



Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

9321st meeting

Monday, 15 May 2023, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland)

Members:

Albania	Mr. Hoxha
Brazil	Mr. Sénéchal de Goffredo Junior
China	Mr. Zhang Jun
Ecuador	Mr. Montalvo Sosa
France	Mr. De Rivière
Gabon	Mr. Biang
Ghana	Mrs. Hackman
Japan	Mr. Ishikane
Malta	Mrs. Frazier
Mozambique	Mr. Afonso
Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
United Arab Emirates	Mrs. Nusseibeh
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
United States of America	Mr. Wood

Agenda

Maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine

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>).

23-13548 (E)



Accessible document

Please recycle



The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Denmark, Lithuania, Poland, Romania 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 also invite His Excellency Mr. Olof 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: I am speaking today from Geneva. When I last briefed the Security Council about the situation in Ukraine in March (see S/PV.9286), I highlighted the humanitarian impact of the full-scale war not only on the people of Ukraine, but on the wider world already struggling with a myriad of shocks. In that context, at that time, I emphasized the overwhelming need for a political solution to the war on Ukraine and, indeed, for peace to be returned to its people. I therefore note with regret — which is, I am sure, shared by everyone on the Council — that the hostilities, including missile strikes, currently appear to be escalating on both sides of the front line. Air-raid sirens continue to ring out in cities and towns across Ukraine. Civilians continue to seek protection in bunkers, some for days on end. As Ukraine emerges from a hard winter, civilian casualties have been rising to their highest levels in months. The High Commissioner for Human Rights has now verified a staggering 23,600 civilian casualties since 24 February 2022, but we all know perfectly well that the actual toll is probably very much higher.

The humanitarian impact is extensive, as those of us who have had the awful privilege to visit Ukraine have seen first-hand. Many communities along the north-eastern border with the Russian Federation and near the front line are encircled, cut off from water, food and medical care by heavy fighting on the ground and blocked roads. Only last week in Kherson, which I visited some months back, residential buildings, a school, an outpatient hospital and a care facility for the elderly were reportedly damaged, leaving scores of civilians needing shelter and health care. Missile strikes in Odesa hit a humanitarian storage warehouse. A Ukrainian Red Cross mobile hospital in Mykolayiv was also hit. Humanitarian supplies and vital medical equipment were destroyed.

Fortunately, on those occasions, no humanitarian staff or volunteers were injured. But the threat to humanitarians and civilians represented by the latest wave of attacks is persistent. I am once again compelled to remind the Council that under international humanitarian law, parties must take constant care to protect all civilians and civilian objects, including homes, schools, hospitals and other essential infrastructure, as well as humanitarian facilities and assets. Even as that law is breached, the essential quality of it must be a reminder to all of us.

As we can see, the humanitarian operating environment remains complex and dangerous. Nonetheless, thanks to the courage of humanitarian workers, particularly and mostly local workers, the United Nations and its national and international partners continue to deliver life-saving assistance to front-line areas and elsewhere across Ukraine. Nearly 3.6 million people received humanitarian assistance in Ukraine in the first quarter of this year, including cash assistance, food, health care and livelihood support. Around 43 inter-agency convoys have delivered supplies in heroic moments to around 280,000 people in front-line areas so far this year. That is a particular feature of the humanitarian operation in Ukraine, and I would like to pause here for a second to pay tribute to those brave people taking those convoys to where they need to be. Of course, those who then take the commodities from those convoys for the so-called last-mile delivery are always national partners — Ukrainian organizations and Ukrainian people.

There are still limitations on our ability to deliver aid to all in need. More is needed to take our efforts to scale. The biggest challenge remains the impediments

to reaching all the areas in Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhya that are currently under Russian military control. The humanitarian notification system, together with direct engagement with key interlocutors in Moscow and Kyiv — in practice, that is — has been in place since the early days of the war. It was set up to maximize the opportunity for the safe and unimpeded passage of inter-agency convoys to those areas.

However, despite 14 months of notifying the partners of our intentions through the system, we have not been able to deliver assistance to communities along the front line in the areas under the military control of the Russian Federation — not once. Access options to those areas, including different response modalities, therefore continue to be explored through engagement with all parties. It is imperative that we explore all options to reach civilians, wherever they are. As I have said before, under international humanitarian law, all parties must allow for safe, rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief for civilians in need and must ensure that personnel engaged in such work have the freedom of movement required for such work. I urge the parties to reinforce and strengthen their facilitation efforts so that we can reach all civilians in need.

Food exported under the Black Sea Initiative, as well as food and fertilizer exports from the Russian Federation, continue to make a crucial contribution to food security at the global level. More than 30 million metric tons of cargo have been safely exported from Ukrainian ports under the Initiative — a level that was achieved as we were meeting in Istanbul, discussing the Initiative's future, just the other day. Of those 30 million metric tons, just over 600,000 metric tons of wheat have been transported by the World Food Programme in direct support of humanitarian operations in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Yemen, which are places that we often discuss in this Chamber. The most recent analysis by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations indicates that global cereal prices have fallen by close to 20 per cent over the past 12 months. Last month, international wheat prices reached their lowest level since July 2021, driven in part by the continued movement of Ukrainian grain and by the large quantities of grain available for export in the Russian Federation and other locations. That is, of course, undeniable progress, but much more remains to be done.

Predictable supplies for humanitarian food assistance operations continue to be required. The

Initiative refers to the export of ammonia, but that has yet to be realized. Over the past month, we have also unfortunately seen a reduction in the volumes of exports moving out of Ukraine's Black Sea ports, owing to the challenging dynamics within the Joint Coordination Centre set up by the same agreement reached in Istanbul on 22 July 2022, as well as the resulting slowdown in operations. In recent weeks, in particular last week, we have engaged in intensive discussions with the parties to the Black Sea Initiative to secure agreement on its extension and the improvements needed for it to operate effectively and predictably. Such efforts will continue and come into focus over the coming days.

In parallel, I pay tribute to Rebeca Grynspan, her leadership and her team. They have continued to deliver a wide range of support with concrete results under the memorandum of understanding between the United Nations and the Russian Federation on the facilitation of Russian food and fertilizer exports, which are so important for international food security.

For the reasons I set out, I hope Council members will agree that the continuation of the Black Sea Initiative is critically important, as is the recommitment by the parties to its smooth and efficient operation. We will continue to call on all to meet their responsibilities, as the world watches us very closely.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my profound gratitude for the efforts, energy and commitment of the Government of Türkiye, which hosted our talks last week, brokered the deal, hosted us in Istanbul and intervened at all levels at every step of the way to reach a sustainable deal. It is clear that the people of Ukraine and millions of people around the world can ill afford a continuation of the war. More than ever, they need an end to the hostilities and a political solution to end the conflict. I am one of those who therefore calls on the Council and all Member States to support any effort that may bring about an end to the carnage and destruction that we have seen so clearly, vividly and continuously. In the meantime, the United Nations and its humanitarian partners remain committed to safeguarding the life and dignity of persons affected by the war and to the pursuit of peace, whether it be today, tomorrow or in the weeks to come.

The President (*spoke in French*): 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. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Griffith for his briefing. At the meeting of the emergency special session of the General Assembly held on 22 February, exactly one year after Russia launched its war against Ukraine, the Secretary-General clearly reaffirmed that:

“Russia’s invasion of Ukraine ... is an affront to our collective conscience. It is a violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. It is having massive humanitarian and human rights consequences ... [and] challenges the cornerstone principles and values of our multilateral system” (*A/ES-11/PV.17, p. 3*).

The toll of this war has continued to rise. Since 28 April, the Russian army has resumed its large-scale air strikes on all of Ukraine. Russia’s aggression has already led to at least 23,000 civilian casualties, including more than 1,000 children. That statistic represents a mere fraction of the actual toll, as the verification process is facing enormous challenges, in particular the inability to gain access to areas temporarily occupied by Russia. Journalists who are courageously covering the conflict to establish the facts are also exposed, as was tragically illustrated by the death of French journalist Arman Soldin. In Ukraine, almost 18 million people stand in need of humanitarian assistance. France will continue to show its solidarity, as long as necessary, by responding to their needs through its bilateral assistance within the European framework and providing support for the United Nations, non-governmental organizations and other humanitarian actors.

Since February 2022, Russia has committed countless violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law. Some of those violations constitute war crimes and even crimes against humanity. Russia has intentionally targeted civilians and civilian infrastructure. Crimes perpetrated against civilians, killings, rapes, intentional attacks on hospitals, schools and maternity wards, the forced displacement of populations and the forcible deportation and transfer of children must not go unpunished. The fight against impunity is imperative, as there can be no lasting peace without justice. France is resolutely committed to ensuring that those responsible for large-scale abuses are held accountable for their actions and brought to justice. France recently donated a second mobile DNA laboratory to Ukraine to help document such crimes.

Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine is having a profoundly negative impact on Ukraine and the world, for which Russia bears the sole responsibility. By invading Ukraine, Russia has exacerbated global insecurity and malnutrition. By restricting maritime exports via the Black Sea, Russia has chosen to exploit the vulnerability of certain countries to fluctuations in the price of grain. We call on Russia not to obstruct the extension of the Black Sea Grain Initiative, which benefits the most vulnerable populations. France, together with its European partners, will step up its efforts to reduce the risk of food insecurity. We will do that in particular through the European Union’s solidarity corridors, which so far have enabled exports of more than 32 million tons of grain and other food products, by river and land.

In conclusion, I want to once again quote the Secretary-General, who continues to remind us that the Charter of the United Nations is clear, the Organization’s position unequivocal and the war that Russia is waging has no place in the modern world and is unacceptable. “It is high time to step back from the brink”, he said (*ibid., p.4*). We know that just and lasting peace must be built on the Charter of the United Nations and on international law. France will continue to stand with Ukraine to that end.

