

# Defending the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine

The following is a joint statement by Australia, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Re-public, Estonia, France, Georgia, Germany, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovakia, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, and the United States

Russia held an informal meeting at the UN today to promote a false narrative about its occupation of Crimea, which it seized in violation of international law in 2014. We condemn Russia's human rights abuses and military build-up on the peninsula. We strongly reject Russia's attempted annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. Russia's actions are of global concern and inconsistent with international law, including the UN Charter, and contrary to the Helsinki Final Act.

Today's event distorted the realities on the ground in Crimea and only served the interests of Russia's occupation. If Russia is truly interested in increasing understanding on the situation in Crimea, it would allow UN, OSCE, and Council of Europe envoys, as well as humanitarian workers, international human rights monitoring missions, and human rights non-governmental organizations, immediate and unimpeded access to Crimea.

As we saw during the March 12 High-Level Arria-formula meeting on Crimea hosted by Estonia and with 23 co-sponsors, as well as during the February 23 General Assembly Debate, Ukraine has the support of the international community in defending its sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. We call on Russia to immediately end its occupation, stop human rights abuses, release all Ukrainian prisoners it unjustly holds, cease its aggressive actions in Ukraine, respect its international obligations, and implement its commitments under the Minsk agreements. We reiterate our support for the efforts of the Normandy format and our firm commitment to a peaceful resolution of the conflict in eastern Ukraine, in line with the Minsk agreements and with full respect of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.