



Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

9340th meeting
 Tuesday, 6 June 2023, 4 p.m.
 New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Abushahab (United Arab Emirates)

Members:

Albania	Mr. Hoxha
Brazil	Mr. De Almeida Filho
China	Mr. Zhang Jun
Ecuador	Mr. Pérez Loose
France	Mr. De Rivière
Gabon	Ms. Koumby Missambo
Ghana	Ms. Oppong-Ntiri
Japan	Mr. Ishikane
Malta	Ms. Gatt
Mozambique	Mr. Fernandes
Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
Switzerland	Mr. Hauri
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Kariuki
United States of America	Mr. Wood

Agenda

Maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine
 Threats to international peace and security

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room AB-0601 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org>).

23-16114 (E)



Accessible document

Please recycle



The meeting was called to order at 4 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine

Threats to international peace and security

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Latvia, Poland 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.

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

I give the floor to Mr. Griffiths.

Mr. Griffiths: I thank you, Mr. President, for this chance to speak on this particularly tragic day.

We have all seen the terrifying pictures of the catastrophe unfolding in Ukraine's Kherson region as we speak. The destruction of the Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant dam is one of the most significant incidents of damage to civilian infrastructure since the start of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. The sheer magnitude of the catastrophe will only become fully realized in the coming days, but it is already clear that it will have grave and far-reaching consequences for thousands of people in southern Ukraine — on both sides of the front line — through the loss of homes, food, safe water and livelihoods.

The Kakhovka Reservoir, which is formed by the dam, is a lifeline in the region and a critical water source for millions of people, not only in Kherson but also in Zaporizhzhya and Dnipro oblasts. Ukrainian authorities report that at least 40 settlements are already flooded or partially flooded in Kherson oblast, and that number is expected to rise in the coming days. Severe impact is also expected in areas controlled by the Russian Federation where humanitarians — my colleagues — are still struggling to gain access.

The United Nations and humanitarian organizations have already stepped up operations today to try to

address the impacts of this event. An emergency response is under way to provide urgent assistance to more than 16,000 affected people. That support includes drinking water, cash assistance and psychosocial support. Those efforts, which are a complement separate from and in addition to the Government of Ukraine's response, include the sending of additional equipment such as power generators, mobile water-filter equipment and transportation for water trucking, with water being such a key issue resulting from this devastation. Multidisciplinary mobile teams have also been deployed to train and bus stations across the oblast to support those seeking evacuation. Cities in the west are preparing to receive those evacuees — families facing tragedy.

When I last briefed the Security Council on the situation in Ukraine just three weeks ago (see S/PV.9321), I highlighted the civilian death and suffering being caused by the conflict on both sides of the front line. I mentioned the loss of health care, water, electricity and heating for thousands of people and the massive numbers of those forcibly displaced. Today's news means the plight of people in Ukraine is set to get even worse than the picture we had of it then. Immediate humanitarian needs are expected to grow as floodwaters move over the coming days and as assessments of the situation and the response continue.

The Kakhovka dam is a key source of agricultural irrigation in southern Kherson and the Crimean peninsula. The sustained flooding displayed on our screens today will disrupt farming activities, damage livestock and fisheries and bring about widespread longer-term consequences. This is a massive blow to a food-production sector that, as we know, is already significantly damaged.

We are particularly concerned about the risks of mine and explosive ordnance contamination, as fast-moving water shifts projectiles to areas previously assessed as safe, thereby putting people in further and unpredictable danger. At least 30 per cent of Ukraine's territory is mine-contaminated, according to the Ukrainian authorities, with Kherson oblast being the most affected in the country. The destruction of the dam may also, of course, negatively affect electricity generation. In addition, any uncontrolled decrease in the water level of the Kakhovka reservoir may negatively affect the safety of the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant downstream. Our colleagues at the International Atomic Energy Agency are closely monitoring the

situation. As of this time, no immediate threat has been reported.

The United Nations has no access to independent information on the circumstances that led to the destruction in the hydroelectric power plant and dam. Yet international humanitarian law is very clear: installations containing dangerous forces, such as dams, must receive special protection precisely because their destruction can cause severe loss for the civilian population. Constant care must therefore be taken to spare civilians and civilian infrastructure throughout all types of military operations. The damage caused by the dam's destruction means that life will become intolerably harder for those already suffering from the conflict. The consequences of not being able to deliver assistance to the millions of people affected by the flooding in those areas are potentially catastrophic and, as yet, unmeasured.

We stand ready to do everything we can to ensure we reach all those who have been affected and need assistance, but that will neither be easy nor straightforward. We are extremely concerned about the people in the affected areas that we are currently unable to reach, and we are operationally ready, at any time, to move with inter-agency convoys and aid personnel into Russian-controlled areas as well as those affected by today's events.

The people of Ukraine have shown extraordinary resilience. Our urgent humanitarian task is to continue to help them to survive — and then to be safe and to have a future — and we will do so in our terms to the best of our ability. And we of course stand ready to keep the Council abreast of any developments.

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. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): On the night of 6 June, the Kyiv regime committed the unthinkable crime of breaching the dam of the Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant, which resulted in the uncontrolled release of water downstream on the Dnipro River. Settlements have been flooded. Thousands of people are in need of evacuation, which has already begun. Agriculture in the region and the ecosystem of the Dnipro estuary have suffered enormous damage. I would like to underscore that the leadership of the Armed Forces of

Ukraine had openly declared its readiness to destroy the dam to gain a military advantage as early as last year. A 29 December 2022 article from *The Washington Post* — listen closely — states,

“Major General Kovalchuk considered flooding the river. ‘The Ukrainians’, he said, ‘even conducted a test strike with HIMARS launchers on one of the floodgates at the Nova Kakhovka dam, making three holes in the metal to see if the Dnipro’s water could be raised enough to stymie Russian crossings but not flood nearby villages. ‘The test was a success’, Kovalchuk said. But the step remained a last resort. He held off.”