Mr. Montalvo Sosa (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank you, Madam President, for convening today’s meeting at the request of France and Ecuador, as well as the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Martin Griffiths, for his very enlightening briefing. I want to reiterate my delegation’s recognition of the valuable work being done by the Organization for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs on the ground. We also recognize the efforts of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Committee of the Red Cross and humanitarian organizations, working in an extremely risky environment. We call on the Russian Federation to facilitate safe access to the territory temporarily under its control, as Mr. Griffiths mentioned.

With some 15 million people on the move, both refugees and internally displaced, the humanitarian conditions continue to deteriorate, and the needs are increasing due to the ongoing hostilities. The worst effects of displacement have been on women and girls, who are the most vulnerable to violence and abuse, including sexual violence. On the other hand, the

millions who have returned to their homes continue to face the challenges created by limited services and the destruction of critical infrastructure, as well as the stress that results from instability. We are also concerned about the fact that the number of civilian victims continues to rise, and the statistics show that thousands have died or been injured, as Mr. Griffiths mentioned just now.

We underscore the need for the parties to strictly respect their obligations under international humanitarian law and reiterate the urgent need to put an end to the use of explosives in populated areas. We deplore the fact that explosive weapons with wide-area effects have been the cause of 92.5 per cent of civilian victims in Ukraine. We are also concerned about contamination caused by mines and explosive remnants. At least 700 critical infrastructure objects have been damaged or destroyed because of the war. We therefore deplore the new escalation of attacks and bombings in recent weeks, which has further jeopardized access to basic services and primarily affects women, girls and boys. We are concerned about the very serious humanitarian crisis that millions of civilians are facing as a result of the intense fighting in Marinka, Vuhledar and Kurakhove in the Ukrainian province of Donetsk.

We offer our condolences to France for the death on 9 May near Bakhmut in eastern Ukraine of the French journalist Arman Soldin of Agence France Presse, as a result of hostilities involving missiles, adding to the conflict's tragic impact on journalism. We recognize the significant role of reporters in documenting and sharing the reality of the war.

We continue to be concerned about the spectre of a nuclear catastrophe, especially in Zaporizhzhya, and call on the parties to take all necessary measures to protect the nuclear plant there from accidents of any kind. We express our support for the efforts of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and urge the Council to demonstrate unambiguous support for the IAEA.

Next week we will commemorate the fifth anniversary of resolution 2417 (2018), by which the Council urged all parties to ensure the proper functioning of food systems and markets in situations of armed conflict and to protect civilians and objects required for food production and distribution. We continue to deplore the impact of the military aggression on global food security. In that context, we ask that there be no

further opposition to the implementation of the Black Sea Grain Initiative and that the Initiative be extended indefinitely for as long as the conflict lasts.

Lastly, we emphasize the importance of ensuring that the Council and its members are guided by the resolutions adopted during the eleventh emergency special session of the General Assembly and reiterate our belief in the necessity of a peace process that is based on strict respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Ukraine, with a view to making progress towards rebuilding and reparations, in accordance with international law.

Mr. Hoxha (Albania): I thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for his update. We pay tribute to his efforts and work, as well as those of the entire team at the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, aimed at meeting the humanitarian needs in Ukraine and elsewhere in order to alleviate the suffering of people everywhere.

After 16 months, the special Russian military aggression has stalled on the ground. But it has not stopped, and it is no less deadly. Beyond the casualties and destruction on the front lines, missiles and illegally acquired drones continue their deadly attacks on innocent civilians and their homes and infrastructure. The Under-Secretary-General just shared a sobering account of the most recent escalations and their consequences. International law prohibits aiming at civilian buildings and nothing justifies it if not to instil fear. Fear helps authoritarian regimes to impose total control over their people, and fear in warfare is used to terrorize civilians. But the truth is that after 446 days of relentless war, Ukrainians have not surrendered and every attempt to terrorize them has just made them fight back harder.

After 10 months of gruelling failed assaults, Bakhmut tells one of the key stories of this absurd war. If Mariupol became the ugly face of the war and a symbol of Russian brutality, Bakhmut, already a site of tragedy, will be known as the symbol of Ukrainian resistance. Yet the painful reality is that more than 23,000 civilians have been killed or wounded. In the first week of May alone, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights recorded 221 civilian casualties in Ukraine. The Kremlin may keep saying that Russia is not fighting the Ukrainian people, but that does not even come close to a bad joke. It is Ukrainian civilians who are dying under Russian bombs

and shells. The 14 million people uprooted from their homes, the 18 million requiring humanitarian assistance and protection, unable to afford or access enough food, and the thousands of children systematically abducted have one thing in common — they are all Ukrainians.

We know now that Russian troops have tortured, sexually abused and murdered non-combatants in towns they have occupied, such as Bucha. Videos have also surfaced allegedly showing Russian soldiers beheading Ukrainian prisoners of war.

Since the beginning of this war, serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed in various regions of Ukraine have been duly documented. The findings of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine and of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Moscow Mechanism point clearly to the commission of war crimes and crimes against humanity. Evidence will one day be presented to a court of law for accountability. But among all the crimes committed in Ukraine, the most incomprehensible and inhumane are those committed against children. Everywhere, in every culture, children are associated with innocence and the need for care and protection. Crimes against them are seen as particularly revolting — because they are. The forcible mass deportation of Ukrainian children to Russia, disguised under different false names or initiatives, is nothing less than a re-education process in the total denial of children's rights. It is indefensible. We expect the Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict to include the effects that the military aggression in Ukraine has had on children.

This war continues to have implications beyond Ukraine, especially for global food security. For hundreds of millions of people around the world, food on the table depends on maintaining the pace of the Black Sea Grain Initiative. We are concerned about the reports of a slowdown in activity, as mentioned to us by the Under-Secretary-General. The number of ships transporting grain has been significantly reduced lately, while renewals beyond 18 May seem no longer to be extended for months but only for weeks. We know what happens in the world when food is weaponized. Prices go up, there is less food for vulnerable populations and people go hungry. One does not sit in the Security Council to deny food to those in need. We therefore call for the Initiative to be extended as part of the global humanitarian response in a way that provides — and

for a sufficient period — the necessary assurances and confidence to markets and people.

Two days ago in Germany, President Zelenskyy and the people of Ukraine were awarded the International Charlemagne Prize of Aachen for their fight to defend their country, as well as Europe and its values. The contrast could not be more striking: a leader who is defending his country and its people and fighting for independence is welcomed, honoured, respected and revered everywhere, while another leader — the author of the worst security crisis in Europe for decades — is under arrest warrant by international justice mechanisms. There is never a bad time to stop a war, especially one that should not have started. Russia must understand that it cannot have its way in Ukraine and decide for its people and their future. It would be far better for it to unconditionally, completely and immediately withdraw from Ukraine and respect its internationally recognized borders. Until that is done and until reason has prevailed, we will continue to stand in full solidarity with the Government and the people of Ukraine in the defence of their nation, their land and our shared values.

Mr. Afonso (Mozambique): Mozambique thanks Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths for his update. We commend him and his team for their noble and tireless work worldwide. I acknowledge the presence in today's meeting of the Permanent Representative of Ukraine. According to the *Global Humanitarian Overview 2023*, published by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs,

“This year, grinding conflict, the deadly climate crisis and health epidemics, including cholera and COVID-19, caused record levels of hunger and displacement, worsened poverty and put equality for women and girls increasingly out of reach. As a result, one out of every 23 people worldwide now needs humanitarian relief, more than double the percentage just four years ago.”

That is a bleak and terrible scenario. It is heartbreaking to know that conflicts remain the major driver of humanitarian crises, and more so in Ukraine. Humanitarian action is an imperative that aims to better address the demands of those in need, particularly in terms of protection and assistance. Notwithstanding all the existing international legal frameworks that govern the protection of civilians, including the humanitarian dimension, guaranteeing the effective protection of

civilians in conflicts remains a formidable challenge. It is our principled position that humanitarian work must be given a high priority.

In that context, we call on the parties in Ukraine to take urgent measures to ensure an environment in which the conditions are conducive to aiding distribution, with safeguards for aid delivery, as well as to reconstruction and fostering long-term peace and reconciliation in the country. We reiterate our urgent call on the belligerent parties to immediately return to direct negotiations conducted in good faith. We believe that the peace initiatives put forward by a number of States, including Member States of the Council, should be given a chance. Political settlement is the right way to address humanitarian problems. In that context, we agree with Mr. Griffiths that the Black Sea Grain Initiative is critically important. We therefore call for the Initiative, which is due to expire this week, to be renewed, improved and expanded, in line with the findings of the Secretary-General's Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to begin our statement by noting the hypocrisy underlying today's meeting of the Security Council on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine. There were no meetings held on that topic for the entire month of April, and the delegations of France and Ecuador, as well as other Western delegations, showed no interest in the situation in Ukraine. However, today we can see that the members of the European Union (EU) literally lined up to read out their identical statements on camera to tick that box. That is yet another clear illustration of the fact that there is no genuine concern for the fate of people living in Ukraine and even less concern for those living in the liberated territories of Donbas — just as the Western delegations have not been concerned about the situation of ordinary people there since 2014.

And we will we not hear today any expression of sorrow about the fact that on 28 April, Ukrainian formations carried out yet another horrendous shelling of Donetsk. They targeted a bus full of people with artillery fire and burned it to the ground. Nine people were killed, including a child. An expert examination showed that the shelling was carried out using high-explosive missiles designed for multiple-launch rocket systems, which were manufactured in Slovakia. The same shells were also used in the attack on Donetsk's central cathedral during the all-night Easter service.

Our briefer today did not say a word about that either. Where is his commitment to the protection of civilians? Or are they the wrong kind of civilians?

Responsibility for those crimes lies not only with the Kyiv regime, but also with those that supply it with weapons. Moreover, every day, just as we think that the level of pumping weapons into Ukraine has reached its limits, we receive new reports of deliveries of increasingly heavy and sophisticated Western weapons — HIMARS Multiple Launch Rocket Systems, shells with depleted uranium, long-range missile systems, hundreds of tanks, and so on. We will return to this issue during the meeting we requested on this topic on 18 May.

