so blatantly abhorrent. However, the leader of the sabotage group said that the act had been coordinated with the Kyiv regime and carried out with its direct assistance. Incidentally, that individual is a well-known neo-Nazi and racist, including in Europe, who is banned from entering the European Union. It is not surprising that, like others with similar views, he felt at ease in Ukraine and committed his crimes with impunity and with the approval of the Kyiv leadership. It is not clear what the Kyiv authorities seek to achieve by means of the cold-blooded murder of children. Do they believe that it will increase the level of Western support? If the West is willing to support a regime that commits such egregious acts, then there is probably no crime that the West will not be willing to cover up in its maniacal and vain desire to defeat Russia on the battlefield.

In general, we have obtained increasing evidence that Western States are directly involved in the conflict, not only by pumping weapons into Ukraine but also through the direct participation of their military specialists. For example, John McIntyre, a former American soldier who enlisted in Ukraine's so-called foreign legion and the Carpathian Sich nationalist battalion, gave revealing testimony to Russia's law enforcement agencies. The documents, maps and other information that he handed over confirm that the Armed Forces of Ukraine have directly coordinated actions on the battlefield with members of United States military and intelligence agencies. That evidence will form the basis for a legal assessment of the degree

of involvement and complicity of foreign officials in the crimes perpetrated by the Kyiv regime against the civilian population. Mr. McIntyre recounted the horrific torture of prisoners of war by Ukrainian armed formations. Our opponents, who vividly imagine that Russia is committing war crimes, simply disregard that and other evidence.

However, Ukrainian and Western sadists and criminals will not go unpunished. An international public tribunal has already been established in Russia to collect and document witness testimonies. Preparations are under way to launch and establish a full-fledged international tribunal rooted in international law, not the rules-based order that the States of the collective West are devising based on their own interests.

The shots fired at Russian children in Bryansk oblast are a clear example of the Kyiv regime's attitude to children. Even before the start of the special military operation in February 2022, in view of the Ukrainian authorities' irresponsible and aggressive policies the leaders of the Donetsk and Luhansk peoples' republics had decided to evacuate civilians, including children, to Russian Federation territory. As at 27 February 2023, approximately 4.5 million people, including about 690,000 children, had been evacuated to the territory of the Russian Federation since the start of the special military operation, with the vast majority of the children accompanied to Russia by their parents, relatives or guardians. In that connection, the numerous speculations about the arrival of large numbers of unaccompanied children are puzzling. Throughout our bilateral cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNICEF and the International Committee of the Red Cross, we have provided reliable information on the measures we have taken to prevent violations of international humanitarian law where children are concerned. In order to end speculation on the issue, which has become a popular subject with Kyiv and Western propagandists, we will be organizing an informal Arria Formula meeting of the Council about it in early April.

Many speakers have today touched on the topic of the Black Sea Grain Initiative — more accurately a package deal — whose 60-day extension could be approved tomorrow. I would like to conclude by elaborating on our position on the matter. On 22 July last year, two packages, or interconnected agreements, were signed in Türkiye. One of them — signed by

Russia, Türkiye and Ukraine for the export of food and fertilizer through three Black Sea ports — was designed at the time to deal with the immediate humanitarian task of supplying food to starving people all over the world. The second, agreed on between Russia and the United Nations Secretariat, was on promoting the export of Russian foodstuffs and fertilizers to world markets. Our Western colleagues refused point blank to acknowledge the second agreement and avoided any mention of it in Security Council drafts. And it has not been implemented in any way.

We and many others also have a lot of questions about the implementation of the so-called Grain Initiative, whose purpose is to facilitate the export of grain from Ukrainian ports. The main question is why a humanitarian initiative suddenly became a commercial one. The statistics are a clear demonstration of that. Its impact on global food prices is also highly controversial. Contrary to what has been said today in this Chamber, the world's poorest countries have received not 66 or 65 per cent of supplies but a mere 3 per cent. More specifically, according to data from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, despite the fact that food prices have come down from their record highs at the beginning of last year, they are more than 20 per cent short of their 2021 levels. And depreciating local currencies, including against the backdrop of a stronger United States dollar in 2022, are exacerbating domestic problems in developing countries as well.

And who do you think is profiting from the situation? The main beneficiaries of rising food prices and destabilized food supply chains are the giant Western agricultural corporations. We are talking about the so-called big four — the United States companies Archer Daniels Midland, Bunge and Cargill, and the Dutch Louis Dreyfus Company — which account for 75 to 90 per cent of global trade in the agro-industrial complex. In 2022, Cargill alone saw its sales increase by 23 per cent to \$165 billion, with a record net profit of \$5 billion. How can we even talk about bonuses for developing countries?

By the way, we should not forget that as a result of uncontrolled exports of food from Ukraine, that country is at risk of a real famine, as many experts have said in so many words, and that has nothing to do with Russia. And in that context is another acute issue, which is Western companies' seizure of chernozem arable land in Ukraine. In the past 10 years, the area that is now under foreign control is now more than 4 million

hectares, or over 10 per cent of all fertile land in Ukraine. And yet the attempts continue to hide all these processes from the international community behind the traditional mantras of Russian aggression and blaming our country for creating a food crisis and increasing food prices. Of course that is all a complete lie. Even the European Parliament's resolution of 16 February on the availability of fertilizers in the European Union explicitly states that the high prices in the agricultural sector have been seen for the past two years. However, that has not prevented Brussels from creating additional risks for the food security of poor countries thanks to its new anti-Russian restrictions.

The Russia-United Nations memorandum is simply not working. No one cares about the fact that it is extremely beneficial for developing countries. At the end of the day, the United Nations, via the Secretary-General's spokesperson, had to admit that the Organization does not have the leverage to exempt Russian agricultural export operations from Western sanctions. I want to emphasize once again that the situation is having a negative impact not on Russia, whose economy is developing steadily in spite of our adversaries, but on the developing world. Given that the concerns expressed by our Western colleagues about it are mere empty words and that the persistent efforts of the Secretary-General have been fruitless, we will not put up with it either. In that connection, on 13 March, pursuant to paragraph H of the tripartite agreement, we officially notified the Turkish and Ukrainian parties that we do not object to the extension of the Black Sea Grain Initiative operations for 60 days from 18 March, that is, until 18 May. Further steps will depend on progress in resolving the issues we have identified.

Finally, if Washington, Brussels and London genuinely desire the continuation of food exports from Ukraine along the maritime humanitarian corridor in their interests, they have two months to exempt from their sanctions, with the assistance of the United Nations, the entire chain of operations supporting Russian agricultural exports. If not, we fail to understand how the Secretary-General's package concept within the framework of the Istanbul agreements will be able to function.