We have warned the international community and the United Nations leadership about that threat. At the end of October 2022, we circulated, as an official document of the Security Council, a note from the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation on the Kyiv regime's plans to destroy the Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant. We regret that our appeals to the Secretary-General to do everything possible to prevent this horrendous crime were not duly taken into account. This time, with its sense of total impunity and the encouragement of its Western backers, the Kyiv regime decided to carry out its terrorist plan. It is becoming increasingly difficult to convince anyone that the Ukrainian conflict is supposedly the result of Russia's so-called unprovoked aggression. Only the United States and its closest allies today continue to deny the fact that Ukraine's Western sponsors have long and purposefully prepared Ukraine for war with Russia since the unconstitutional Maidan coup, while egregiously ignoring the nine-year war of the Maidan Government with its Russian-speaking populations in the east and south-east of the country, which killed thousands of civilians and ending which was the primary purpose of Russia's special military operation in Ukraine.

We are already seeing a coordinated information — or rather, disinformation — campaign. We are hearing statements from the West and, of course, Kyiv. And we are sure to hear today in this Chamber that the Kakhovka hydroelectric dam was brought down by Russia. Such statements follow the same flawed logic that attribute to Russia the shelling of the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant and the destruction of the Nord Stream pipelines. Drawing such “conclusions” reeks of schizophrenia, perhaps not even latent schizophrenia. Kyiv's deliberate act of

sabotage against this critical piece of infrastructure is extremely dangerous and can, in fact, be classified as a war crime or terrorism. Attacks on installations containing dangerous forces are expressly prohibited under international humanitarian law, with the specific mention of dams in article 56 of Protocol Additional I to the Geneva Conventions of 1977.

Kyiv's sabotage has two obvious goals.

The first is to draw maximum attention to itself in order to create favourable opportunities to regroup the units of the Ukrainian Armed Forces and continue the much-publicized and so-called counteroffensive, which is clearly becoming bogged down and failing to achieve Kyiv's set goals. According to information obtained by our Ministry of Defence, Kyiv has begun building up defensive positions on the right bank of the Dnipro River, which indicates that the Ukrainian forces intend to change to a defensive posture.

The second goal of today's attack is to inflict maximum humanitarian damage on the population of vast territories, which inevitably results from the destruction of a major water and energy infrastructure facility. The authorities of the Kherson region of the Russian Federation are currently evacuating the population from flood-prone areas. The explosion at the hydroelectric plant has already led to an environmental disaster. Dozens of settlements located downstream of the Dnipro River have been flooded. The water level in the Kakhovka reservoir and the North Crimean Canal, which supplies water to the Crimean peninsula, is dropping. In other words, Kyiv has once again set out to take revenge on the Crimean people for choosing Russia by depriving them of water. We are also not ruling out an implicit attempt at provocations involving the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant.

At the same time, the Kyiv authorities have significantly increased the release of water from the Dnepropetrovsk hydroelectric power plant, which is leading to even more flooding in the territories and indicates that the sabotage was premeditated in order to inflict the most severe consequences on the population of the region. In our view, the criminal Kyiv regime and its Western sponsors that are persistently stoking it with weapons bear full responsibility for the unfolding tragedy. This act can be seen as a continuation of the systematic tactic that the Kyiv regime has used since 2014, which consists of striking purely civilian targets for the sole purpose of intimidating the civilian

population. That is explicitly prohibited by Article 51 of the same Protocol Additional. The use of terrorist methods has already become an official tactic of the Kyiv regime, which openly brags about it. It has bombed the Crimean Bridge, assassinated Daria Dugina and Vladlen Tatarskiy and attempted to assassinate Zakhar Prilepin. The Chief of Military Intelligence of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, Kirill Budanov, has publicly announced plans for the further terrorist extermination of Russians. And Western delegations have not uttered a word condemning those actions.

The Kyiv regime has good teachers, who, *inter alia*, responsible for the Nord Stream pipeline explosion and targeted strikes on the Al-Tabqa dam in Syria. The West is used to having others do its dirty work. But in this case, hiding behind Kyiv's dysfunctional regime will not work. We know perfectly well who is actually planning, preparing and authorizing sabotage on this scale. It is deeply puzzling that the Secretariat repeatedly refuses to condemn the Kyiv's regime's attacks by citing a lack of information, as, for example, with regard to the shelling of the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant by the Armed Forces of Ukraine despite its obvious source. At the same time, the Secretariat's leadership does not hesitate to reiterate politicized conclusions that all such crimes are allegedly the result of Russia's actions in Ukraine. That is an unacceptable deviation from the principle of objectivity and impartiality by which the Secretariat leadership should be guided, according to Article 100 of the Charter of the United Nations.

We call on the Secretary-General to finally provide an objective assessment of and condemn the terrorist actions of the Kyiv regime. We urge for establishing all the circumstances behind the barbaric attack on the Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant. We cannot allow for the repetition of the Bucha tragedy or the bombing of the Nord Stream pipelines.

Mr. Hoxha (Albania): I thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for his briefing.

Here we are once again with dreadful news coming from Ukraine. A huge hydroelectric dam in the temporarily Russian-controlled part of southern Ukraine was blown up, unleashing a significant amount of water, now flowing freely through the dam and the hydroelectric power plant. You do not need to be a scientist to be able to anticipate its huge consequences. Estimating the damage caused to, and the destruction of,

civilian property will require time, and experts already warn that it will definitely have extensive, negative and long-term ecological and environmental consequences, not only for Ukraine but for neighbouring countries and regions as well. Under-Secretary-General Griffiths has already given us an initial grim picture, not to mention that, as a result, the cooling procedures at the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant may be seriously affected, as well.

Ukraine has directly accused Russia of the destruction. We just heard Russia claiming the opposite. As the Secretary-General stated earlier this morning, the United Nations has not been able to independently verify the facts but has clearly established that this is yet another catastrophic consequence of Russia's aggression in Ukraine. As we all know, there are two parallel wars going on — Russia's war of choice, which is killing civilians, committing crimes and destroying an entire country, and its propaganda war, which it is waging in trying to fool the world through a totally biased and intentionally distorted narrative despite the serious recurrent issue of credibility.