Some of those weapons are being supplied by Security Council members sitting right next to us, who care so much about the humanitarian consequences of the conflict in Ukraine. On a daily basis, those weapons kill civilians, women and children, destroy hospitals and schools in the Donetsk People's Republic, the Luhansk People's Republic, Zaporizhzhya and Kherson oblasts. The entire military potential of NATO is targeting them, and the Kyiv authorities openly boast that they legally have the right to destroy everything in those territories. Once again, we want to respond to those who have said this or will say this today: Russian Federation military forces are not fighting civilians and are not subjecting them to targeted strikes, unlike the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

Western countries are widely known for loving to talk about combating impunity, especially when it does not involve their own crimes. They believe they have gotten away with millions of civilian deaths in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and elsewhere. We are convinced that one day they will be held accountable. And no threats of sanctions against judges, as was the case with the investigations of United States war crimes in Afghanistan, or intimidation of witnesses and investigative reporters or suppression of facts will help. We can already see that developing countries that are neutral on Ukraine are rejecting the pressure being exerted upon them. We are convinced that they are tired of justifying their every step or call for peace. Annalena Baerbock recently said that weapon supplies by third countries to Russia are unacceptable because they can be considered tantamount to participation in the conflict. What about the fact that the entire military machine of the West is now fuelling the war? This

is yet another honest confession showing the West's participation in the conflict.

With the tolerance of Western patrons, Kyiv does not shy away from openly terrorist methods either. Among its crimes are the terrorist attack on the Crimean Bridge, the murder of journalists Darya Dugina, Maxim Fomin and the attempt on the life of Zakhar Prilepin, which resulted in the death of his friend, Alexander Shubin. On 3 May, the Federal Security Service of Russia informed us that it thwarted an assassination attempt on the leadership of the Republic of Crimea, which was being planned by the intelligence of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine. The Chief of Intelligence, Kyrylo Budanov, openly stated his readiness to kill Russians nationals around the world. And the State news agency of Ukraine, UNIAN, after the assassination attempt on Zakhar Prilepin, published a poll on which Russian figure should be next. If that is not an open incitement to terrorism then what is it? How can the people of France, the United States and other countries accept this when they know first-hand about terrorist attacks? How can the Secretary-General and representatives of other international organizations remain silent about that?

Today we will hear a lot about the solidarity of the Western community with Ukraine, the readiness to support it until the end. However, they need to understand that this support will lead Ukraine to this very end. External debt in 2022 rose to a record \$132 billion, or 89 per cent of its gross domestic product. It is estimated that, at the end of the current year, it will exceed 100 per cent. The colossal amounts provided to Ukraine by the International Monetary Fund, the EU and Washington are driving this country into debt. All this solidarity is not free, and it is ordinary Ukrainians will have to pay it back.

In the meantime, capital is flowing into the country. As we understand it, the funds will be distributed by the American financial company Black Rock, with which Kyiv just recently signed an agreement to launch the Ukraine Development Fund. Under the guise of attracting private investment for large-scale projects in key areas of the economy, we see the transfer of State sovereignty under the external corporate control of the largest investment fund in the world, headquartered in New York. Earlier, we also stated in the Council that over the past 10 years, the amount of Ukrainian arable land that has come under the control of mostly American agro-industrial companies is in excess of 4 million hectares. And the food supplies exported

from Ukraine as part of the Black Sea Grain Initiative were not being sent, as we now know, for the use of starving countries, but for commercial deliveries.

The West has always put its interests first. We are therefore essentially witnessing another example of how American money comes full circle. Most of it will return to the accounts of Western corporations, and some will end up in the offshore accounts of Ukrainian and American bureaucrats. Ukrainian leaders will probably not be able to take all of it with them when they leave the country in a hurry, as was the case with the former President of Afghanistan.

The European countries are equally cynical. When it came down to the well-being of farmers in EU countries, political slogans gave way to objective analysis. In April, the countries, which, because of so-called solidarity corridors, were overstocked with Ukrainian agricultural products and took extreme measures. They introduced a unilateral ban on imports and, in some cases, even a ban on transit through their territories of grain and other agricultural goods from Ukraine.

It is undeniable that a large part of Ukrainian food remains in the EU, even though they were allegedly originally intended to be sent to the Global South. This is a vivid example of the true nature of Brussels' famous humanitarian initiatives. Let me recall that the launch of the solidarity corridors was accompanied by measures to liberalize Ukrainian exports to the EU, which greatly facilitated the supply of Ukrainian goods to the EU market and not the markets of developing countries.

Russia approaches the food situation in the world very responsibly. Despite the fact that global problems in the field of food security appeared long before the start of the special military operation and were the result of the irresponsible monetary policy of Western countries and were compounded by the pandemic, on 22 July 2022, we responded positively to the Secretary-General's initiative, the main goal of which was to ease the situation by facilitating the supply of food and fertilizer to developing countries. A package deal was concluded to export food and ammonia via Ukrainian ports and to unblock the export of grain and fertilizers from Russia.

However, things did not go according to plan. As of 4 May, 40 per cent of all products exported along the humanitarian sea corridor went to the EU countries. The share of the poorest countries is less than 3 per

cent. For almost a year, Ukraine's agricultural goods have been used by the West, which was not hungry in the first place.

It is only since 18 March, at the beginning of the third phase of the Black Sea Grain Initiative, that food supplies to African countries have increased by 54 per cent compared to the second phase. And that was possible only thanks to the persistent efforts of the Russian team at the Joint Coordination Centre in Istanbul. They were the only one who fought, even against the United Nations, to ensure that for priority consideration be given to applications from ships bound for Africa.

The export of ammonia was to be occur in parallel with the export of grain. However, that never happened. The Ukrainian side in the Joint Coordination Centre refused to even discuss the unblocking of the Togliatti-Odesa ammonia pipeline, which was enshrined in the applicable tripartite agreement. Instead, it put forward new series of conditions that were not part of the Initiative.

For nearly a year now, we have seen no progress whatsoever in the second part of package deal between Guterres and the Russian Federation, namely the Memorandum of Understanding between Russia and the United Nations Secretariat. The main Russian bank, Rosselkhozbank, which is the entity that is specifically intended to conduct financial transactions on exports of foodstuffs, remains under sanctions. The one-time transactions that were so generously promised by Washington and Brussels are just laughable when they are presented as a viable solution to the problem. The package proposed by the Secretary-General works only on the part related to servicing Ukrainian commercial exports. Russian agricultural supplies continue to be effectively blocked by Western sanctions without any prospect of their easement for supposedly non-sanctioned fertilizers and food. The United States and its satellites, with their usual preaching, are essentially pushing the narrative that the world needs Ukrainian corn for animal feed, which amounts to 70 per cent of exports, more than it needs Russian wheat and fertilizer.

As we know, high-level four-party talks were held in Istanbul last week to consider the future of the Black Sea Grain Initiative. Contacts on that subject are ongoing. But we would like to recall that, in March at the time of the extension, we already spoke about a

lack of progress on the five systemic issues blocking Russia's agricultural supplies. We could not guarantee that the package agreement would be extended.

Mr. Ishikane (Japan): I thank Mr. Martin Griffiths for his insightful briefing.

It is with profound concern that we continue to witness Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine, constituting a flagrant violation of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations. Russia should stop the war it started.

Japan denounces Russia's attacks on civilian infrastructure and urban centres across Ukraine. The attacks on housing complexes, hospitals, schools, energy facilities and other essential installations for life jeopardize the welfare and future of the Ukrainian people. We once again recall that indiscriminate attacks on innocent civilian populations constitute a war crime. There must be no impunity for war crimes and other acts of atrocities. Russia must be held accountable.

We further condemn all violations of international humanitarian law and human rights abuses, urging all parties to the conflict to uphold international humanitarian principles.

To restore a just and lasting peace in Ukraine, Japan is committed to the rapid recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine. We will continue to steadily implement humanitarian, financial and other assistance, totalling \$7.6 billion, to support Ukraine in various fields, including electricity, mine action and agriculture.

The challenges we face today are very complex, but Russia's aggression against Ukraine has exacerbated the global food security crisis and caused high inflation. To respond to this urgent issue, the Black Sea Grain Initiative has played a pivotal role in mitigating the repercussions on the world's food supply. The Initiative has adeptly facilitated the export of over 30 million metric tons of grain from Ukrainian ports, allocating over 56 per cent of those food exports to developing countries. Consequently, the Initiative has not only contributed to the reduction of global food prices, but also provided essential support to those severely affected by the war, particularly in developing countries.

Japan commends the unwavering dedication of the Secretary-General, Mr. Griffiths and Ms. Grynspan, to upholding the Initiative's continuity and integrity. We also extend our appreciation to the Government of

Türkiye for its diplomatic and operational assistance to the Initiative.

In line with the efforts to prevent further deterioration of the food crisis, Japan actively contributes to providing emergency food assistance and enhancing the resilience of the international community, including vulnerable Member States, and has so far committed over \$250 million in assistance.

It is truly regrettable that Russia opposed a 120-day automatic extension of the Initiative in March. It is also deeply concerning that, since 1 May, the Joint Coordination Centre inspection rate has dropped significantly, indicating not only Russia's unwillingness to facilitate inspections and the movements of ships, but also the intention to suspend the Initiative. The prospect of suspension is alarming, as it disregards the potential catastrophic consequences for global food supplies.

To avert global hunger and tackle food insecurity, we must ensure the safe and smooth passage of vessels transporting grain, related foodstuffs and fertilizers from designated Ukrainian ports by sustaining the Initiative's operations. Japan calls on all relevant parties, particularly Russia, to act responsibly to ensure the continuation of the Initiative.

The anguish endured by Ukraine and the subsequent strain on global food security must cease. Japan reaffirms its unwavering dedication to providing comprehensive support and standing in solidarity with the people of Ukraine. We pledge to continue our endeavours to secure global food supplies, thereby contributing to stabilizing global markets, preventing poverty, containing social instability and maintaining international peace and security.

Mr. Biang (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I thank Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths for the information he just shared with us on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine. I welcome the participation of the Permanent Representative of Ukraine, the delegation of the European Union and the representatives of Denmark, Lithuania, Poland and Romania.