In conclusion, with regard to the warrant issued by the International Criminal Court (ICC) that has been mentioned here today, that biased, politicized, incompetent international judicial body has once again demonstrated its flawed nature. The ICC is

a puppet in the hands of the collective West, always ready and willing to deliver pseudo-justice to order. It is particularly cynical that the legally null decision was unveiled on the eve of the twentieth anniversary of the United States' invasion of Iraq, where the ICC had jurisdiction but did absolutely nothing to hold the perpetrators to account. The Russian Federation is not a party to the Rome statute and the ICC has no jurisdiction over Russia or its citizens. We consider any documents issued by it to be legally null and void. By all indications, the ICC has indeed gone down a path towards self-destruction, above all where its international authority and credibility are concerned. We are not alone in that opinion. Allow me to end with a surprising quote from John Bolton, former United States National Security Advisor, in 2018: "We will let the ICC die on its own. After all, for all intents and purposes, the ICC is already dead".

Mr. De Almeida Filho (Brazil): I thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for his contribution.

We have been following with extreme concern the attacks in recent weeks on targets in various cities in Ukraine, as well as the horrifying fighting around Bakhmut. Brazil reiterates the call for all parties to fully respect international humanitarian law and international human rights law. It is a universal responsibility to ensure the protection and safety of civilians, provide humanitarian aid to those in need and treat detainees humanely. These are non-negotiable obligations.

Brazil is also deeply concerned about the lack of improvement in the humanitarian situation in Ukraine. Urban areas continue to be shelled, and civilian infrastructure destroyed. We remind both parties of resolution 2417 (2018), which indicates our obligation to spare civilian objects and critical infrastructure for delivering humanitarian aid and to ensure the proper functioning of food systems and markets.

In order to put an end to this humanitarian crisis, it is necessary to seek pragmatic solutions. We urge all Member States to pursue realistic ways to achieve peace. Protecting human life and safeguarding human dignity must always come first. In that regard, we would like to mention three points.

First, it is necessary to keep channels open for dialogue. Insisting on military solutions reinforced by unilateral sanctions will not lead to an end to this conflict. Dialogue is the way to de-escalate and build trust. When there is engagement, it is possible to

achieve positive results, as demonstrated by the Black Sea Grain Initiative.

Secondly, it is urgent that the two sides agree to cease hostilities in accordance with resolution ES-11/6, adopted by the General Assembly in February (see A/ES-11/PV.19). Continuing to fight will deepen the humanitarian crisis, increase casualties and destroy infrastructure, without resolving the underlying causes of the conflict. The continuation of this war will also affect other countries in the immediate neighbourhood, as well as in developing nations hard hit by the collateral effects of the conflict on their economies and with limited resources and instruments to counter those effects.

Finally, we reiterate our support for a negotiated solution that takes into account ways to prevent renewed violence in future. Brazil considers it essential to understand the security concerns of the parties involved and to respond to them in a constructive and pragmatic manner. Alongside other countries, we are ready to engage in diplomatic efforts based on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and with the goal of a just and sustainable peace in the long term.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for his briefing.

The Ukrainian crisis has dragged on, is expanding and is becoming more complex. The humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate, and the prospect of peace remains elusive. China is deeply concerned. There are no winners in conflict and war, and bloody confrontations will only exacerbate suffering. We call on all relevant parties to truly put the people at the centre, step up actions and spare no effort to mitigate the humanitarian consequences of the conflict, while simultaneously redoubling efforts to de-escalate the situation and cease hostilities as quickly as possible.

In that connection, I would like to make several remarks.

First, the basic norms of international humanitarian law must be strictly observed. The protection of civilians must always come first. Parties to the conflict should refrain from attacking civilians and civilian facilities, ensure the normal operation of key public services such as energy, health care and education, protect victims of conflict and respect the basic rights of prisoners of war. All parties to the conflict should remain rational,

exercise maximum restraint and avoid actions that endanger the safety and security of nuclear facilities in order to minimize the risk of accidents. China supports the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in fulfilling its safeguards functions and playing an active role in promoting the safety and security of nuclear facilities. China will donate €200,000 to the Ukrainian nuclear safety and security technical assistance project through the IAEA.

Secondly, every effort must be made to maintain the scope and intensity of humanitarian relief. Since the outbreak of the conflict, the affected areas have suffered severe shortages of materials, water, electricity and heating supplies. China has delivered multiple batches of emergency humanitarian aid to Ukraine and developing countries affected by the spillover crisis. The international community should scale up relief to all affected people, speed up the repair and restoration of civilian infrastructure and do its utmost to mitigate the impact of the conflict on people's lives. Relevant parties should ensure rapid, safe and unimpeded humanitarian access and support the United Nations in its humanitarian coordination role. Women, children and displaced persons are vulnerable groups in armed conflicts. Targeted assistance should therefore be provided in order to meet their special needs.

Thirdly, the spillover effects of the conflict must be managed. All parties should work together in a responsible manner in order to mitigate the impact of the crisis on international energy, finance, food trade and transportation so as to maintain the momentum of the global economic recovery. Relevant countries should stop abusing unilateral sanctions and long-arm jurisdiction in order to eliminate the disruption caused by such measures to international economic and trade cooperation. China commends Secretary-General Guterres for his active communication with all parties on the extension of the Black Sea Grain Initiative. We hope that the Initiative will be fully and effectively implemented in a balanced manner. At the same time, China hopes that the memorandum signed between the United Nations and Russia will also be actively implemented.

Fourthly, diplomatic efforts towards a peaceful solution must be continuously advanced. No matter how complex the situation, the door to a political settlement cannot be closed, and peace efforts cannot slow. The international community must promote peace talks with the utmost urgency, create conditions

for the resumption of negotiations and push the parties concerned to resume negotiations without preconditions at an early date in order to give the restoration of peace a chance. Facts have shown that the continuous delivery of offensive weapons and resorting to group confrontation and political isolation will not help to resolve the crisis. On the Ukraine issue, China will always take a stand on the side of peace, dialogue and humanity. China issued a position paper on the political settlement of the Ukrainian crisis and will continue to work with the international community to play an active role in the political settlement of the crisis.

Finally, I would like to state our position on the procedural vote conducted before the start of today's meeting. China regrets that the Security Council had to conduct a procedural vote on whether to invite Ms. Daria Morozova to brief the Council. China is of the view that the Council should make a decision on this matter on the basis of consensus reached through patient consultations. We believe that the Council's decision on this issue should comply with the provisional rules of procedure and be consistent with past practice on inviting briefers in order to avoid giving the impression of double standards. I would also like to reiterate that China's position on the Ukraine issue remains unchanged.

Mr. Boateng (Ghana): At the outset, let me explain that Ghana voted in favour of the proposal to invite Ms. Daria Morozova under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, to provide the Council with her personal views regarding the humanitarian situation in the Donbas region of Ukraine. We have consistently supported the President's choice of briefers. That in no way impairs our position on the Donbas region being a part of Ukraine.