Let us have a closer look.

How many times did we hear in January and February last year that Russia had no intention of attacking Ukraine, until it shamelessly did? How many times have we heard, including in this Chamber, that everything happening since February 2022 is solely and entirely the fault of Ukraine, which, we know, it is not?

How many times have we heard that the despicable crimes committed in Bucha were staged? The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine and other credible reports have concluded otherwise.

Did we not hear endlessly that Russia never attacked civilians? The 20,000 Ukrainians killed or wounded and those millions uprooted from their homes were an exception.

Did they not say that Russia never forcefully deported children to give them up for adoption in Russia? The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Moscow Mechanism have proved otherwise and reached different conclusions.

The world witnessed in disbelief a room full of people laughing in New Delhi when the Russian Foreign

Minister claimed that Russia is defending itself from a war launched by Ukraine. One hundred and forty-three countries of the United Nations just do not buy it.

The world scientific community is still waiting for proof of the biolaboratories producing combat birds and armed mosquitoes and of the spread of pathogens using migratory birds and bats. They are nowhere to be seen. Everyone remembers the high alerts issued on the non-existent Ukrainian dirty bombs and so on.

Therefore, the simple question we have is: why would then the destruction of the dam be otherwise when we have witnessed, day and night, that Russia has not spared any effort in inflicting as much damage as possible to the civilian and critical infrastructure in Ukraine?

Did they not do everything to destroy power installations last winter to leave entire cities without electricity and heating, with the deliberate intention of forcing into submission civilians, families, women and children, girls, the elderly, the disabled and everyone actually or of leading them to freeze to death? What is there to say about the 2,600 schools and more than 1,250 health facilities destroyed or damaged already?

This is not about who speaks first; this is not about who speaks louder. This is about truth, rules, laws and accountability. And the international law is clear: deliberate attacks on critical civilian infrastructure amount to war crimes. The perpetrators directly or indirectly involved in such acts must be held accountable.

Whoever thinks that such acts, like others before it, despite their dire consequences, will affect the spirit of Ukrainians and deter them from fighting to defend and liberate their country should think twice, because, in all this, Ukraine is right, and Russia is wrong. That is why the international community will continue to help Ukraine and its people to defend themselves, their freedom and their dignity.

There is only one way to put an end to the consequences of this war and that is the complete withdrawal of all Russian troops from the internationally recognized border of Ukraine and engaging in sincere talks on finding solutions through diplomacy. Anything else would be perpetuating what we have seen so far — madness.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for his briefing.

Today we have seen yet another tragic outcome of Russia's unprovoked, full-scale invasion of Ukraine. It is deeply alarming and concerning that the Nova Kakhovka dam, a crucial hydroelectric plant on the Dnipro River, was destroyed. Its destruction has caused devastating floods and impacted the lives and livelihoods of tens of thousands of Ukrainian civilians along the river. We are in close touch with Ukrainian authorities on providing assistance to the many civilians displaced and forced to flee their homes for safety. And we will continue to work with humanitarian partners on the ground to provide assistance.

We regret the Council must meet on an urgent basis to discuss the destruction of the dam, which is yet another casualty in Russia's brutal, full-scale invasion of Ukraine. I want to make absolutely clear: it was Russia that started this war, it was Russia that occupied this area of Ukraine and it was Russian forces that took over the dam illegally last year and have been occupying ever since.

To be clear, deliberate attacks on civilian objects are prohibited by the law of war. As a party to Protocol II Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949, Russia has an obligation not to attack works or installations containing "dangerous forces, namely dams," if such attack may cause the release of dangerous forces and severe losses among the civilian population (Part IV, article 15).

The international community is again confronted with the devastation, immeasurable human toll and catastrophic damage to Ukraine's critical infrastructure caused by Russia's illegal war.

The dam's destruction risks massive ecological devastation, as Ukraine's already badly damaged critical infrastructure must once again absorb a devastating blow. Those downstream are under flood risk. The water supply to southern Ukraine, including Crimea, is at risk. Agricultural lands will likely also be impacted, further disrupting food production and impacting global food security.

The dam's destruction undermines the stability of Ukraine's power supply and could create additional challenges to maintaining safety in and around the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant. Although we understand the dam's destruction poses no immediate risk to the nuclear safety of the plant in the short term, we reiterate the call of the Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA):

Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant's cooling pond, which draws water from the dam's reservoir, must maintain its integrity and access to water, which is essential for cooling the reactors and their spent fuel. We call on Russia to reconnect the sensors that automatically report data to Ukraine's civilian regulators and to allow the IAEA to ensure the international community has reliable information on any radioactivity around the plant.

While investigations are under way, I will say again: the latest humanitarian, agricultural, energy and environmental crisis would not even exist had Russia not launched its brutal war against Ukraine. Russia's full-scale invasion continues to put innocent lives at risk and decimates the infrastructure, livelihoods and safety of the Ukrainian people.

The United States will continue to work with the international community to hold Russia to account for its aggression. We will continue to support Ukraine to defend itself in the face of the Kremlin's brutality. The way forward is clear: Russia must withdraw its troops from Ukraine's internationally recognized borders. It must end this war, and it must end the untold human suffering it has wrought.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): I am grateful to Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for his briefing.

The destruction of the Nova Kakhovka dam is truly an abhorrent act. The United Kingdom stands in solidarity with Ukraine and the thousands of Ukrainians who are tonight evacuating their homes or facing terrible damage to their livelihoods or water supply.

We stand ready to support Ukraine and all those affected by this catastrophe. And we are already working with humanitarian partners on the ground to supply aid. The United Kingdom has helped support them to pre-position supplies in case of an emergency like this.

As we have heard, this act has put thousands of civilians in danger and is causing severe environmental damage to the surrounding area. Flooding threatens to contaminate water supplies and vital natural habitats. Vast swathes of agricultural land and electricity supplies are also at risk. This in turn threatens food production and the international food trade.