As we enter the fifteenth month of war in Ukraine, the toll of this deadly conflict in terms of human casualties, suffering and distress continues to grow. Civilians and civilian infrastructure continue to be targeted in deadly fighting and numerous displacements of populations as a result of the bombardments, which makes the daily life of innocent people impossible.

Despite prompt and consistent international solidarity, humanitarian assistance has not been able to reach all those in need, and, according to statistics from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs from last week, there are an estimated 17.6 million people in need in 2023.

We commend the work of the United Nations specialized agencies and all the organizations in the field, which must meet the humanitarian needs in often difficult conditions. We recognize their efforts to provide urgent relief following the bombings and multifaceted assistance that the populations need on a daily basis when fleeing or in reception facilities.

We call on the parties to facilitate access for humanitarian convoys in all areas of operation, especially those closest to the front line, which are the most affected. The people who are not participating in the combat, in particular vulnerable people such as children, the sick or the elderly, must be able to access essential services such as water, electricity or medicine.

We reiterate our continuing call on the belligerents to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law; not to target critical infrastructure or civilian populations; and to refrain from using weapons whose indiscriminate effects inflict unnecessary suffering on civilians or may pose a long-term threat to civilians, including through their effects on the environment. In particular, we emphasize the need for belligerents to refrain from the use of mines or cluster munitions or other remotely delivered weapons and to take maximum precautions to minimize their effects on civilians, especially women, children and the most vulnerable.

The magnitude of the security challenges that are juxtaposed in several hotbeds of tension is putting a strain on international solidarity and making humanitarian mobilization more complex. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is warning of shortages of food, water and medicine, the effects of which could be catastrophic if they are not quickly contained. As for the funding needs for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations rapid response plan for 2023 in Ukraine, it is estimated at \$205 million.

In a global economic context greatly impacted by various crises, the resurgence of other armed conflicts, the worsening of the humanitarian crisis, in particular in relation to the rampant food insecurity, the only

relevant option for overcoming the crisis seems to be to invest in dialogue with a view to achieving a diplomatic and political solution to end the war. The price to pay, both in human lives and in material reconstruction, is too heavy and every day of war will only make it heavier.

My country remains convinced that peace and peaceful coexistence will result from good faith negotiations among all parties. The Black Sea Grain Initiative and the agreement on the exchange of prisoners of war reinforce our conviction. We remain attentive and stand ready to encourage any initiative to resolve the conflict through diplomatic channels.

My country supports the search for viable solutions that allow for a lasting settlement of the conflict to achieve peace and calls on the parties to engage in good faith negotiations to end the deadly war in Ukraine.

Mrs. Hackman (Ghana): We are grateful to you, Madam President, for convening today's meeting and to France and Ecuador for requesting that you do so. We are also grateful to the Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths for his informative briefing.

It is regrettable that the war on Ukraine is continuing in a manner that puts at risk the lives of innocent civilians, as several cities and towns continue to come under the heavy bombardment of military artillery. For several weeks, intense fighting has taken place in such areas as Bakhmut, Mariupol, Lysychansk, Popasna and Sievierodonetsk, where there are reports of numerous civilian casualties. In the first week of this month alone, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights recorded 221 civilian casualties, with 58 persons killed and 163 injured, mostly by explosive weapons with wide-area effects. As is often indicated in the briefings to the Security Council, these numbers are likely to be higher than those reported.

While the casualties have diminished in comparison to previous months, we feel strongly that any civilian casualty is one too many for a war that ought not to have been fought at all. Moreover, both sides have borne great costs as hundreds of thousands of their men are reported to have lost their lives or been injured at the front lines of the battle.

While the turn of the war in the coming days is uncertain, what remains unchanged are the obligations of the warring parties under international humanitarian law and human rights law to ensure the protection of

civilians from harm during times of war. In keeping with these humanitarian obligations, we urge the parties to ensure the safe passage of civilians and grant unhindered humanitarian access to all areas where people require assistance, including the occupied territories of Ukraine. We caution against deliberate attacks on civilian-populated areas as well as the destruction of civilian infrastructure, especially energy and water installations, homes, medical centres, schools and marketplaces, whose destruction heighten the vulnerabilities of civilians and worsen their difficult circumstances.

We are grateful for the continuing commitment of United Nations humanitarian agencies and other partners and for their indispensable efforts aimed at reducing the impact of the war on innocent lives. We wish to emphasize the importance of making medical, reproductive and psychological health services accessible to all, especially, for women and children.

We thank the leadership of the United Nations and Türkiye for their efforts made in support of the Black Sea Grain Initiative and join the calls that the Initiative's further renewal would be helpful in assuaging commodity-market concerns. As indicated in today's briefing the grain deal has been an important stabilizing factor in global food prices over the past year. In expressing our hope for an extension of the Initiative, we reiterate our call on the parties and all stakeholders to renew their commitments so as to ensure its effective operation in all aspects. My delegation further urges relevant stakeholders to make progress in addressing any obstructions to the effective implantation of the memorandum of understanding on promoting Russian food exports and fertilizers to world markets.

Following the recent evacuation of settlements around the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant, an action that has heightened uncertainty among residents and also abroad, we share the concerns raised about the staffing conditions at the plant and express our support for the ongoing consultations led by the International Atomic Energy Agency to secure the protection of the power plant. We wish to reiterate the absolute necessity of nuclear safety and security in Ukraine and further reiterate that there can be no winners in a nuclearized conflict. We therefore appeal for such capabilities not to be postured in the course of the conflict in the interest of all humanity.

We remain resolute in our view that the war on Ukraine cannot be won militarily, and that is why we continue to urge the international community to keep at the forefront of its efforts diplomatic interventions that can help to secure the immediate cessation of hostilities. We believe that it is already past time for the international community to have built on the international consensus for peace in Ukraine in working towards a credible pathway for a comprehensive political settlement in keeping with international law and the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations. We once again call on the Russian Federation to rethink its actions in line with our shared commitments for international peace and security and to immediately and unconditionally withdraw its troops from the internationally recognized borders of Ukraine.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate Ghana's complete commitment to the sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine as we renew our support for all humanitarian efforts in aid of the suffering people of Ukraine.

Mr. Sénéchal de Goffredo Junior (Brazil): I thank Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths for his detailed briefing on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine and on the Black Sea Grain Initiative.

We regret that the pursuit of a military solution to the conflict continues to take an intolerable toll on human lives, as was the case with the air strikes earlier this month on Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities and with the increased fighting in Bakhmut just last week. We express our solidarity with the victims.

We reiterate our call on all parties to respect and ensure respect for international humanitarian law and the fundamental principles of distinction between combatants and civilians, of proportionality, precaution, necessity and humanity. Parties must refrain from attacking critical civilian infrastructure. We also emphasize the need for unhindered humanitarian access to those in need wherever they may be and the need to ensure safe conditions for humanitarian personnel, including medical units and equipment. There must be no politicization of humanitarian messages, nor selective application of international humanitarian law.

Since the start of the conflict, Brazil has defended, alongside other States Members of the United Nations, the immediate cessation of hostilities, without prejudging the results of future peace negotiations, in order to avoid further violence. That remains our

position. The efforts of other Member States in this direction are encouraging. We take note of new appeals in favour of dialogue between the parties, which, in our view, is the only path towards sustainable peace.

We see the renewal of the Black Sea Grain Initiative as a key step towards building trust between the parties. Brazil encourages the extension of the agreements for as long as necessary, in order to limit uncertainties about the global supply of grain and fertilizers. Developing countries have dramatically suffered the side effects of the conflict, due to their structural vulnerabilities to fluctuations in the prices of food and agricultural inputs.

The success of the Initiative is a collective responsibility. We encourage Russia and Ukraine to reach an understanding and urge other Member States to avoid actions that go against the spirit of the Istanbul agreements, including with regard to Russian exports of grain and fertilizers.

We are concerned with the deterioration of the political environment in the Council. We around this table have different perspectives on the conflict's origins and on the way forward, but our understanding of basic norms and principles of international humanitarian law must nevertheless be shared. Brazil cannot avoid expressing frustration at the Council's inability to find common ground and adopt a resolution calling on all parties to respect international humanitarian law. We also find it regrettable that the conflict in Ukraine contaminates other issues on the international agenda, including in other multilateral forums, by blocking dialogue and making it difficult to find answers to other urgent challenges for which we are responsible.

Equally regrettable are attempts, mentioned at a meeting earlier this month by the representative of Gabon, to force others to choose sides (see S/PV.9316). Defending the United Nations Charter and international law is a duty of all members, and we support the territorial integrity of Ukraine. However, this principled position should not hamper the work of the Council towards finding a peaceful solution. That will require the parties and other Member States to be willing to understand the demands and concerns of all sides. The sooner we engage in this collective effort, the better.

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

First, let me underscore that every day that Russia obstructs and threatens to suspend the Black Sea Grain Initiative, it raises global food prices around the world. That means higher prices for everyone, including poor and middle-income countries and the United Nations, which also procures food on the global market. We have heard the United Nations say many times, as we did from Under-Secretary-General Griffiths just now, that the Initiative is critical to stabilizing global food prices and getting food to the world's hungry. Despite that, Russia has stopped discharging its commitments to the United Nations and Türkiye. It has deliberately slowed the pace of vessel inspections and severely reduced the amount of grain leaving Ukraine's ports to help meet the needs of the world's most vulnerable. In recent weeks, on more than one occasion, the Russian Federation's delegation at the Joint Coordination Centre in Istanbul has refused to allow any inspection of ships. Now Russia is threatening to end its cooperation on 18 May.

While Russia keeps Ukrainian grain supplies from feeding the hungry, Russia is successfully exporting its own bumper crop of grain. The Russian Government regularly cites the need to implement its memorandum of understanding with the United Nations on the export of Russian food and fertilizers. In that very memorandum of understanding, Russia committed to facilitating "the unimpeded export of food, sunflower oil and fertilizers" from Ukraine's Black Sea ports. Russia must implement its own commitments. Russia must stop holding global food security hostage to its cynical power plays and profit-taking.