Indeed, it affirms Ukraine's sovereignty. To be clear, Ghana does not recognize the so-called Donetsk People's Republic, including any person purporting to act in any official capacity on behalf of that entity. As we understand it, Ms. Morozova is a resident of the Donbas region and, by extension, a citizen of Ukraine. In that sense, we are of the view that her personal views as a citizen of Ukraine should be admitted by the Council.

Turning to the subject of our meeting, I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for the important updates provided to the Council on the prevailing humanitarian conditions in Ukraine. We continue to value his contributions to resolving that

aspect of the war, concerning the survival of the people of Ukraine. Ghana continues to be deeply concerned about the overall humanitarian situation, in particular the plight of the innocent civilians caught in the crossfire of the intense combat raging across several cities in Ukraine. If the hostilities in Bakhmut, Odesa, Donetsk, Kharkiv and other front lines share anything in common, it is the fact that we see rising casualties and further destruction. The already impaired energy infrastructure of Ukraine continues to be pummelled, with no regard for the needs of the civilians who rely on it for their survival, especially during the winter season.

While destroyed infrastructure can be rebuilt, the destruction in the minds and hearts of the people, which is hidden from our eyes, is perhaps worse than we have imagined. They may never be restored from the deep loss and trauma of the brutal war. For that reason, we remain supportive of initiatives to provide mental health care and counselling support for Ukrainians affected by the war, especially children. UNICEF reports that, despite the gruelling impacts of the war on the 7.5 million children in Ukraine, they continue to show tremendous resilience for survival. We must do all that lies in our power to bring an end to the scourge of the war on their lives.

The report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, issued on 15 March, regrettably bears out our fears of widespread and systematic human rights violations, disregard for civilians and possible war crimes. We note the report as an important contribution to international efforts aimed at ensuring accountability for the horrendous crimes being committed in Ukraine. We further agree with the Commission that there is a need to ensure further investigations and comprehensive accountability, including to ensure the criminal responsibility of the perpetrators and the right of victims to truth, reparations and non-repetition.

At the core of the prohibition on the use of force as a means for the settlement of disputes is the principle of the value of human life and the essential obligation to protect and preserve humankind from the harms of war. International humanitarian law is therefore intended to impose on warring parties a number of obligations concerning the protection of civilians and the treatment of prisoners of war during conflicts. We deeply regret that those fundamental principles have not been obliged and that more people continue to suffer needlessly with each passing day of the war. In view of the worsening

humanitarian conditions, we renew our appeal to the parties to ensure compliance with their obligations under international law, international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Civilians must be protected from harm and prisoners of war must be treated with respect, in accordance with the measures prescribed under the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols.

The continuing missile attacks near the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant, resulting in the temporary loss of its only remaining back-up power line, point to the growing risk of a catastrophic nuclear incident. We remind the parties of the existential and intergenerational harm caused by nuclear arms and urge them to rethink their actions in the interest of humankind, as we all stand at risk from any such incident, whether accidental or calculated. We urge the parties to treat nuclear safety and security as non-negotiable and to undertake the steps outlined by the IAEA, including the immediate demilitarization of all nuclear facilities in Ukraine.

After 13 months of sustained violent exchanges across all of Ukraine, there appears to be no hope of an end in sight and little appetite on the part of the warring parties for a peaceful settlement. We continue to be concerned about the inflammatory rhetoric and the heightened risk of a wider geopolitical conflict involving other European nations. If peace in Ukraine is to be attained, the parties must relinquish any military logic to winning the war. We remain firmly of the view that dialogue and diplomacy offer the best chances of a comprehensive peace process that would address the respective concerns of the parties, and we reiterate our call for the intensification of international efforts to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine. It has been well asserted in the Council and the General Assembly that peace in Ukraine must be founded on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and should seek to uphold the sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine, in accordance with international law.

We encourage agreement on the further renewal of the Black Sea Grain Initiative when it expires on 18 March this year, as it once again offers a glimmer of hope through the dark facade of the war. We are encouraged by the commitments made by the parties, given the significant impact the deal has been shown to have on the global food supply chain and market

stability, and we urge its full implementation in line with the terms of the agreement. We thank the Secretary-General for his visit to Kyiv on 8 March, when he held discussions with President Zelenskyy on the continuation of the Grain Initiative. Good faith implementation by all stakeholders is now crucial to sustaining its integrity in a manner that assures its future extension for much longer periods of time. We also underline the importance and necessity of further efforts and cooperation in relation to the export of Russian ammonia and agricultural products.

Humanitarian assistance and protection are vital to saving lives and mitigating the impacts on the people. As we all know, however, they do not replace the critical need for the cessation of all violent hostilities. For that reason and in the interest of the many suffering women, children and vulnerable persons, we reiterate the calls made to the Russian Federation to end the aggression against its neighbour Ukraine. It is time to end the war and begin the task of charting a path of peace between the Russian Federation and Ukraine.

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

More than one year has passed since Russia launched its aggression against Ukraine. That gross violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international law has led to yet another man-made humanitarian catastrophe. Today, the war threatens not only Ukraine and the region but also millions of people across the world. As we heard, more than 17 million people—nearly 40 per cent of the population of Ukraine—require humanitarian assistance and protection as a result of the war, while more than 8 million Ukrainian refugees have been recorded across Europe, and 5.4 million people have been internally displaced.

We have all witnessed the humanitarian consequences of the systematic use of missiles and drones to attack civilian objects and infrastructure indispensable to the survival of the civilian population across Ukraine, not least in Tuesday's missile strike on an apartment building in Kramatorsk. Such attacks have left millions without power, heating and water for days, in the middle of winter, compounding the hardship for the most vulnerable caught up in this fighting, especially those in areas close to the front lines and outside the control of Ukrainian authorities.

Furthermore, we have also seen the horrific effects of the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects

in populated areas, with town squares and residential apartment blocks reduced to rubble. Malta once again calls on the Russian Federation to cease such attacks, which constitute a violation of international law.

The devastating impacts of Russia's war on children, women and men will be felt for generations. We condemn the pattern of international humanitarian and human rights law violations related to the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war. Malta also deplores the unlawful transfer and forced deportation out of Ukraine of more than 6,000 children. Such actions constitute war crimes. In this regard, Malta supports the International Criminal Court's efforts to ensure that all those involved in violations of international humanitarian and human rights law are held accountable.

In addition, we welcome the important work being carried out by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine and support the idea of establishing a register of damages as a record of evidence and information on claims for damages, losses or injury caused by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. Such initiatives will support the much-needed reconstruction of civilian infrastructure destroyed in the country over the past decade as a result of the conflict.