This is the latest of many tragic consequences of President Putin's war, which will bring further terrible suffering to the people of Ukraine.

We have seen Russia indiscriminately attack civilians and critical civilian infrastructure time and time again in this war. If Russia proves to be responsible, it would be a new low in its conduct of this brutal war.

We will continue to carefully assess the evidence in the coming days. But let me repeat what we have said throughout: now is the time for President Putin to withdraw all his forces from Ukraine's sovereign territory and bring his war of aggression to an end.

Mr. Pérez Loose (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I too welcome the urgent convening of this meeting, and I welcome the briefing by Mr. Martin Griffiths, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

We express our strongest condemnation of the destruction of the Nova Kakhovka dam in the Kherson region of Ukraine, which, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross, is one of the most significant pieces of damage to critical infrastructure in Ukraine since the beginning of Russia's military aggression in February 2022.

The impact of such destruction has alarming ecological, economic and humanitarian consequences. The devastation, the loss of homes, the disruption of vital health services and the large-scale evacuations are deplorable. We are also concerned about how long the impact of this destruction on people and their livelihoods will last. We regret that this is happening when only a fortnight ago we held a meeting in the Council on the protection of civilians (see S/PV.9327), in the context of the fifth anniversary of resolution 2417 (2018).

With more than 700 critical infrastructure facilities damaged or destroyed by the war, lives and access to basic services continue to be jeopardized, affecting women and children in particular.

We reiterate the centrality of accountability to ensure that no attack on civilian infrastructure goes unpunished. We recall that the parties must comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and that dams must be afforded special protection at all times because of the risk to the population if they are damaged.

We regret that the mitigation and response capacities in the dam area are adversely affected due to the de facto interim administrative situation resulting from the invasion and military occupation. We support

the call of Secretary-General António Guterres for safe and unimpeded humanitarian access so as to facilitate a timely response.

We commend the efforts of the United Nations and its humanitarian partners for vital assistance, including safe drinking water. We also express our appreciation for the immediate reaction of the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency with regard to the safety implications of this destruction for the safety of the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant and support his determination to visit the plant next week, as already planned, in order to continue his efforts to prevent a nuclear disaster.

We urge the Security Council to support and equip the Secretary-General with all the tools necessary to intensify his efforts in key areas related to this war.

Finally, we reiterate Russia's obligation to withdraw its occupation troops from Ukraine.

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

The partial destruction last night of the Nova Kakhovka dam, in the Kherson region, is a particularly serious act. It illustrates once again the disastrous consequences of Russian aggression, particularly on Ukrainian civilian infrastructure. None of this would have happened if Russian troops had not invaded Ukraine and if Russia had respected the Charter of the United Nations.

France is deeply concerned about the humanitarian, environmental and economic impact of this disaster. Massive flooding has been reported in dozens of localities. Thousands of Ukrainians have had to be evacuated. France is ready to respond to requests from the Ukrainian authorities to help the people affected.

The destruction of the dam further increases the threat to the safety and security systems of the Zaporizhzhya power plant. France expresses its full support for the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency in his efforts to preserve the integrity of the site.

France once again calls on Russia to completely, immediately and unconditionally withdraw its armed forces from all Ukrainian territory. That is the only way to avoid further tragedies of this kind.

Russia will be held to account for the crimes committed in Ukraine. It will have to pay for the

long-term reconstruction of Ukraine. That is why, in Reykjavik, the Council of Europe responded to the call from the General Assembly and Ukraine by creating a register to document that damage. This is an important step. We call on all States to join it.

We will continue to stand by the Ukrainian people in the fight they have been waging for over 15 months to exercise their right to self-defence and preserve their territorial integrity and sovereignty.

Mr. Ishikane (Japan): I also thank Under Secretary-General Martin Griffiths for his briefing.

We are seeing an ongoing catastrophe at the Nova Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant. According to the United Nations, it has already caused at least 16,000 people to lose their homes, with safe and clean drinking water supplies at risk for many more. The effects will likely be long-lasting. We express our deepest sympathies to all those affected by this catastrophe for their loss and suffering.

We take note that the International Atomic Energy Agency assesses that there is no immediate risk to the safety of the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant. Nevertheless, it is particularly regrettable that this incident occurred just after last week's discussion in this Chamber on nuclear safety in Ukraine (see S/PV.9334).

We are seriously concerned about what is described in today's letter from Ukraine to the President of the Security Council as the process of assessing the situation on the ground continues. What is clear is that this would not have happened if Russia had not launched its aggression against Ukraine in the first place. We recall the statement of the Secretary-General today that this is another devastating consequence of the Russian aggression against Ukraine.

We once again urge Russia to stop its ongoing aggression and immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraw its troops and military equipment from the entire internationally recognized territory of Ukraine. Russia's aggression against Ukraine constitutes a flagrant violation of international law, in particular the Charter of the United Nations. There must be no impunity for war crimes and other atrocities, including attacks against civilians and critical civilian infrastructure.

Our support for Ukraine will not waver. We are renewing our commitment to provide the financial,

humanitarian, military and diplomatic support Ukraine requires for as long as it takes.

Ms. Oppong-Ntiri (Ghana): I too thank Under Secretary-General Martin Griffiths for his briefing.

My delegation is deeply alarmed by emerging reports of extensive damage to the Nova Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant and its consequential flooding of several settlements in the Kherson region. We are particularly concerned by the further disruptions to the lives of civilians in the region and those that rely on the dam for energy and water supply. We are equally concerned about the immediate and long-term ecological and economic fallout, as well as the possible risks to the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant. It is important that the circumstances surrounding the damage to the dam are independently verified to prevent future occurrences and ensure accountability where necessary. We urge restraint by the parties from further actions that could risk the safety and security of other highly sensitive infrastructure, which, if compromised, could bring catastrophic consequences for the people of Ukraine and beyond. We further urge the parties to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law requiring conflicting parties to ensure distinction, necessity, proportionality and humanity.