While we are all paying the increased price for Russia's actions, no one is paying more dearly than Ukraine. After 15 months and countless briefings, we are unfortunately no closer to ending the humanitarian suffering caused by Russia's unprovoked war against Ukraine. Instead, the death toll is rising from Russia's missile and drone strikes on Ukraine's civilian population centres. Between 1 and 4 May, Russia launched more than 145 air strikes across Ukraine. That translates into an average of more than one missile, drone or bomb every hour, 24 hours a day, for three days straight. In those three days alone, Russia's attacks have killed and injured more than 100 civilians, including at least five children.

Humanitarian organizations have reported worsening conditions in the front-line areas, and necessities such as electricity, food and fuel are in short supply. President Putin's escalating attacks

on Ukraine's critical infrastructure threaten us all. Russia's obstruction of the Black Sea Grain Initiative is impacting the world's hungry. Russia has no interest in mitigating the spillover effects of its war against Ukraine, just as it has shown no genuine interest in negotiation or meaningful diplomacy. We call on Putin to stop holding the world's hungry hostage and to extend and fully implement the Black Sea Grain Initiative. We again call on Russia to end its attacks on the people of Ukraine and withdraw its forces from Ukraine's territory completely. Russia alone has the power to end the war that it senselessly started.

Mrs. Frazier (Malta): I thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for his sobering briefing and for the work that he and his team are doing on the ground.

The humanitarian situation in Ukraine has continued to deteriorate since the last time the Council discussed it (see S/PV.9286). In the past 15 months, the number of people in need of emergency humanitarian aid and protection has increased from approximately 3 million to nearly 18 million. We want to state with all the clarity we can muster that this is the result of nothing but Russia's unprovoked aggression against Ukraine. Malta strongly condemns Russia's continued escalation of its illegal war of aggression against Ukraine. Ukrainians continue to suffer deliberate large-scale attacks on critical infrastructure that is indispensable for the civilian population's survival. Their basic services, including energy, water supply and heating, have been destroyed by Russian attacks. Russia's continued attacks on energy infrastructure prompted an energy crisis in the first months of 2023, putting the country's resilience further to the test.

Russia has perpetrated indiscriminate killings of civilians, torture and other forms of cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment, as well as sexual and gender-based violence and abductions and forced deportations of children. In doing so, it has wilfully violated the rules-based international order. According to the recent report by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, the forced transfer and deportation of Ukrainian children to Russia or regions under Russian control are violations of international humanitarian law and amount to war crimes. Those children must be promptly returned to Ukraine using technical assistance from international organizations. We demand that Russia stop the unlawful deportations and comply with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

We also welcome and encourage further efforts to ensure full accountability for all crimes committed by Russia against Ukraine and on Ukraine's territory. In the light of that, we are supportive of the ongoing International Court of Justice and International Criminal Court (ICC) processes. Malta strongly believes that there can be no peace without justice. In that regard, Malta joined other States parties to the ICC in making a referral to the Court on the situation in Ukraine and will continue its efforts to strengthen the cooperation between the ICC and the Security Council in continuing to investigate Russia's crime of aggression. Malta is a strong supporter of the ICC as a beacon of accountability. We take note of the warrant issued against President Vladimir Putin and the Russian Commissioner for Children's Rights, Maria Lvova-Belova. We are firm in our belief that such crimes must not go unpunished and that all perpetrators must be held accountable.

Malta will continue to support every effort to address the humanitarian consequences of Russia's aggression. We also reiterate that the only serious step towards a just and lasting peace would be for Russia to immediately cease all hostilities and to unconditionally and completely withdraw all of its forces and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

In conclusion, I want to highlight the importance of the Black Sea Grain Initiative, which extends beyond Ukraine and affects global food security. It is paramount to ensure that the agreement is further extended between all the parties to alleviate the pressures on the security of supply that are affecting communities all over the world. That is yet another element that needs to be pursued as part of the collective efforts to secure sustainable and lasting peace.

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

The Ukraine crisis is still dragging on. The humanitarian situation remains dire, and the spillover effects of the crisis continue. The international community should take positive steps to mitigate the humanitarian consequences of the conflict and make joint efforts to de-escalate the situation and ensure a cessation of hostilities as soon as possible.

First, every effort should be made to reduce the harm and suffering done to civilians. International humanitarian law provides for a code of conduct that must

be observed in situations of conflict. The parties to the conflict should spare no effort in protecting the safety of civilians and civilian facilities. Women and children are the most vulnerable groups in armed conflicts and must be given special attention. We welcome the expansion of aid to all the populations affected and the facilitation of the repair and restoration of civilian infrastructure by the international community, including humanitarian agencies, on a basis of neutrality and impartiality. China supports the balanced, full and effective implementation of the Black Sea Grain Initiative and the memorandum of understanding on the export of Russian food and fertilizers. We also support the United Nations in playing an important role in that regard with a view to removing the real obstacles facing the export of Russian food and fertilizers.

Secondly, the red line of nuclear safety must never be crossed. Nuclear weapons must not be used, and nuclear wars must not be fought. The safeguarding and security of nuclear power plant facilities in Ukraine concern the safety and welfare of hundreds of millions of people. An accident could lead to incalculable humanitarian and ecological consequences. We call for maximum reasonableness and restraint and for avoiding words and actions that could exacerbate the confrontation and lead to a miscalculation. China supports the Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency in maintaining communication with Russia and Ukraine and playing a crucial role in safeguarding the safety and security of civilian nuclear facilities.

Thirdly, the spillover effects of response measures to the conflict should be taken seriously and managed. The world economy faces a renewed risk of recession, which calls for coordinated actions by all countries to jointly maintain the stability of global food, energy and financial markets. However, consecutive rounds of unilateral sanctions and ever-increasing long-armed jurisdictions have not only resulted in severe humanitarian consequences but also undermined global industrial supply chains. The United States and other relevant countries should seriously consider their behaviour, correct it and create the conditions necessary for developing countries to grow their economies and improve their people's livelihoods. They must refrain from engaging in economic coercion and fabricating narratives that accuse other countries of economic coercion. Unilateral sanctions have no basis in international law and are eliciting pushback from a growing number of countries. We must point out that in

the same way, the so-called rules-based international order is highly problematic in terms of its legal and practical ramifications. It would not be used by the United States or other relevant countries as pretexts to abuse unilateral sanctions, nor does it enjoy the broad support or approval of the international community.

Fourthly, it is of the utmost importance that a political settlement of the crisis be reached with the greatest sense of urgency. Complex issues do not have simple answers. Any comprehensive solution always begins with the first step, and the resumption of dialogue and negotiation cannot be deferred indefinitely. All parties should create the conditions necessary to advance dialogue and negotiation, instead of adding fuel to the fire and escalating tensions in an attempt to profit from them. With regard to the issue of Ukraine, China has always been a proponent of peace. All our efforts are directed towards promoting peace talks. Special Representative of the Chinese Government on Eurasian Affairs Li Hui left today to visit Ukraine, Poland, France, Germany and Russia in order to engage with all parties in order to reach a political settlement of the Ukraine crisis. We stand ready to work with the international community in its continued and tireless efforts towards achieving a political settlement of the Ukraine crisis.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): I join others in thanking Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for his briefing and work on the ground. His briefing reminds us of the enormous cost of Russia's war of aggression.

Russia has continued to conduct massive missile and unmanned aerial vehicle strikes against inhabited areas across Ukraine, killing innocent civilians. The United Kingdom is appalled by the reports of recent Russian attacks on Ukrainian Red Cross Society warehouses in Odesa and a mobile hospital in Mykolaiv. There is no excuse for attacking the most vulnerable or the brave humanitarian workers who support them. We therefore call on Russia to abide by international humanitarian law, in particular to observe the distinction between combatants and civilians. Ukrainian civilians — indeed all civilians — should be protected by all combatants. Similarly, aid organizations and workers, whose mission is to help innocent civilians in humanitarian need, are not a target. In the Russian-occupied areas of Ukraine, an estimated 4 million people are living in dire and forlorn conditions. Despite regular attempts by the United Nations to gain access to deliver humanitarian

support, Russia has never provided the necessary security guarantees for access. We continue to call for unimpeded and sustained humanitarian access to the people of Ukraine. We call on Russia to stop denying access and to cease its attacks on critical infrastructure and residential areas.

As we heard from others, the Black Sea Grain Initiative is critically important. More than 30 million tons of grain and other foodstuffs have been exported under the Initiative since 1 August. The deal has been critical to lowering global food prices and getting urgently needed grain to countries that need it most. As the World Food Programme has said, grain deliveries to any country drive global prices down. We therefore urge Russia to stop threatening to leave the Initiative and instead agree to a sustained and stable deal. Meanwhile, Russia continues to block and delay ship inspections. Such obstruction harms global food security by delaying shipments, restricting supplies and keeping prices high for food-importing countries.

Lastly, the United Kingdom is fully committed to holding Russia to account for its illegal actions in Ukraine. We will continue to support independent investigations into the atrocities committed in Ukraine, as part of a just and sustained peace.

Mrs. Nusseibeh (United Arab Emirates): I would like to join others in thanking Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for his informative briefing today.

His sobering report is a reminder of not only the importance of why we are here but also what we must do our utmost to avoid: losing our sense of urgency about the conflict. And we should not stand idly by as the war transforms into a protracted years-long conflict. The consequences are too grave for all of us. Yet fighting has been continuous, with the price being paid by civilians, who bear the brunt of the suffering. The scale of devastation and the dire humanitarian situation in Ukraine cannot be truly conveyed by the statistics that we heard today. In the past 14 months of war, there have been more than 23,000 verified civilian casualties, the actual number of which is likely to be considerably higher. Some 18 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, while more than 8 million people are refugees across Europe, and an additional 5 million people have been displaced within Ukraine. Humanitarian access must therefore be ensured in order to allow much-needed aid to reach the civilians caught in the fighting.