Malta is concerned that many of those in desperate need of humanitarian assistance are unable to gain access to or are prevented from obtaining the services they need. We commend the work of the United Nations, its partner agencies and all humanitarian organizations working in such dangerous situations, and we appeal for the full facilitation of humanitarian access and operations throughout the country, especially in the areas along front lines.

Malta highlights the importance of the continuance of the Black Sea Grain Initiative. This initiative has allowed the export of tons of grains and other foodstuffs. Prolonging the agreement is crucial for the stability of international prices and for the continuous flow of grain, helping people worldwide struggling to put food on their tables and supporting farmers whose incomes have plummeted because of the war. Additionally, we reiterate our call for unimpeded and repeated access to be granted to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) for all Ukrainian prisoners of war. Malta recalls that under the Third Geneva Convention, all prisoners of war are entitled to receive regular visits from ICRC delegations.

As the war in Ukraine begins to ramp up once again, we reiterate our call on the Russian Federation to immediately cease its hostilities and withdraw all Russian forces from Ukraine's internationally recognized borders. More than enough lives have been lost, families torn apart and civilians traumatized by a year of carnage. Let us see de-escalation and dialogue in the days and weeks ahead, rather than this continued cycle of death and destruction.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): I also thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for his briefing today.

Today, over 21 million people need humanitarian assistance as a result of Russia's full-scale invasion: this is over 50 per cent of Ukraine's pre-war population. Of these people, over 5 million are displaced internally, and another 8 million have fled to Europe as refugees. This is the most significant displacement seen anywhere in the world for decades. In areas under Russian control, approximately 4 million people are in acute need of humanitarian protection and assistance.

The foregoing figures demonstrate the devastating nature of Russia's actions in Ukraine. We must not forget that behind every number in these millions is a person, a brother or a sister, a mother or a father, whose normal life has been destroyed by Russia's aggression.

I will focus on the situation in Bakhmut. The city has been subject to near constant shelling, with civilian infrastructure, such as schools, water and energy and health facilities, suffering significant damage. There are not many buildings left standing, and the humanitarian consequences of Russia's brutal assault are extreme.

Humanitarian assistance entering the city stopped mid-February when the fighting intensified, and it became too dangerous for most aid to get in. Nearly 4,000 civilians remain, hiding in basements. These people are severely vulnerable, in particular children, persons with disabilities and the elderly. Only a limited number of local volunteer groups have been able to distribute assistance, at great risk to their own personal safety.

We therefore call for unimpeded and sustained humanitarian access to the people of Ukraine, including in Bakhmut. Russia must stop denying access and cease its attacks on critical infrastructure and residential areas. Ukrainians must be allowed to seek safety wherever they choose.

As the Under-Secretary-General has made clear, the impact of Russia's actions is still being felt around the world. Commodity prices are up, and 345 million people face crisis levels of food insecurity, with close to 50 million people one step away from famine. This is the global cost of Russia's actions.

The United Kingdom strongly supports the efforts of the United Nations in partnership with Türkiye to continue bringing Ukrainian grain to the world markets. The Black Sea Grain Initiative is vital — the world needs Ukrainian grain. Everything should therefore be done to tackle global food insecurity and ensure that food assistance reaches those who need it most. We call on Russia to respect the terms of the deal and the latest 120-day extension.

Finally, the United Kingdom is fully committed to holding Russia to account for its illegal actions in Ukraine. The International Criminal Court's announcement today is an important step for ensuring those responsible are held accountable. Barbaric atrocities have been committed during this conflict, including against children. It is right that they should be independently investigated, and that those accountable face justice.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): I thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for his thorough briefing and for the United Nations efforts aimed at securing an extension of the Black Sea Grain Initiative.

As Under-Secretary-General Griffiths clearly outlined, as long as Russia continues to blockade Ukraine's ports, the world needs the Black Sea Grain Initiative. The Black Sea Grain Initiative slashes global food prices. It calms market volatility. It ameliorates global food security. It saves lives. It must continue, reliably and sustainably.

The Initiative must be allowed to operate efficiently. It must work at a pace that meets global demand. The delays imposed by Russia have already reduced the number of ships leaving port and increased transportation costs.

We agree with what the Secretary-General said during his visit to Kyiv two weeks ago: the Initiative should enable the greatest possible use of Black Sea export infrastructure. Right now, only three ports are free to operate, while global food prices remain at historic highs.

Ukraine's food exports are down by more than a third from last year. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has already disrupted the global food supply chain and caused a spike in food prices, pushing many more people into extreme poverty. The world needs the grain. It must flow freely.

Since the beginning of the Initiative, more than 24 million metric tons of grain and oilseed have been shipped worldwide, including humanitarian aid through the World Food Programme for the world's most food-insecure people. During his trip to Africa this past week, Secretary Blinken saw bags of wheat — gifts from the Ukrainian people — that had been delivered to Ethiopia as a result of the Black Sea Grain Initiative. That is grain that can feed the world. That is the critical assistance that is at stake.

We know, and the rest of the world knows, that Russia's exports of food are at least as high as their pre-war levels. When we hear the Russian Government say that it is being held back from exporting grain and fertilizer, the numbers show that that is just not true. When it comes to sanctions, we have gone to extraordinary lengths to communicate the clear carveouts for food and fertilizer to Governments and to the private sector. Simply put, sanctions are not the issue.

Beyond the Black Sea Grain Initiative, the Council must also focus on the continuing devastation and dire humanitarian needs caused by Russia's war in Ukraine. On 15 February, the United Nations announced that United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations will need \$3.9 billion to bring humanitarian aid to those inside Ukraine. That does not include the additional \$1.7 billion to support countries hosting millions of Ukrainian refugees.

For its part, since the invasion, the United States has provided nearly \$2 billion in humanitarian assistance to those in need in Ukraine and the region. We have provided nearly \$15.5 billion in direct budget support to the Government of Ukraine through World Bank mechanisms. We plan to provide an additional \$7.4 billion up to the end of September. We are doing our part, and we are asking the rest of the international community to do theirs. We should all dig deep, and we must do so without sacrificing a single cent to the many other urgent humanitarian crises around the world.

However, funding alone is not enough. Security Council members must continue to demand unhindered

humanitarian access across Ukraine, just as 141 Member States did last month (see General Assembly resolution ES-11/6). We must call out Russia's continued missile and drone attacks on civilians and critical infrastructure and how those attacks are preventing humanitarian assistance from reaching areas temporarily occupied by Russia.

Just last week, massive attacks destroyed residential buildings, electricity infrastructure and railways, killing at least 11 civilians. That was also the sixteenth major attack on Ukraine's energy infrastructure in the past five months, showing flagrant disregard for nuclear safety.