As we understand from the unfolding situation, many people are likely to be displaced by the flooding. We therefore welcome the immediate deployment of humanitarian support by the United Nations in coordination with the Government of Ukraine, as indicated by the Secretary-General. In this regard, we reiterate the call for humanitarian access to all affected settlements and communities.

It is important to acknowledge that this unfortunate development is taking place in the context of the Russian Federation's unjustified aggression against Ukraine, and without an end to the war, all other critical infrastructure in Ukraine remains at risk of accidental or deliberate damage. We re-echo the appeals for peace and the immediate cessation of hostilities through the Russian Federation's unconditional withdrawal of its troops from the internationally recognized borders of Ukraine.

Finally, it is my delegation's expectation that the Council will be provided with more clarity on the situation.

Ms. Koumby Missambo (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I would also like to thank the Deputy-Secretary-General for his enlightening briefing.

It was exactly one week ago today that the Security Council met in this Chamber to discuss the imminent risk to the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant following its disconnection from the national power grid (see S/PV.9334). In his briefing to Council members, the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) called for restraint and de-escalation on the part of the belligerents and presented the five principles for guaranteeing nuclear safety and security.

Despite repeated calls from Council members and the international community as a whole for a cessation of hostilities, and in particular for a halt to military activity in and around the nuclear power plant, the fighting continues, and with it attacks on strategic infrastructure. The attack on the Kakhovka hydroelectric dam, located in the Kherson region, is an act that adds to the uncertainty surrounding the safety and security of the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant, which draws part of the energy it uses to cool its reactors from the dam. We welcome the responsiveness of IAEA experts, whose presence on site enabled a team to be deployed immediately. We hope that the situation can be dealt with as quickly as possible to contain the potential risks.

We are deeply concerned by this attack on civilian infrastructure and fear the potential consequences for civilian populations, economic activity in the region and the environment, as the Deputy-Secretary-General has so aptly described just now. As we speak, over 16,000 civilians are being evacuated from the affected areas. These thousands of disaster victims add to the millions of people in humanitarian need, which makes the humanitarian situation in the country even more complex.

My country reiterates that nuclear power plants and hydroelectric installations are civilian infrastructure protected by international humanitarian law. The belligerents must comply with this law and refrain from any attack on this essential infrastructure. We also reiterate our support for the IAEA and recognize its leading role in maintaining the safety and security of nuclear facilities. We also urge the parties to cooperate fully with the IAEA.

We reiterate our call for dialogue to find a diplomatic solution to this war, which has gone on too

long. We continue to encourage initiatives aimed at bringing the parties to the negotiating table to achieve peace and peaceful coexistence.

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

Brazil extends its solidarity to the people affected by the collapse of the dam at the Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant. In view of the seriousness of the incident and its potential consequences, we consider evacuation efforts in the areas downstream of the Dnipro River to be a priority and urge the parties to the conflict in Ukraine to facilitate access for rescue teams and humanitarian workers.

We express our concern about the risks that the incident poses to the safety of the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant. Even though the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) considers that there is no immediate danger, the possibility that the rupture of the dam might affect the supply of water for cooling reactors and nuclear waste is a reminder of how close we may be to a nuclear catastrophe. We encourage parties to refrain from actions that could lead to this scenario and to increase their engagement with the IAEA to ensure the safety of nuclear facilities.

We also regret the environmental damage to the lower Dnipro and the surrounding area. The recovery of the affected region may require years of effort.

We consider it essential to investigate the incident and hold those involved accountable. More important, however, is to bear in mind that the rupture of the dam would not have occurred if Russia and Ukraine were at peace. Prolonged hostilities are likely to lead to further tragedies in future. We echo the Secretary-General's call for an end to violence, a just peace and respect for international humanitarian law.

In recent weeks, several Member States have approached the parties in attempts to engage them in the pursuit of a peaceful solution to the conflict. We hope that these initiatives will result in the resumption of dialogue and the cessation of hostilities, so that reconstruction can finally begin. This is the wish of the vast majority of the States Members of the United Nations. It is also in line with our obligations under the United Nations Charter and the needs of the civilian population of Ukraine.

Mr. Hauri (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Deputy Secretary-General Martin Griffiths for his briefing.

Switzerland is gravely concerned by the destruction of the Nova Kakhovka dam. The developments of the last few hours further increase the burden on a population suffering from Russia's military aggression against Ukraine. The extent of the damage is still difficult to determine, but it is already certain that we are facing — in the words of the Secretary-General — a humanitarian, economic and ecological catastrophe. It deserves our full attention.

The images reaching us from the city of Kherson and other towns and villages along the Dnipro River are frightening. At this very moment, large-scale evacuations are under way on both sides of the frontline. Thousands of people are likely to be affected. In addition to the devastating short-term consequences in southern Ukraine, we must be prepared for serious long-term consequences.

Switzerland is concerned about the risks that massive flooding could pose to the environment, as well as to energy and food security, including water supplies. This event is a sad example of the links between water and civil protection that the Security Council has addressed in the past.

Finally, the cooling system at the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant could be affected. We are continuing to closely follow the assessments of the International Atomic Energy Agency on this subject.

In this crisis situation, the protection of the civilian population must be the priority. We express our full support for the immediate response by the United Nations and humanitarian partners, which, in coordination with the Government of Ukraine, are doing their utmost to provide essential aid, in particular to guarantee the supply of drinking water. Switzerland calls for rapid and unimpeded access for humanitarian aid to be guaranteed throughout the territory of Ukraine.

Given the urgency and gravity of the situation, we reiterate that attacks on civilian infrastructure are unacceptable. They must stop immediately. Whether the Nova Kakhovka dam is considered a civilian facility or a military objective, it is protected under the rules of international humanitarian law. Violations of those rules cannot be tolerated. Those responsible must be identified and held to account.

We also reiterate our call for full respect for international law, including the Charter of the United Nations. And we call on Russia to immediately de-escalate the situation and to withdraw its troops from Ukraine's territory without delay. Failure to respect international law in general, and international humanitarian law and human rights in particular, undermines the foundation of international security — the security of us all. We must never forget that.