In recent weeks, there has been a noticeable uptick of missile and drone strikes, which have damaged or destroyed civilian infrastructure. Humanitarian facilities have been hit. Last week, a Ukrainian Red Cross Society warehouse and mobile health clinic were destroyed. We once again reiterate our call on the parties to the conflict to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law. Civilian objects must never be the target of an attack.

The United Arab Emirates continues to provide humanitarian assistance to those impacted by the conflict, including its recent donation of ambulances. We also continue to support civilian energy needs. We have sent 2,500 generators and will send additional energy-efficient power supplies in the near future.

The war in Ukraine has had far-reaching consequences beyond the battlefield, as the ripple effects have exacerbated global food crises. The Black Sea Grain Initiative has proved vital against that backdrop. The world has seen the safe export of more than 30 million metric tons of grain and foodstuff from Ukraine since the beginning of the Initiative. So far, those efforts have successfully contributed to alleviating the mounting pressure on global food prices and the inevitable knock-on effects of a destabilized food system on the world's poorest. We have been encouraged that the vital Initiative has continued and commend the earnest efforts of the United Nations and Türkiye to bring all the parties to the table in order to find solutions to outstanding issues. We are pleased to hear that the United Nations will continue to work closely with all sides to ensure that the Initiative operates smoothly. At the same time, we continue to call for the full implementation of the memorandum of understanding on Russian fertilizer and food products and to support efforts to that end.

While the importance of Black Sea Grain Initiative is widely appreciated for its practical benefits, we also hope that in reality it is a trust-building mechanism. The ability to reach an agreement on that Initiative and other successful negotiated outcomes, such as exchanges of prisoners of war, demonstrates that there remains some degree of willingness to negotiate a pathway forward. We are cautiously hopeful that such efforts can be a conduit for building trust between all the parties and for reminding them of the benefits of peace.

The United Arab Emirates has consistently held that there can be no viable military solution to this

war, and we will not waver in that belief. We call for de-escalation, diplomacy and dialogue as the way forward. The international community should rally behind all efforts that can lead to a cessation of hostilities and pave the way for just and lasting peace — one that respects Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

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

I would like to begin by thanking Mr. Martin Griffiths, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, not only for his briefing but for all of his and his team's work both in Ukraine and related to Ukraine.

In May the Council traditionally focuses on the protection of civilians, a legal obligation for any party to an armed conflict. And yet after 15 months of war, we are compelled to recognize that civilians in Ukraine continue to pay a price that is far too painful. In the past few days the Ukrainian population has again had to endure multiple waves of attacks, with Russian missiles and drones hitting various regions. In Kherson, attacks were carried out on a train station and a supermarket during rush hour and killed or injured dozens of persons. In Odesa, the Ukrainian Red Cross warehouse was destroyed, as was its mobile clinic in Mykolayiv. In Ternopil, a humanitarian warehouse was also destroyed by Russian strikes last Saturday. Switzerland strongly condemns those attacks. I reiterate that civilians and civilian objects should not be targets. We call for respect for international humanitarian law. The parties to the conflict have a responsibility to take every possible measure to protect civilians. We also want to point to the obligation to protect humanitarian workers and ensure their unhindered access to the 18 million people in need in Ukraine, including those in Russian-occupied areas.

Accountability is an imperative for delivering justice. The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine concluded in March that certain violations of international law in Ukraine constitute war crimes. The perpetrators of those crimes and other violations of international law must be held accountable. At the same time, the needs of victims must be placed at the centre of all transitional justice efforts. We support the recommendation of the Commission of Inquiry that complementary instruments, such as a victims'

registry, reparations and mental health and psychosocial services, be put in place.

Russia's military aggression against Ukraine has had negative repercussions all over the world. That is where the Black Sea Initiative comes in, along with the memorandum of understanding focused on the export of Russian food products and fertilizer. The Initiative helps to alleviate food and energy insecurity. Last week, it reached an important milestone, having seen the export of 30 million tons of Ukrainian grain and foodstuffs since its launch. Of that, more than half a million tons of grain have been shipped by the World Food Programme in support of its humanitarian operations in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Yemen. In view of its added value, the Black Sea Grain Initiative must continue. We encourage all parties to redouble their efforts to find a lasting solution. We welcome the commitment of the Secretary-General and his representatives and the contribution of Türkiye in that regard. Switzerland stands ready to provide its support, in particular in its role as host State.

After 15 months of war, thousands of civilians are suffering from the devastating direct effects of the hostilities, as well as the indirect effects on the infrastructure necessary to meet their basic needs. We reiterate our urgent call on Russia to de-escalate the situation immediately, cease all hostilities and withdraw its troops from Ukrainian territory without delay. I hope that this month of May, marked by the spirit of the Geneva Conventions, will lead us to reaffirm what should unite us all — the humanitarian imperative to protect civilians. That is true in Ukraine as it is everywhere in the world.

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, Madam President, as well as the members of the Security Council and Under-Secretary-General Griffiths. I also recognize the representative of Putin's regime in the permanent seat of the Soviet Union.

We are meeting to address the Russists' war against my country. After one of the lowest periods in the history of the Security Council, the April presidency of the aggressor State inflicted yet another blow on an already compromised principal body of the United Nations. This April alone, the Russian occupiers

committed 6,139 war crimes, which led to the death of 207 Ukrainian civilians, including 11 children. On 28 April, Russia again launched a missile strike on a multistorey apartment building, this time in Uman, in the Cherkasy region. As a result, 23 residents were killed, including six children. So much for Putin's envoy saying that Russia does not attack Ukrainian civilians. Many Council members have seen the heartbreaking video footage from Uman, where people desperately waited for hours near the rubble for their loved ones to be retrieved. In Russia, television viewers watched that footage on the State-owned propaganda channel Russia-1. Meanwhile, the Russist "Ministry of War" posted on social media the words "Right on target".

The fact is that since day one of the Russian invasion, regardless of the torrent of lies from the Russist representative on the Council, innocent civilians have been a deliberate target for Russian weapons and a permitted object for Russian crimes. Russism and its disciples, including in this Chamber, have defied logic, all laws of non-contradiction and all semblance of decency. Two days after the strike on Uman, on 1 May, another Ukrainian child, a 14-year-old boy, was killed in the village of Lyzunivka, in the Chernihiv region, by a Russian air bomb that also destroyed the local school. The attack was another case of the cowardly and despicable terror tactics that the Russist army has applied widely against the northern Ukrainian regions that were liberated a year ago — bombing Ukrainian border settlements from Russian air space. Like any other terrorists, the Russist servicemen do not care where those bombs fall. The main thing is that they must sow death and destruction.

Terror aimed at the liberated areas has become a hallmark of the Russist army. On 3 May, Russia killed 23 people in the Kherson region alone, and 49 people were wounded — in a store, a railway station and a gas station and in their homes. On 7 May, a Russist missile strike damaged a mobile hospital in the Mykolayiv region that also belonged to the Ukrainian Red Cross. Since the beginning of the full-fledged Russist invasion, 25 facilities of the Ukrainian Red Cross have been damaged or destroyed. On 9 May, a massive barrage of 25 missiles slammed into Ukrainian cities. The day before that, on 8 May, the Ukrainian Air Force was able to down all 35 of the Iranian drones launched by Russia. Also on 8 May, Russian missiles completely destroyed a warehouse of the Ukrainian Red Cross in Odesa, along with all the humanitarian

aid stored there. One employee was killed. As a result of the attack, the Odesa branch of the Ukrainian Red Cross was compelled to suspend the provision of humanitarian aid and the implementation of a number of humanitarian projects.

We are grateful to our friends and allies, who literally saved the lives of Ukrainians by helping us to reinforce our air defence, which enabled us to shoot down 23 of 25 missiles. However, more needs to be done to fully protect our skies and civilians. This weekend, Ukrainians also had to spend their time with air-raid sirens sounding in the background as Russia launched massive new attacks using dozens of Iranian drones, cruise missiles and S-300 rockets. The cities of Khmelnytskyi, Ternopil, Mykolayiv, Kharkiv and Kostiantynivka in the Donetsk region suffered human casualties and serious damage to civilian infrastructure.

In addition to the immediate harm caused to millions of Ukrainians by Russia's war, the long-term effects of displacement, trauma and poverty will be felt for years to come. The most vulnerable suffer the most. Russia is violating the fundamental principles of child protection in wartime. As a result of the Russist aggression, 480 children have been killed, and 967 have been injured. To date, 13 cases of sexual violence against children have been verified by the Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine in the Donetsk, Kyiv, Kherson, Mykolayiv and Chernihiv regions. The real numbers are definitely higher, and our law enforcement continues the investigations. Russist attacks have damaged 3,185 educational institutions, 330 of which were destroyed. In total, 1,412 health-care objects and 577 health-care facilities have been damaged, 258 facilities of which were destroyed. According to the annual report of the UNICEF country office in Ukraine, education for an estimated 5.7 million children has been disrupted, while 1.5 million children face mental health issues.

The forceful deportation of children is nothing but a well-planned Kremlin policy aimed at aggressive indoctrination, ethnic identification-change and the deprivation, for Ukraine, of its succeeding generations. The Ukrainian authorities have identified that to date, 19,393 children have been deported or abducted to the Russian Federation or to the territories of Ukraine temporarily occupied by Russia — some 4,390 of whom are orphans or children without parental care. It has been possible to return only 364 children. We note with concern that Russia has reportedly intensified its deportation and abduction practices in the occupied

territories under the guise of so-called evacuation. We join many others in the Council in reiterating that it is only the Russist troops that must be evacuated from the territory of Ukraine. As soon as that happens, the atrocities of the war will be over.

We welcome the well-founded conclusions of the reports of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, established by the Human Rights Council, and by the Moscow Mechanism of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which reconfirmed the enormous scale of violations and crimes committed by the Russist occupiers, in particular against children. We call on the Secretary-General and the Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict to give a proper assessment of the gravity of the violations against children in Ukraine perpetrated by the Russist Government forces in the upcoming annual report. We believe that it should contribute to ensuring accountability for perpetrators and justice for Ukrainian children — victims of the Russist aggression. The invasion of the Soviet permanent seat in the Security Council should give neither immunity nor amnesty to war criminals.