Russia's attacks have even resulted in the deaths and injuries of humanitarian workers. Women and girls in particular have faced frightening and dramatic increases in trafficking and gender-based violence as they tried to flee for their lives. Today, as we wrap up the sixty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women, let us all commit to holding Russia's forces accountable for such atrocities.

There is, of course, one way to instantly prevent further suffering. Russia can heed the demands of the United Nations and the world's Member States to withdraw immediately, completely and unconditionally from Ukraine. Until then, let us do everything that we can to help the people of Ukraine and all those affected by the fallout of this horrific and unnecessary war.

Ms. Koumby Missambo (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I thank Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths for his enlightening briefing.

There has already been a year of destructive war, and there is no way out in sight. On the contrary, the escalation continues and is becoming increasingly widespread on the ground and in the air. After a year, the cost of the war in terms of human and material losses is increasing on a daily basis and continues to exacerbate Ukraine's economic situation and impede the prospects for Ukraine's reconstruction. As a result, the humanitarian situation is steadily deteriorating. Civilians and civilian infrastructure continue to be targeted by relentless and extensive bombing. No area has been spared, and the parties do not hesitate to strike energy infrastructure, which has been a prime target for holding operations of all sorts for some time.

In recent days, the tensions regarding the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant suggest that the risk

of a nuclear accident is still a possibility that should not be overlooked. We reiterate that access to water, energy and other essential public services must not be subject to any blackmail.

My country reiterates its condemnation of attacks on civilian populations and infrastructure and any kind of strike targeting innocent populations, in particular women and children, and reminds the belligerents of their obligations under international humanitarian law. Even in a situation of war, human rights must be safeguarded.

Security Council meetings must be geared towards finding a solution for the victims of the war in Ukraine and for the more than 8 million refugees, 5 million internally displaced persons and more than 17 million Ukrainians in need of humanitarian aid. Prospects must be offered to the young people of Ukraine, the dispersed families and the thousands of children whose lives and schooling have been disrupted.

It is quite clear that the war is becoming increasingly entrenched, as are the dire international consequences in terms of the soaring prices of consumer goods. In some countries, there have been waves of protest and unrest recently against the rising cost of living and the fact that purchasing power has been reduced as a result of soaring inflation.

We call on the parties to renew the Black Sea Grain Initiative for the duration provided for by the original agreement, and we express our support for the facilitators' ongoing commitment. We welcome and encourage all efforts to remove all obstacles to the agreement's full and complete implementation for the benefit of all parties.

We have taken note of the recent report of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the assessment of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations concerning, in particular, grain exports to developing countries and their impact on the global cereals price index.

The signing of the agreement also remains a beacon of hope and a potential platform on which broader initiatives can be built to chart a course towards the cessation of hostilities. We continue to urge all parties to safeguard such an outcome.

I reiterate my country's condemnation of war, the use of weapons of mass destruction and the use of any methods of warfare aimed at spreading fear and

causing unnecessary suffering to civilian populations. My country expresses its support and encouragement to humanitarian personnel working in combat areas and in countries hosting refugees for their remarkable work and their ongoing efforts to try to restore a little humanity to the daily lives of those who have lost all hope as a result of the war.

In conclusion, we call on the parties to commit to peace through frank and direct dialogue and to refrain from unilateral actions that could narrow the window of opportunity for negotiations or draw us further away from such an opportunity. My country continues to believe that a political solution is the only option and that peaceful coexistence is the ultimate goal.

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

I want to begin by thanking Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for his important briefing. I would also like to recognize the presence in the Chamber of the Permanent Representatives of Denmark, Lithuania, Ukraine and the European Union.

As we enter the second year of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the humanitarian toll keeps mounting, the prospects for peace keep receding and the resources needed to alleviate the human suffering keep multiplying. Mozambique strongly believes that the best and most effective support that the Council can give the humanitarian efforts in Ukraine is by stepping up its efforts to bring the conflict to an end. Our own experience in Mozambique shows that there is no humanitarian solution to humanitarian problems. Only negotiated political solutions can solve them.

However, Mozambique notes that notwithstanding our repeated calls for dialogue and our appeals to the parties to return to the negotiating table, there has been little or no progress in the direction of peace. Nor have the parties heeded our repeated warnings about the increasing spillover effects of the conflict to other parts of the world or the ever-present danger of strategic miscalculation. We have said that the conflict is constraining the ability of the humanitarian community to muster an appropriate and rapid response to other challenges throughout the globe, whether those are earthquakes in Türkiye or cyclones affecting countries such as Mozambique, Malawi and Madagascar.

We welcome the willingness expressed by some members of the international community to facilitate,

mediate and promote peace initiatives, with the consent of all parties and in good faith. We have urged the parties on several occasions to seize and build on the few signs of goodwill shown during the conflict, such as prisoner exchanges and the Black Sea Grain Initiative, with a view to achieving a de-escalation. However, we must realistically concede that the more than 22 Council meetings dedicated to Ukraine alone since 2022, along with multiple warnings and offers of mediation, have so far yielded no positive momentum towards peace. It is high time for us to redouble our efforts to take concrete and pragmatic steps to end the conflict while increasing humanitarian assistance. The Black Sea Grain Initiative, aptly described by Mr. Griffiths as a beacon of hope against a bleak backdrop, and in our view a rare bright spot of multilateral diplomacy, expires tomorrow. We hope that it will be extended immediately.

As the Secretary-General stressed recently, we must do everything possible to preserve the integrity of the Black Sea Grain Initiative and ensure its continuity. That is in the interests of the people of Ukraine and of the world at large. We once again urge all the parties involved to set aside their differences and allow the extension and possibly indefinite roll-out of those life-saving arrangements, essential to countries like mine that are already dealing with acute and imminent threats to food security. Mozambique believes that the unity of the Council on the issue is essential.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

Mr. Kyslytsya (Ukraine): I commend the Security Council for upholding multiple General Assembly resolutions on Ukraine's territorial integrity by not allowing the Russian citizen — and so-called ombudsperson of a part of Ukraine's Donetsk region that Russia tried to annex — to address the Council. We thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for his briefing, which has once again highlighted the devastating humanitarian impact of the Russian aggression. We commend United Nations efforts for a resolute humanitarian response in my country. United Nations-led operations provide a lifeline for millions of Ukrainians affected by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

We also appreciate the fact that the Secretary-General, while visiting Kyiv on 8 March, clearly confirmed the United Nations commitment to working

hard to mitigate the impact of the war until a just peace can be attained. According to the Secretary-General, a just peace would mean that the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine must be upheld within its internationally recognized borders, established at independence in 1991.

Should it be a surprise that Russia responded to that visit in the same way that it did on previous occasions when the Secretary-General was in Kyiv? That is, with missile shelling. Eighty-one missiles of various types were immediately launched to kill Ukrainians and destroy civilian infrastructure upon the visit of the Secretary-General. It was the fifteenth massive missile strike since October 2022, when the destruction of civilian infrastructure, in particular energy facilities, was publicly declared by Russia as a method of warfare.