Ms. Gatt (Malta): I too thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for his sobering briefing.

Malta is seriously concerned about the latest developments and strongly condemns the attack on the Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant dam. This is another attack against Ukrainian civilian critical infrastructure, and yet another flagrant violation of international law and international humanitarian law.

The resulting flooding from the destruction of the dam has caused catastrophic damage. It has put at risk the lives of civilians, further aggravating the humanitarian situation in the country. As we heard from Under-Secretary-General Griffiths, reaching those in need of assistance will not be easy or straightforward.

Thousands of people are at risk. People living in low-lying parts of the city of Kherson, less than 50 miles downstream, have been warned to evacuate as quickly as possible and to seek shelter on higher ground. Eight villages have been completely flooded, with more expected to flood as we speak. At least 16,000 people have lost their homes, with safe and clean drinking water supplies in jeopardy for thousands more.

This attack has also brought with it irreversible environmental consequences. The river has now been contaminated with 150 tons of industrial lubricant. Furthermore, dropping water levels in the dam affect access to one of the main critical cooling sources for the reactors at the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant and put at risk the proper functioning of the plant's safety and security systems. That violates, in every way possible, the International Atomic Energy Agency's five principles for ensuring nuclear security and safety.

We emphasize that civilians and civilian infrastructure are not and must not be targets. Intentionally targeting them constitutes a war crime. Malta stresses its determination to make sure that the perpetrators of such crimes are held accountable in line with international law. Accountability must be our

priority, and perpetrators must know that justice will ultimately prevail.

In the meantime, Malta will continue to support all efforts to address the consequences of Russia's aggression. We once again urge 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. We continue to express our unequivocal support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and deplore any behaviour that seeks to escalate the conflict further.

Mr. Fernandes (Mozambique): I thank the presidency for promptly convening this briefing to the Security Council at the request of both the Russian Federation and Ukraine. I thank Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths for his update on this worrisome situation. I acknowledge the participation in today's meeting of the permanent representative of Ukraine.

While there are still conflicting accounts on the attribution and the apportionment of blame, and indeed of the causes of the damage to the hydro dam, there should be no reservation in condemning it if it is confirmed that it was due to a deliberate act of sabotage. As people scramble to contain the humanitarian and ecological fallout of the damage, the sad reality is that this act, if proven to be deliberate and premeditated, adds another reckless dimension to the steadily escalatory trend of this conflict. It comes as there is no end in sight to the hostilities after 16 months of conflict and amid reports of increased battlefield activity. Mozambique warns of the global repercussions of the looming environmental disaster, particularly to populations and ecosystems in the immediate vicinity of the incident, but also to an already strained global food and grain supply chain.

The deliberate weaponization and targeting of civilian infrastructure in time of war is a violation of international humanitarian law, as repeatedly stated in various products of the Council and relevant international treaties, such as Protocol Additional I to the Geneva Conventions of 1977, which

“prohibits [the use of] methods of warfare that are intended, or may be expected, to cause widespread, long-term and severe damage to the natural environment”

Parties must know that they should be accountable for those acts. Mozambique recognizes the importance of both parties calling the Council's attention to the ongoing emergency. However, we remain steadfast in our appeals to them to resume direct negotiations aimed at finding a lasting solution consistent with the Charter of the United Nations. Mozambique warned last week against the risk of misunderstandings, miscalculation and collateral damage being ever-present in this conflict among erstwhile neighbours and brothers (see S/PV.9334).

In conclusion, we strongly reiterate our call for the immediate cessation of hostilities and the return to direct negotiations between the parties as a matter of urgency.

Mr. Zhang Jun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to start by thanking you, Mr. President, for convening this emergency meeting. I also thank Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths for his briefing.

The protection of civilians and critical civilian infrastructure in armed conflict is an important principle enshrined in international humanitarian law. We express our grave concern about the destruction of the dam at the Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant. We are deeply concerned about the resulting humanitarian, economic and ecological consequences. We call on all the parties to the conflict to abide by international humanitarian law and to do their utmost to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure.

The collapse of the dam has caused major flooding. A great number of people are in urgent need of evacuation, and tens of thousands more people may face difficulties in accessing drinking water. We support the active efforts by the United Nations and humanitarian agencies to assist to the best of their abilities in the evacuation of the affected population, followed by further assistance.

The Kakhovka reservoir is also a major source of cooling water for the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant. We note that the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency has confirmed that the incident has not yet posed any safety risk to the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant. However, the water in the reservoir continues to recede, and it may not be possible to continue pumping water to the nuclear power plant in the future. China reiterates that, in the event of a nuclear disaster, no one is immune. We call for maximum restraint and to refrain from words and

deeds that could escalate confrontation and lead to miscalculation, as well as for maintaining the safety and security of the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant.

China is concerned about the protraction or even further escalation of the crisis in Ukraine. What has just happened reminds us once again that anything can happen in a conflict situation. As long as the flames of war rage on, it will only bring about greater suffering and more disasters, creating more grave and unpredictable risks.

The parties concerned should submit to good sense, exercise restraint and resume peace talks as soon as possible. The international community should spare no effort with a greater sense of urgency to create favourable conditions for promoting dialogue and negotiations and restoring peace. No party, especially countries with important influence, should fuel the fire and escalate tensions, much less try to profit from expanded crises to advance their own strategic agenda.

China will continue to stand on the side of peace and, alongside concerned partners, make unremitting efforts to promote peace talks and achieve a political settlement of the Ukrainian crisis.

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

I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for his valuable briefing today.

The destruction of parts of the Nova Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant and dam has led to large-scale flooding from the reservoir with wide-ranging and serious consequences.

The Nova Kakhovka Reservoir was so large locals referred to it as the “Kakhovka Sea”, and it provided water for drinking, industrial activities and agriculture. The reservoir is also the source of the water required to cool the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant.

The destruction of the dam has created an ecological, humanitarian and nuclear safety risk.

International humanitarian law could not be clearer about the need to protect dams in times of conflict. Like nuclear power plants, dams are afforded special protection against attack, even if there is a military objective, owing to the dangerous forces contained therein and the risks to civilian populations.