We have already brought to the Council's attention the critical situation concerning the mine contamination of Ukrainian lands. According to preliminary estimates, 170,00 to 180,000 square kilometres of Ukraine's territory are contaminated with mines and other explosive ordnance. Our primary task today is to accelerate the demining process as much as possible, increase the number of demining teams and equip them with special equipment. Unfortunately, those people who risk their lives to clear Ukrainian territory of mines and restore safety for people are also a target for the Russist troops. Most recently, on 7 May in the Kherson region, nine members of a demining team were killed by Russian shells while on duty. The mine contamination in Ukraine is an issue affecting global food security, as more than 4,700 square kilometres of contaminated areas are agricultural lands. In such extraordinary circumstances, Ukraine continues to act as a reliable contributor to global food security by implementing its agreement with the United Nations under the Black Sea Grain Initiative and advocating for expanding its geographical scope by including new Ukrainian ports.

As of the beginning of May, Ukraine has exported 29.8 million tons of grain and foodstuffs this year. That number includes 600,000 tons of grain shipped

by vessels chartered by the World Food Programme in support of its humanitarian operations in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Yemen. That volume could have been significantly higher if Russia had not resorted to impeding practices. We are concerned about that, since as of 1 May, the inspection rate has dropped to an average of 2.9 inspections per day, compared to 6.6 in the period from August 2022 to April 2023. As a result, in April we were able to export through the grain corridor less than 3 million tons, which is only half of our agricultural export capacities.

Together with the United Nations and Türkiye, Ukraine strives for the extension of the Initiative without any delay or disruption to shipments. According to experts, if it is blocked by Russia, global food prices could increase substantially again. That grim perspective should be taken seriously. It is disgusting that Russia still pretends to be on the losing side of the deal. I will not even remind the Council of the immorality of such complaints from the aggressor State, which has been and remains the only threat to food shipments in the Black Sea. Let us just turn to the data, which clearly shows the benefits for Russia from the deal. The data indicates that Russian wheat exports in January and February 2023 nearly doubled from the same period one year earlier. We therefore consider those speculations to be an attempt to whitewash Russia's deliberate practices to weaponize food supplies, and we urge the international community to give a resolute response.

Let me remind some who have made statements here today that the Black Sea Grain Initiative is not due to expire this week. It is, however, the Russian blackmail deadline that expires this week.

A week ago, we paid tribute to the victims and heroes of the Second World War, marking the end of that war in Europe. The atrocities of that war prompted our predecessors to commit to saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war. Now in Ukraine, Russia reminds us that our commemoration slogan, "never again", is still a goal to be achieved. The lessons of the Second World War teach us that just and lasting peace can be possible only if evil is defeated and is not able to continue its aggression. Any attempt to appease the aggressor, at the expense of its victims, will only protract and broaden the scope of the tragedy.

As my President said on 8 May, when Ukraine, along with the entire world, commemorated the victory over Nazism:

"We in Ukraine give meaning to the words 'never again' — not only to remember, but also to protect; not only to value life, but also to the utmost to ensure that everyone who threatens life, everyone who brings aggression, everyone who resorts to terror against other nations, every such evil loses."

Ukraine has committed to stop this modern evil of Russia-ism. We are guided by the supreme principle of morality, which is a categorical imperative since it is not conditional upon one's preferences.

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

Mr. Skoog: I have the honour to speak 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; the potential candidate country Georgia; and the European Free Trade Association country Liechtenstein, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Andorra and Monaco, all align themselves with this statement.

Like everyone else, I want to first thank Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths for the briefing and to commend him and the United Nations system for their excellent work on the ground, providing humanitarian assistance under very difficult circumstances in Ukraine and in many other places.

The horrors that Mr. Griffiths and others have described from inside Ukraine, resulting from Russia's unprovoked and unjustified military aggression, are unimaginable. For 15 months now, the Russian leadership has struggled, without success, to find any justification whatsoever for its illegal war of aggression. Russia must stop its war and immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraw all of its forces and proxies from the entire territory of Ukraine, within its internationally recognized borders.

I will emphasize three points in my intervention — the importance of upholding international law and international humanitarian law, the need for accountability and efforts to address the global consequences of Russia's war of aggression.

First, international law and international humanitarian law must be respected. Russia must therefore immediately stop its indiscriminate and decimating shelling of civilians and civilian areas. Under international humanitarian law, deliberate attacks on civilians or attacks that do not distinguish between military targets and civilians, are prohibited under all circumstances.

We strongly condemn cases related to sexual and gender-based violence. We are particularly horrified by the impact of Russia's aggression against children. Children are being killed and maimed and schools and hospitals have been attacked, in blatant violation of international law. Russia's practice of forcibly transferring and deporting Ukrainian children is a violation of international humanitarian law. The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine concluded that it amounts to war crimes. Russia must immediately facilitate the safe return of Ukrainians who were forcibly transferred or deported.

We also strongly condemn Russia's attacks and violence against journalists and media workers. UNESCO has stated that 12 journalists have been killed in Ukraine since the start of the invasion. The safety of journalists is indispensable to ensuring the right to freedom of opinion and expression and, in particular, the freedom of the press.

We urge Russia to enable safe, rapid and unhindered humanitarian access to populations in need of assistance, in particular into the temporarily occupied territories through the front lines. It is imperative that the safety of humanitarian workers is ensured.

Secondly, there can be no impunity for the commanders, perpetrators and accomplices of atrocities. The EU is firmly committed to ensuring full accountability for war crimes and the other most serious crimes committed in connection with Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, including through the establishment of an appropriate mechanism for the prosecution of the crime of aggression. We welcome the creation of the new International Centre for Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression, in The Hague, and we reiterate our support for the investigations of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court. We are also fully supportive of the establishment of an international mechanism to register the damages Russia has inflicted, as recommended by the General Assembly in resolution ES-11/5, adopted in November 2022.

Thirdly, Russia's aggression and its weaponization of food have undermined global food security, driving up food and fertilizer prices worldwide. We welcome the Secretary-General's active engagement to address those serious consequences, and call on all Member States to come together in support of his efforts. They benefit us all, including Russia.

The Black Sea Grain Initiative, in particular, has been instrumental in bringing down global food prices. It is crucial that it be renewed and run at its full potential in order to provide the continuity and predictability needed by operators and to avoid a discontinuation in shipments of grains to countries in need. We must not forget that there would be no need for the Initiative were it not for Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

In addition to the Grain Initiative, the EU's solidarity lanes have allowed the export of more than 32 million tons of Ukraine's food and agricultural goods. Vessels chartered by the World Food Programme have transported almost 600,000 tons of wheat through various Black Sea ports, including to Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia and Kenya. Through Ukraine's own Grain from Ukraine programme, hundreds of thousands of metric tons of grain have been donated to countries in need, as we just heard.

We know that these efforts are insufficient for countries vulnerable to food insecurity. Therefore, together with our member States, we are providing €18 billion to address urgent and longer-term food security needs in 2021 and 2024, focusing on regions most affected by food insecurity. Concretely that support enables vulnerable countries to afford imports of key staples despite price increases and currency devaluations, as well as to increase their resilience and food autonomy in the longer term.

I want to reassure the members of the Council that every effort in support of Ukraine has come in addition to, and not instead of, our global commitments, as illustrated by the increase in EU official development assistance. We are grateful to all countries that are generously supporting those in need in Ukraine and elsewhere, and once again encourage all to step up their assistance, in line with the humanitarian response plan and appeal for aid of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs this year.

In conclusion, I reiterate our call for a just, comprehensive and lasting peace, in line with the Charter of the United Nations and the General

Assembly resolution adopted in February (resolution ES-11/6). The EU is unwavering in our support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, within its internationally recognized borders, and its inherent right of self-defence against Russia's aggression.

We will continue to stand firmly with the Ukrainian people for as long as it takes.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Romania.

Mr. Feruță (Romania): I too want to thank Ecuador and France for requesting this meeting, and I thank you, Madam President, for convening it. I appreciate this opportunity to address the Council.

In addition to the points made by European Union (EU) Ambassador Skoog, I would like to add several remarks.

Under-Secretary-General Griffiths provided a sober overview of the humanitarian situation in Ukraine. I want to take this opportunity to thank him and pay tribute to the efforts of him and his team to address the multiple challenges posed by this aggression. Sadly, it is still the civilians who pay the price of the illegal aggression of Russia against Ukraine. Today is day 446 since the beginning of the aggression.

International law and international humanitarian law must be respected. That is a red line agreed by the entire United Nations membership. And yet, the new barrage of rockets towards Ukraine provides no indication that Russia has any intention to stop its indiscriminate shelling of civilians and civilian areas. Ironically, next week we are to celebrate at the United Nations the week of the protection of civilians.

The ruins of urban and rural areas are in sharp and painful contrast with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11 on sustainable cities and communities. There could not be a more direct connection between development and security than that. Later this year, we are expected to take stock of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the SDG summit in September. The Russian invasion and the continued aggression towards Ukraine also hamper our efforts to promote the 2030 Agenda, in addition to being blatant violations of the principles of international law and international humanitarian law.

Since the beginning of the year, the international community has sent strong messages regarding the predictability of accessing food around the globe via the Black Sea Grain Initiative. We welcome the continued efforts undertaken by the Secretary-General, Under-Secretary-General Griffiths and Secretary-General Grynspan and those of Türkiye in keeping the Black Sea Grain Initiative alive. We need the Initiative to move forward. We need predictability. We need responsibility. We have implemented the Black Sea Grain Initiative for too long to go back and risk an aggravated global food crisis. There is no time for second thoughts. As we heard today, there is no plan B with regard to the Black Sea Grain Initiative.

For its part, Romania will continue to rise to the expectations and facilitate the exports of grains from Ukraine to reach those in need via the EU solidarity lanes. So far, more than 16 million tons of grains have crossed Romanian territory, mainly through Romanian Black Sea ports, in addition to the amounts exported through the Black Sea Grain Initiative.