As a result of the missile terror, which peaked in the winter season, for the time being Ukraine has lost 44 per cent of its nuclear generation, 75 per cent of its thermal power plant capacity and 33 per cent of its combined heat and power plants. However, Russia has failed to bring Ukraine to its knees by terrorizing it with missiles. It is also failing on the battlefield, as it burns through more and more regular military units and Wagner Group mercenaries near the town of Bahkmut.

The irrational enmity towards Ukraine and Ukrainians keeps the peace efforts in a stalemate. Russia continues to ignore the will of the General Assembly as expressed in resolution ES-11/6, entitled "Principles of the Charter of the United Nations underlying a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine". Russia rejects the peace plan formula offered by the President of Ukraine, which follows the same logic as resolution ES-11/6. Instead, Russia persists with its warmongering rhetoric and, through Putin's spokesperson, threatens that it will continue to achieve its goals and that "now it is possible only by military means".

The report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, which was circulated yesterday, provides us with a shocking record of crimes that might seem unbelievable in the twenty-first century. Let me cite just a few examples of the Commission's findings, and let me remind everyone here — and those who listen to us — that these are not our Government's findings. They are the findings of the United Nations and include the following:

“Rapes were committed at gunpoint, with extreme brutality and with acts of torture, such as beatings and strangling. Perpetrators at times threatened to kill the victim or her family, if she resisted. In some cases, more than one soldier raped the same victim, or rape of the same victim was committed several times. In one incident, the victim was pregnant and begged, in vain, the soldiers to spare her; she had a miscarriage a few days later. Perpetrators also, in some instances, executed or tortured husbands and other male relatives. Family members, including children, were sometimes forced to watch perpetrators rape their loved ones.”

The United Nations also established the following fact:

“Detention, interrogation, torture, or ill-treatment often preceded execution. Some victims were found with hands or feet tied. According to medical records and photographs, the most common method of killing was a gunshot to the head at close range.”

Highlighting the issue of forced transfers and deportations of children, the Commission stated that

“the onus to trace and find parents or family members fell primarily on the children. Parents and relatives encountered considerable logistical, financial and security challenges in retrieving their children. In some cases, it took weeks or months for families to be reunited. Witnesses told the Commission that many of the smaller children transferred have not been able to establish contact with their families and might, as a consequence, lose contact with them indefinitely”.

We welcome the fact that today the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for two individuals who are allegedly responsible for the war crimes of the unlawful deportation of population (children) and the unlawful transfer of population (children) from the occupied areas of Ukraine to the Russian Federation. There are reasonable grounds to believe that those persons bear individual criminal responsibility for the aforementioned crimes. Their names are Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation, and Maria Lvova-Belova, so-called Commissioner for Children's Rights in the Office of the President of the Russian Federation. That step testifies once again that the process of ensuring justice is proceeding, and sooner or

later it will end with Putin, Lvova-Belova and other war criminals in the dock.

Russia's war has taken a terrible human toll, leaving tens of thousands of civilians killed, injured or maimed. The tactics of siege and scorched earth employed by Russia have resulted in the destruction of some 59,000 residential buildings, 436 hospitals and more than 2,200 educational institutions. Those numbers do not include the temporarily occupied areas, in which the real level of destruction is much higher. As Russia's attacks continue to mount, 17.6 million Ukrainians — about 40 per cent of the population — remain in dire need of humanitarian assistance. The increasing level of land-mine contamination in Ukraine constitutes another grave threat to its people. Russia's war of aggression has turned Ukraine into one of the most mine-contaminated countries in the world. In total, according to the State Emergency Service of Ukraine, the territory of Ukraine that is considered to be contaminated is about 174,000 square kilometres — or 30 per cent of the entire territory of our country. The Russian forces in Ukraine widely use anti-personnel landmines and cluster munitions, planting mines on civilian roads, pathways, residential areas and agricultural fields. Nearly 50,000 square kilometres of agricultural land are currently unsuitable for use due to mines, explosive hazards and armed hostilities.

Even under those extraordinary circumstances, Ukraine has fulfilled its obligations under the Black Sea Grain Initiative, which alleviates the food crisis in the world and prevents many new crises from emerging. Since 1 August, 814 vessels have exported 24.4 million tons of Ukrainian food from the ports of Odesa to Asia, Europe and Africa within the framework of the Black Sea Grain Initiative. That volume could have been significantly higher if Russia had not had a policy of delaying the inspection of vessels. Owing to the shortages in terms of the new fleet and the queue in the territorial waters of Türkiye, the export of foodstuffs via the grain corridor does not exceed 3.4 million tons per month, despite Ukraine's ability to give the world 6 million tons per month of its agricultural products.

For example, only 149 inspections were carried out in February despite the fact that 296 inspections had been planned for that month. In addition, as a result of such actions, there are continuous queues of vessels — between 120 and 140 vessels — and Ukrainian ports face the problem of a shortage of new vessels for loading. Today, 86 vessels that are due to be

sent for loading are still awaiting inspection in Turkish territorial waters.

The Black Sea Grain Initiative should be renewed after it expires on 18 March for at least 120 days, as is foreseen, or for an unlimited period. Its coverage should be expanded to Ukrainian ports in the Mykolayiv region. Today more than 30 countries and the European Union joined the “Grain from Ukraine” humanitarian programme launched by President Zelenskyy to help the poorest countries of the world with food. The programme raised almost \$200 million and sent more than 140,000 tons of Ukrainian grain to countries suffering from hunger. We call on countries around the world wishing to make their contribution to global food security to join that initiative.

Yesterday Ukraine paid tribute to the victims of one of the most horrendous Russian war crimes. A year ago, Russian aerial bombing destroyed a theatre in Mariupol — a building that was being used as a shelter and was clearly identified with a sign that read “Children”. We still do not know the exact number of victims and Russia did everything it could to mop up the traces of its crime as soon as Mariupol was occupied.

Every day of the war and every day of the Russian presence in Ukraine multiplies the suffering of the Ukrainian people. The war must be brought to an end, and it must be followed by accountability for the aggressor. We appreciate the international community’s strong stance in striving for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace based on the principles of the Charter. Ukraine is ready to implement that approach, which all peace efforts and proposals should be based on. We urge Member States to contribute to the implementation of General Assembly resolution ES-11/6, adopted at its emergency special session on 23 February. That should include stepping up pressure on the Russian Federation to abandon its aggressive course. Until that happens, Ukraine will continue to defend itself, the principles of the Charter and the rules-based order.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Skoog.

Mr. Skoog: I would like to say a few words on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the potential candidate country Georgia and Andorra, align themselves with this statement.