We further recall the fundamental principles of necessity, proportionality and distinction and note that the destruction of part of the dam has led to significant damage to other civilian infrastructure owing to flooding. The Council also reaffirmed, in resolution 2417 (2018), the need to spare from harm the means of food production such as farms, many of which have been destroyed by the flooding. All parties must comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law.

The destruction of the dam also increases the risk of an unimaginable nuclear accident. The Nova Kakhovka Reservoir played a crucial role in cooling the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant. According to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the plant is now relying on the backup cooling pool for that critical function.

Since the start of the war, the world has narrowly avoided nuclear disaster more than once. That act has only further increased the risks. As an immediate step, we encourage all parties to work with the IAEA to ensure that the cooling mechanism is functioning and that there are appropriate backup systems in place. We also urge all parties to cooperate with the IAEA to de-escalate the situation in the area of the plant and ensure its long-term, safe functioning.

The humanitarian consequences of the destruction of the dam are significant. Already 16,000 people, including thousands of children, are reported to have been forced to evacuate their homes and evacuations continue, including in parts of Kherson city. Those evacuations are particularly challenging for the elderly. We have heard from Under-Secretary Griffiths that 40 villages are already submerged or partially submerged, with more at risk. The town of Nova Kakhovka is already submerged. There are reports of water contamination and civilian water systems being damaged. The United Nations is providing emergency drinking water and purification tablets to affected people.

Conflict and challenges to the export of Ukrainian grain have impacted global food security. Floods have damaged farmland, and there are reports that farm animals that could not be evacuated have drowned. The damage to a productive farming region puts further strain on an already challenged global food system. We call upon all parties to ensure the safety of those that have been displaced and enable humanitarian

organizations to provide assistance to those impacted by the flooding.

The United Arab Emirates reiterates that the cessation of hostilities throughout Ukraine is the only certain way to prevent further harm to the civilian population and prevent a nuclear disaster. We call for de-escalation and dialogue to drive the conflict towards a peaceful, sustainable solution in line with the Charter of the United Nations, and we stand willing to support any serious effort to that end.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

Mr. Kyslytsya (Ukraine): I thank you, Mr. President, as well as the members of the Security Council and the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs. I also recognize the representative of Putin's terrorist regime in the permanent seat of the Soviet Union.

My delegation requested this urgent meeting of the Security Council as that regime has detonated a bomb of mass environmental destruction, which has led to the largest man-made disaster in Europe in decades. On the night of 6 June, the Russian Federation blew up the dam of the Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant, which is located in the temporarily occupied territory of the Kherson region. That was a terrorist act against Ukrainian critical infrastructure aimed at causing as many civilian casualties and as much destruction as possible. By resorting to scorched-Earth tactics, or in this case to flooded-Earth tactics, the Russian occupiers have effectively recognized that the captured territory does not belong to them, and they are not able to hold those lands.

The terrorist attack on the Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant was previously discussed intensely at the level of the occupation forces in the Kherson region, propagandists on Russian television and the Russian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, which indicates that it was planned well in advance. The letter circulated by Putin's Envoy last October was an element of that ground-setting strategy.

The Russian statement today was therefore predictably deceitful. We have observed the same technique of blaming the victim for one's own crimes. There was little chance that the country which desperately denied its war crimes in Mariupol, Bucha, Izyum and at the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power

plant would acknowledge responsibility for today's technological disaster.

Let me note that Russia has been controlling the dam and the entire Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant for more than a year. It is physically impossible to blow it up somehow from the outside by shelling. It was mined by the Russian occupiers, and they blew it up. About to bite the dust on the front, here in the Security Council Chamber, Russia is floundering again in the mud of lies.

It speaks volumes that one week before the Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant was blown up, on 30 May, the Russian Government adopted a decision envisaging that technical investigations would not be carried out into accidents at hazardous production facilities and hydraulic facilities that occurred as a result of "military operations, sabotage and acts of terrorism".

The explosion of the dam of the Nova Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant is an act of ecological and technological terrorism — the biggest technological disaster in Europe in recent decades and yet another example of Russia's genocide against Ukrainians. This is the Kremlin's response to countries calling for peace talks with the Russian Federation. Through its actions, Russia has just reconfirmed that it is not at all interested in de-escalation or peace. It must be stopped and rendered harmless rather than appeased. That is why Russia's defeat — a defeat that we will ensure, anyway — will be the most significant contribution to the security of our region and the entire world.

The dam that the Russian Federation blew up held more than 18 million cubic metres of water. As a result of the Russian terrorist act, the upper part of the dam, which is the sixth stage of the Dnipro cascade, was partially destroyed. Notably, 11 of 28 sections of the dam were destroyed. As of noon, New York time, there has been an increase in the water level of 3.24 metres on the Dnipro River, near Kherson. According to the current scenario, the maximum extent of the flooded territory will occur within three to five days. The left bank of the Dnipro River coastline will suffer 8 times more than the right bank.

Additionally, places such as Oleshky and Hola Prystan may end up under water. Partial flooding may also affect Oleksandrivka, Shyroka Balka, Sofiiivka, Vynohradne and other settlements. The level of water that can flood those areas may vary and, depending on the degree of dam destruction, it could reach 1.5

metres or more. The local authorities have organized the evacuation of residents from those settlements to other parts of Ukraine. On the Government-controlled territory of Ukraine, 17 settlements are planned to be evacuated, with more than 17,000 people.

On the occupied territory of the left bank, 20 settlements are subject to evacuation, with approximately 25,000 people. It is a matter of concern that the Russian occupiers are not organizing the evacuation of civilians, although they have withdrawn their troops. We urge the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross and other international organizations to send humanitarian missions to the left bank of the Dnipro River to help local residents affected by the flooding.

The Ukrainian authorities are also ensuring the provision of humanitarian assistance to the local population — mostly drinking water, food and other necessities. It is already clear that the destruction of the dam will deprive or severely worsen the water supply to Crimea and the Kherson region and significantly complicate the situation in the Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhya regions.