In line with resolution ES-11/6, adopted by the General Assembly on 23 February, Romania will continue to call for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine. Similarly, we should also be mindful of the danger of impunity for those responsible for crimes committed in connection with Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. Alongside the Russians who commit abuses and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law provisions, the March report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine recommends that the Russian Federation limit the use of private military and security companies as they are "generally less accountable than regular forces" (*A/HRC/52/62, p.18*).

Romania firmly believes that justice must be done with regard to all core crimes committed in the context of this war — all core crimes — including the crime of aggression. While that is not an easy path, we should rise to this challenging task rather than be discouraged.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Poland.

Mr. Szczerski (Poland): Poland appreciates the convening of this timely and very needed meeting. We value the opportunity to contribute to the discussion, triggered once again by the new distressful facts regarding the humanitarian impact of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, which we heard about from

our well-informed briefer. I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths for his briefing.

Let me concentrate today on the following three points.

First, Russia has been waging its war of aggression against Ukraine and Ukrainian people for close to 500 days now, and the war's human and material tolls keep growing every day. As the Russian military fails on the battleground, it tries to compensate for its shortcomings there with continuous brutal aggression against innocent civilians. Air-raid sirens keep blaring across the whole territory of Ukraine. Critical infrastructure facilities remain the primary targets of the Russian rockets. New civilian deaths are being continually reported. All that bears the characteristics of a total war and, as such, requires repeated universal condemnation time and time again.

My second point refers to the Russian strategy at the United Nations. Despite the fact that the vast majority of United Nations Member States have been crystal clear in their condemnation of the Russian aggression and its disastrous humanitarian impact on numerous occasions, Russia keeps ignoring our appeals, distorting the basic facts even today and flooding us with disinformation and propaganda about this special military operation. Its hope is that the international community will eventually become tired of this war, stop talking about it and eventually forget about it. My appeal to Council members today is simple: let us never be indifferent, and let us never get used to war — any war — even if it disappears from the breaking news headlines.

As long as Ukraine and Ukrainians keep paying the highest price, heroically defending each square kilometre of their territory against the invading forces, we cannot let our resolve falter. We need to stand our ground and continue to defend the Charter of the United Nations. We need to keep putting pressure on Russia to cease its aggression. When there is no aggression, there is no war, so that is the way to achieve peace, which the whole world is looking forward to.

Finally, we should keep helping Ukraine on the ground as long as it takes. In 2022, the total value of support for Ukraine from Poland amounted to about \$10 billion. This year, the expenditure to cover only the social benefits and educational needs of Ukrainians, mostly women and children, finding refuge in Poland will amount to another \$1.2 billion. In the face of the systematic Russian attacks aimed at destroying energy

and heating infrastructure during the past winter, our humanitarian assistance focused on spare parts and equipment for the energy infrastructure, as well as transformers and power aggregates. We will continue with our support for Ukraine, both in the United Nations and on the ground, as long as it is necessary. We will not get worn down in our solidarity with Ukraine by Russian hybrid attacks on Poland, which have increased recently, and we call on all Member States to do the same.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now 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. We fully align ourselves with the statement of the European Union. I also thank Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths for his comprehensive briefing.

We highly value the work of the United Nations in its efforts to provide humanitarian aid to people affected by Russia's unprovoked and premeditated war against Ukraine, as well as in its close monitoring and documentation of human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law. We also appreciate its active engagement in numerous diplomatic efforts, including the Black Sea Grain Initiative.

Over the past 15 months, Russia has inflicted immense suffering upon Ukraine and its people through its full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine. The humanitarian consequences of Russia's attacks on the civilian population have been devastating. Each additional day of aggression prolongs the toll of human suffering.

Russia, responding to its military losses in Ukraine, is terrorizing the civilian population by conducting massive missile and unmanned aerial vehicle strikes at critical infrastructure and residential areas, including in Kyiv and Odesa. Those horrific attacks, which result in significant casualties and destruction, are designed to erode the will of ordinary Ukrainians to resist. However, launching attacks with the sole purpose of terrorizing civilians is a war crime.

The United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) have published extensive reports indicating atrocities committed by Russia and its armed forces against civilians in Ukraine. Those acts have been classified

as war crimes, crimes against humanity and gross violations of the Geneva Conventions. We highlight the large-scale attempts by Russia to abduct and transfer children from Ukraine. International humanitarian law must be upheld collectively with international organizations leading the way. The recent arrest warrants issued by the International Criminal Court for Russia's President Vladimir Putin and Presidential Commissioner for Children's Rights in Russia, Maria Lvova-Belova, the OSCE Moscow Mechanism mission of experts on the situation of Ukrainian children and the Human Rights Council's Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine are all concrete steps towards accountability and safeguarding international humanitarian law. We strongly condemn Russia's attempts to intimidate the ICC and undermine international efforts to secure justice.

On 8 May, Russian strikes destroyed the humanitarian aid stored in a 1,000-square-metre warehouse of the Ukrainian Red Cross for the Odesa region. By attacking agricultural infrastructure and restricting maritime exports, Moscow seeks to instrumentalize the vulnerabilities of other countries. It is estimated that Ukrainian agricultural products feed 400 million people around the world. Despite the full-blown war on its territory, Ukraine remains one of the world's top five agricultural exporters. The Black Sea Grain Initiative, the grain from Ukraine and the EU Solidarity Lanes have played an instrumental role in this by alleviating the global food crisis that has been severely exacerbated by Russia's illegal war of aggression. If Russia were serious about countering food insecurity, it would stop its threats to unilaterally leave the Black Sea Grain Initiative and put an end to delaying the inspection of vessels.

The Baltic States are making significant efforts to support Ukraine, providing humanitarian, economic and military aid. Together with Poland, we are among the top four bilateral aid donors to Ukraine by percentage of gross domestic product. It is important to recall that all the support being provided to Ukraine is in addition to, rather than at the expense of, aid and development cooperation to other countries around the world.

Russia must realize that it cannot win in Ukraine. Ultimately, it is Ukraine that will prevail. With unwavering support from the international community, Ukraine will continue to demonstrate its remarkable courage, determination and moral strength, as it fights to liberate its homeland. A peace will be achieved

when Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence are fully restored, enabling its people to thrive and prosper.

We reiterate our support for President Zelenskyy's efforts to promote a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in line with the United Nations Charter, and we support the basic principles outlined in his peace initiative. We are committed to holding Putin's criminal regime accountable for the war of aggression unleashed against Ukraine.

We, the international community, must unite and commit ourselves to ensuring full accountability for the core international crimes in connection with Russia's war against Ukraine, including through the establishment of a special international tribunal for the prosecution of the crimes of aggression.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Denmark.

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

The Nordics are committed to the protection of civilians in armed conflict as a cornerstone of international humanitarian law. Globally and at the country level — in Africa, the Middle East, Asia, the Americas and Europe — our commitment to humanitarian action is resolute. I want to take this opportunity to thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for his briefing and for the work of the staff of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs as well as the staff of other United Nations agencies and other humanitarian actors who do humanitarian work around the clock under impossible conditions in Ukraine and elsewhere.

For more than a year now, Ukraine has been bravely resisting a brutal war of aggression initiated by Russia. The devastating consequences of the war also reach beyond Ukrainian borders — to the Horn of Africa, Yemen and beyond — where millions of people have been pushed deeper into food insecurity, due to rising food and energy prices across the world. Russia's war against Ukraine has compounded many global challenges, making it an urgent matter of international peace and security — and obviously a matter of concern to all States Members of the United Nations.

Russia's indiscriminate missile attacks across Ukrainian cities continue to cause harm to civilians and severe damage to civilian property and infrastructure, illustrating Russia's complete disregard for international humanitarian law. The consequences of these brutal attacks are extensive and far-reaching, and the situation is especially dire close to the front lines, where the need for protection and humanitarian assistance, such as food, medicines and shelter, is alarmingly high. For many, the consequences of the war are long-lasting, damaging the very foundation for recovery and healing, at both the personal and societal level. In this regard, the Nordics welcome the establishment of a register of damage, documenting claims of damage caused by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, as recommended by the General Assembly in its resolution ES-11/5.

Delivering humanitarian assistance in Ukraine to those in need is difficult and dangerous. The situation is a horrific reminder of the need to ensure protection for all civilians. Under international humanitarian law, civilians and civilian objects must be protected, and humanitarian actors must have full, safe and unhindered access. We condemn in the strongest terms attacks on humanitarian operations, such as the attacks on a Ukrainian Red Cross warehouse in Odesa and on medical facilities in Mykolaiv on 8 May. We call on Russia to allow full, safe and unhindered access for humanitarian actors.

Further to the tragic consequences for people in Ukraine, Russia's illegal invasion has had catastrophic global effects. The worsening food crisis and the volatility of global food and energy prices have affected countries around the world. The World Food Programme estimates that an astounding 345 million

people will experience acute food insecurity this year. This is the equivalent of more than the entire population of the United States of America. The world's poorest and those in the most vulnerable situations tend to be the ones most affected by such crises. As a result, the need for humanitarian assistance globally has increased. At the same time, food assistance and humanitarian operations have become more expensive, exacerbating the gap between humanitarian needs and available funding.

Until Russia ends its illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, the continuation of the Black Sea Grain Initiative remains imperative to avoid a worsening of the global food crisis. Up until earlier this month, the Initiative had ensured the export of as much as 30 million tons of grain and foodstuffs, thereby helping to stabilize global food prices and allowing access to food for people at risk of famine.

We welcome the active engagement of the Secretary-General and Türkiye and urge Russia to ensure a long-term rollover of the Black Sea Grain Initiative, in line with the Istanbul agreement — and to immediately suspend its military operations. The extension and full implementation of this initiative is critical in order to avoid a further deterioration of the global food crisis.

Let me conclude by saying the Nordics will continue to stand with Ukraine and its people. We commend Ukraine's initiative for a just peace and support the various initiatives that are seeking accountability for international crimes committed in connection with Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.