For more than a year now Russia has been struggling to find any justification whatsoever for its war of aggression against Ukraine. We are well aware of the toll that Russia’s escalating aggression is taking, with daily missile strikes that are costing innocent Ukrainians’ lives. We have just heard living examples of that from the Ukrainian Ambassador and from many other speakers around the table today. While the world is suffering from soaring food prices, Russia’s war continues to hamper efforts to export Ukrainian grain. That must end. I will emphasize three points today — first, the global consequences of Russia’s full-scale invasion; secondly, its systematic attacks on civilians and critical infrastructure; and thirdly, the need for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace.

First, the war has disrupted agricultural production and trade and has driven world food and fertilizer prices to unprecedented levels. We must all work together to address those serious consequences, and we welcome the Secretary-General’s engagement in that regard. We echo the plea made by 14 members of the Council this afternoon for the Black Sea Grain Initiative to be renewed in order to provide the continuity and predictability needed by operators and to avoid discontinuations in shipments of grain to developing countries. The Initiative has been instrumental in bringing down global food prices and it needs to run at its full potential.

In addition to the Black Sea Grain Initiative, the EU’s solidarity lanes have enabled the export of more than 29 million tons of Ukraine’s food and agricultural goods to the world. Vessels chartered by the World Food Programme have transported more than 481,000 metric tons of wheat through various Black Sea ports, including to Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia and Kenya. Ukraine is also helping those in need, despite the effects of the war on its population. Through the Grain from Ukraine programme, 175,000 metric tons of grain have been donated to countries in need. Many EU member States are also proud to be part of that Ukrainian initiative.

Let us be absolutely clear. It is Russia’s war that has rocked the markets. Russia’s fertilizer exports are exempt from EU sanctions. United Nations data clearly demonstrates that the volume of the total exports of Russian fertilizers to developing countries remained stable in 2022 compared with previous years. Moreover, Russian revenue from fertilizer exports jumped by 70 per cent in the first 10 months of last year compared

to the same period in 2021, according to data from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Russia conveniently omits to mention its own export taxes and quotas on both cereals and fertilizers, which lead to artificial increases in global prices and the profits of Russian companies at the expense of those most in need.

At a time of unprecedented humanitarian needs, the EU not only supports Ukrainians but remains collectively among the largest donors of humanitarian aid globally. We are grateful to all countries that are generously supporting those in need in Ukraine and elsewhere and encourage all to step up their assistance, in line with the appeal by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for aid for this year. I want to make one absolutely thing clear here. The humanitarian funding that the EU allocates to Ukraine does not come at the expense of other humanitarian needs worldwide, which Mr. Griffiths eloquently described earlier today. The EU remains consistently at the forefront of efforts to meet those needs.

Secondly, as we have heard, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine set up by the Human Rights Council concluded yesterday that Russia has committed numerous violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, in addition to a wide range of war crimes. The findings are shocking. The crimes include sexual violence, forced deportation, torture and other forms of inhumane and degrading treatment as a tactic of war. We also heard about cases of rape just now. We continue to be appalled by Russia's continued, systematic and indiscriminate attacks on civilians and critical infrastructure, which we condemn in the strongest possible terms. Russia's shelling is killing civilians and depriving them of electricity, heat and water during winter. The accumulated damage to the energy system and the consequent difficulties in accessing electricity and heating services are exacerbating the humanitarian situation.

Many of Ukraine's cities have been bombed to ruins. We just heard the Russian Ambassador say that Russia uses only high-precision weaponry, which would seem to constitute a confession that such destruction is intentional and deliberate. We welcome the fact that following the General Assembly's adoption of resolution ES-11/5, on a register of damage, all such acts committed by Russia in Ukraine will be carefully recorded. We are also extremely concerned about the

Russian offensive against Bakhmut. We note that the military operation is led by the infamous Wagner Group, known for its abuses and serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law, and not just in Ukraine. We want to once again recall the importance of upholding human rights and international humanitarian law, and of ensuring that all commanders, perpetrators and accomplices of war crimes and other most serious crimes committed in connection with Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine are held to account. Russia must also enable safe, rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access to the temporarily occupied territories through the front lines.

On 9 March, the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant was again cut off from Ukraine's power grid for several hours, with cooling depending solely on diesel generators, for the sixth time since the start of the war. The head of the International Atomic Energy Agency issued a warning about safety and security at the plant. That is extremely worrying for all of us. The EU fully supports the work of the United Nations in assisting Ukraine in ensuring nuclear safety and security and maintaining the implementation of the safeguards pursuant to Ukraine's obligations.

Finally, we reiterate our call for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in line with resolution ES-11/6, adopted by the General Assembly on 23 February with the support of an overwhelming majority of the States Members of the United Nations. We express our support for President Zelenskyy's peace formula and reaffirm our commitment to working actively with Ukraine on the 10-point peace plan. It is clear that a large majority of the United Nations membership, including Council members, are committed to peace in line with the Charter of the United Nations. But while the General Assembly once again called for a peaceful long-term solution based on the Charter and respect for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, Russia has continued and is in fact stepping up its offensive. We reiterate our call on Russia to immediately cease all hostilities and unconditionally, completely and immediately withdraw all its forces and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

While Russia's war lasts, the European Union will remain steadfast in its support to the people of Ukraine for as long as it takes.

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

Mr. Hermann (Denmark): I thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for his briefing.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the five Nordic countries — Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and of course my own country, Denmark.

Allow me first to express our condolences for the devastation caused by Cyclone Freddy to those affected in Mozambique, as well as in Malawi and Madagascar. We stand with them in solidarity, as we stand with the people of Ukraine.

Last month, an overwhelming majority of Member States from all regions of the world adopted a resolution for peace in Ukraine (General Assembly resolution ES-11/6) and once again demanded that Russia immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraw from the territory of Ukraine (see A/ES-11/PV.19). The General Assembly underscored the need to reach, as soon as possible, a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in line with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. And we reaffirmed our commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

The Nordic countries would like to highlight the following three areas of concern: first, the disruptive global consequences of Russia's war of aggression and the importance of the continuation of the Black Sea Grain Initiative for global food security; secondly, Russia's ongoing violations of international law and the obligation to provide full, safe and unhindered access for humanitarian actors; and thirdly, the impacts of conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence.

Russia's illegal invasion has had shattering consequences, and not only for the people of Ukraine. It has also worsened the humanitarian situation globally. Russia's war of aggression has hampered Ukraine's ability to produce and export grain and other agricultural products that are much needed in communities around the world. We, the Nordic countries, are determined to be at the forefront of mitigating the disruptive, global consequences of the war. We have continued our efforts to assist where the needs are greatest. That includes countries in Africa, where existing food insecurity has been made worse by the decline in exports from Ukraine.