The reduction of the water level in the Nova Kakhovka reservoir will lead to a decrease in its level in all water intakes in surrounding regions, particularly the Nova Kakhovka canal, which supplies water to the occupied Berdiansk and most settlements in the Zaporizhzhya region.

Due to the decrease in the water level in the Nova Kakhovka reservoir, there is also a danger of an incident at another critical infrastructure facility occupied by Russia — the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant. As of now, there is no immediate threat to power plant. The situation is complex but under control.

We call on the international community to resolutely condemn the Russian terrorist attack on the Nova Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant. The technological crime of the Russian Federation confirms the high relevance of the peace formula of the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy. We call on international partners to join its implementation as soon as possible, in particular with regard to the points on countering ecocide and ensuring nuclear and energy security. Russia will have to compensate those affected for its crime and its consequences for people, infrastructure and the environment.

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

Mr. Pildegovičs (Latvia): I speak on behalf of the Baltic States — Estonia, Lithuania and my own country, Latvia.

We thank Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths for his briefing.

Just two weeks ago, we gathered here for the annual Security Council open debate on the protection of civilians (see S/PV.9327). Nevertheless, we are here to today, sadly, to condemn in the strongest terms another deliberate attack on civilians and civilian infrastructure by the Russian Federation — namely, the destruction of the Nova Kakhovka dam, in the Kherson region of Ukraine. It is another piece in the chain of war crimes committed by Russia.

The Nova Kakhovka dam has been under the occupation of the Russian Federation since it started the unjustified and unprovoked aggression against Ukraine. Russia has a track record of violating international humanitarian law and committing countless war crimes, including attacks against civilians and critical civilian infrastructure. This irresponsible and barbaric act of the destruction of the Nova Kakhovka dam has prompted the displacement of thousands of civilians, creating another humanitarian crisis and an environmental disaster of proportions still to be fully revealed. Indeed, we might be witnessing an ecocide.

As a direct consequence of Russia's attack today, at least 17,000 people have already lost their homes, and there will be many more to come. Safe and clean drinking water supplies are at risk for the whole region. Newly planted crops have been destroyed. It is the most vulnerable groups, including children, women, disabled persons and the elderly, who are suffering and will continue to suffer the most from the consequences of this illegal war. This is another war crime that cannot go unanswered. Attacks against civilians and critical civilian infrastructure must stop now.

We are also concerned about the potential hazardous consequences for energy security, food security and nuclear safety, which may go beyond Ukraine's borders. To quote President Zelenskyy, Russia has detonated a bomb of mass environmental destruction. This act further complicates the already dire situation at the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant, which is illegally occupied by Russia, with complete

disregard for the nuclear safety concerns expressed numerous times by the international community. The destruction of the dam has led to a significant reduction in the level of the reservoir used to supply cooling water to the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant. Russia must immediately return control of the plant to Ukraine, which would allow for effective crisis management efforts, with full involvement of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Against that backdrop, we commend the humanitarians who are providing life-saving assistance to people in need. It is crucial to maintain safe and secure humanitarian access. As stressed in the today by High Representative Josep Borrell Fontelles and Commissioner for Crisis Management Janez Lenarčič, the European Union (EU) is ready to provide immediate assistance to Ukrainian authorities and address any immediate needs, including food and drinking water.

The Emergency Response Coordination Centre of the European Commission is actively monitoring the situation and in close contact with the State Emergency Service of Ukraine. Ukraine can request assistance under the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.

Dams like the Dnipro dam, in Nova Kakhovka, are protected by the laws of war and the Geneva Conventions. Destroying it is considered a grave violation of article 56 of Protocol Additional I and would amount to a war crime. The international community simply must not allow the Russian Federation to cause yet another disaster with catastrophic consequences. Russia must bear responsibility for the devastating consequences for thousands of innocent civilians and civilian infrastructure. We need to make every effort to ensure accountability. Launching the Council of Europe's International Register of Damage Caused by the Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine is a concrete step in this direction. Importantly, we need to prosecute Russia's leadership for their crime of aggression at the special tribunal for the crime of aggression.

The sooner Russia realizes it has lost the war, the better. It is a choice that Russia can make not to make things worse before it is too late. We call on Russia today to withdraw its troops from Ukraine and stop this criminal war now.

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

Mr. Szczerski (Poland): Allow me to start by thanking you, Mr. President, for convening this urgent meeting, and to thank Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths for his briefing.

The issue at hand is of particular importance for Poland, a country that is an immediate neighbour of Ukraine. The consequences of the ongoing war, including humanitarian, emergency and environmental disasters, also affect my country as a witness of the sufferings of the Ukrainian people and a hub of international humanitarian assistance.

Poland strongly condemns the blowing up of the dam spanning the Dnipro River in Nova Kakhovka, which was yet another outrageous act of Russian barbarity on occupied territory of Ukraine, a grave violation of basic norms of humanitarian and environmental protection law and an apparent war crime. This act poses a direct threat to the lives of civilians living along the Dnipro banks downstream from the dam and to the operation of the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant. It also brings the prospect of an environmental disaster, which would have unprecedented consequences on a regional scale, which in turn would reverberate across Europe. The attack intensifies material losses and will result in further forced displacements of the local population on a mass scale. It is in clear violation of all of our efforts to highlight the importance of climate-and-security nexus, nuclear safety, protection of civilians in armed conflicts, including women and children, and protection of critical infrastructure. All of these topics have been or are in the Security Council's programme of work in recent months.

Poland will make every effort to hold Russia accountable before the international community and punish the perpetrators of this criminal act. We will insist on it through relevant international institutional and legal mechanisms, including humanitarian and environmental ones.

As we have repeated many times in this Chamber and beyond, in order to stop the various threats and risks discussed by the Security Council, Russia must immediately stop its war of aggression, and Ukraine deserves every assistance needed. We call on Security Council members and the broad international community to stand by their values and the norms of international law. That will lead us to a just peace.

The meeting rose at 5.25 p.m.