The continuation of the Black Sea Grain Initiative is imperative to mitigating the food insecurity caused by

Russia's war against Ukraine, especially in developing countries. The Initiative has ensured exports of more than 24 million tons of grain and other foodstuff from Ukraine since August 2022. It has helped to stabilize global food markets and food prices, and it has ensured the delivery of food to countries in need. We urge Russia to be part of a solution to ensure a 120-day rollover of the Black Sea Grain Initiative, in line with the Istanbul agreement.

In Ukraine, the violence and destruction show no signs of abating. Russia has resumed its deadly and destructive missile attacks. The most recent report by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, published yesterday, concludes that Russia has committed numerous violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, in addition to a wide range of war crimes. The findings are shocking and include sexual violence, torture and the forced transfer and deportation of children from Ukraine and their illegal adoption in Russia. Such acts are in violation of international humanitarian law and may amount to war crimes.

The Commission has further documented indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks in populated areas causing excessive suffering and harm to civilians and civilian objects, including hospitals and schools. Russia's attacks on civilian infrastructure, including the systematic targeting of energy-related infrastructure, may amount to crimes against humanity. This is real. It means, for instance, that pregnant women are denied prenatal care and forced to give birth under dangerous circumstances. We call on all parties to protect health care and the provision of reproductive health services — not only in accordance with international humanitarian law, but as a basic human right.

The need to ensure protection for all civilians is a key humanitarian prerogative. However, Russia continues to violate our agreed norms and rules of armed conflict. We call on all parties to comply with their obligations under international law and to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure, as well as to enable full, safe and unhindered access for humanitarian actors.

Lastly, we would like to draw attention to the alarming reports of sexual and gender-based violence in Ukraine. The violence is perpetrated, overwhelmingly, by Russian military personnel against Ukrainian women, girls, men and boys. Conflict-related sexual violence is

a clear violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law and may constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity.

We must listen to the survivors of violence. They demand justice, but also dignity and support to continue their lives. Investing in the mental health and psychosocial well-being of survivors is an investment — not only in their recovery, but also in sustainable peace and national resilience.

In conclusion, the Nordic countries will continue to stand with Ukraine and its people. We commend Ukraine's initiative for a just peace and support the various initiatives established to secure accountability for atrocity crimes committed in Ukraine.

The President: In my capacity as the representative of Mozambique, I would like to thank the representative of Denmark, speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, for his expression of solidarity towards the people of Mozambique, Malawi and Madagascar.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Lithuania.

Mr. Paulauskas (Lithuania): I am speaking on behalf of the Baltic States — Latvia, Estonia and my own country, Lithuania. I also thank Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths for his briefing.

For more than a year, Russia has pursued its war of aggression against Ukraine. Thousands of civilians have been killed and injured, millions forced from their homes and their jobs and livelihoods destroyed, with many left struggling to access food, water, health care, education and a safe place to live.

The humanitarian toll of Russia's unprovoked war against Ukraine continues to mount. The situation in Ukraine remains a massive humanitarian crisis, with almost 18 million people in need of humanitarian aid. Nearly 6 million are internally displaced, forced to flee their homes in search of safety and shelter. Eight million people have sought refuge in Europe and other countries.

We have seen, day after day, cynical disregard by the Russian Federation of international humanitarian law. Russian missiles and drones destroy Ukrainian cities and infrastructure, kill and injure civilians, and damage roads, homes, schools, medical facilities, farmland and power systems. Attacks on energy infrastructure in

the depths of winter caused an energy crisis, testing the entire country's resilience and deepening the humanitarian crisis. According to the World Health Organization, a staggering number — 859 — of attacks on health-care facilities have been reported since 24 February 2022.

The war has had a severe impact on children, with massive destruction of schools and displacement imposing immense challenges to the education system. It is estimated that, since the outbreak of the war, Russia has deported thousands of children from the newly occupied Ukrainian territories. Credible reports have shown that this operation is centrally coordinated by Russia's federal Government in an effort to erase Ukraine's identity and future. The report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine of the Human Rights Council, released on 15 March, concluded that

“Russian authorities have committed unlawful transfers and deportations of civilians and of other protected persons within Ukraine or to the Russian Federation, respectively. This is a war crime.”

This is a plain violation of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

In that regard, we also welcome the arrest warrants issued today by the International Criminal Court for Vladimir Putin and Maria Lvova-Belova for the war crimes of the unlawful deportation of children and the unlawful transfer of children from Ukraine to Russia. Russia must return those children to their parents and guardians, provide registration lists of the children it has removed and allow independent observers to access facilities within Russian-controlled or occupied areas of Ukraine and in Russia.

As Ukraine continues to defend itself against this aggression, it is important to remember what Russia's occupation of parts of Ukraine means for the people: filtration operations, summary executions and torture, rape and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence.

Russia's war has also greatly exacerbated the global food security crisis. We support the Grain from Ukraine initiative and the Black Sea Grain Initiative, as well as European Union solidarity lanes, which help to reduce the global cost of food and provide food supplies to the most vulnerable populations. Russia must allow the unrestricted movement of grain from Ukraine's

ports and extend the Black Sea Grain Initiative beyond 18 March.

The international community has provided much-needed aid, with United Nations agencies and local and international civil society organizations working tirelessly to ease the suffering of the Ukrainian people. Humanitarian aid must reach those in need safely and without impediments. Providing support for Ukraine is at the heart of our foreign policy. The Baltic States, together with Poland, make up the top four donors of bilateral aid to Ukraine, based on percentage of gross domestic product. We are proud to have been among the first to provide military assistance, and we grant protection to nearly 200,000 Ukrainian refugees and provide humanitarian relief. Behind those efforts are private citizens and businesses — they have welcomed Ukrainians into their own homes and donated millions of euros to support Ukraine's armed forces.

We fully support President Zelenskyy's 10-point peace plan and Ukraine's efforts to secure a just and sustainable peace, in line with the Charter of the United Nations, international law and General

Assembly resolutions. Until then, we stand with Ukraine as it exercises its inherent right to self-defence against Russia's war of aggression, in accordance with international law, notably Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, and we will continue doing so for so long as it takes.

Russia must end the war by fully withdrawing its forces from all occupied territories in Ukraine. That is the most effective way to end the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. There must also be full accountability for the perpetrators. The International Criminal Court, regional bodies and individual States must prosecute those responsible for war crimes, crimes against humanity and the crime of genocide in Ukraine. Today's arrest warrant issued by the International Criminal Court represents a powerful first step in that direction and an international special tribunal should be created to prosecute the crime of aggression. Lastly, we should explore all legal means to ensure that Russian assets are used to compensate for all the material and moral damage caused by the aggression.

The meeting rose at 6.50 p.m.