

Devastation caused by Russia's war: UK statement to the OSCE

Thank you, Mr Chair. Since 24 February, the world has witnessed the devastation stemming from President Putin's war throughout Ukraine. Thousands of civilians have been killed. Millions have been left in need of humanitarian assistance. 25% of Ukrainians have been forced to flee their homes. Hospitals, schools and other critical infrastructure have been bombed, targeting the most vulnerable.

As Russia begins a new offensive in eastern Ukraine, civilians will continue to suffer. This includes in Mariupol which, prior to the invasion, had a population of over 400,000 – hundreds of thousands of whom were Russian speakers – and was a centre for Ukraine's grain trade and heavy engineering. Russia's efforts to capture the city have already come at horrifying costs to its residents. The Mayor of Mariupol has estimated that more than 20,000 civilians may have been killed in the city since the start of the invasion, whilst large areas of infrastructure have been destroyed. Many Ukrainians have been forcibly deported – against their will – to Russia or to Russian-controlled regions of Ukraine. And there are shocking accounts of civilians – men, women and children – deprived of access to food, water and medical supplies. How can Russia attempt to justify this? The UK joins the call for an urgent humanitarian pause to allow assistance to reach civilians in the hardest-hit areas and for civilians to be allowed to evacuate safely and freely.

In the face of this enormous suffering, the Russian Government has continued to perpetuate their blatant lies and to deny responsibility for these deaths. They repeatedly said they would not target civilian infrastructure, but they have remorselessly attacked residential areas, schools and hospitals. They said they would not harm civilians. Yet we are seeing strong evidence that war crimes against the civilian population may have been committed, including as documented in the OSCE Moscow Mechanism report which we discussed in this Council last week.

Not content with spreading disinformation, the Russian government has also attempted to tamper with the efforts of those who report the truth, including through their refusal to extend the mandate of the Special Monitoring Mission. And now we have received alarming reports that Russia's proxies in Donbas are threatening Mission staff, equipment and premises and that Russian forces have taken SMM staff members captive. We condemn these threats to this Mission and its dedicated personnel in the strongest possible terms. We call for the release of SMM staff members, as well as all Ukrainians detained by Russia.

Let us be clear: the world sees through the Kremlin's lies. The true extent of Russia's actions in Mariupol, and in the rest of Ukraine, is yet to be revealed, but there should be no doubt that justice will be sought for these and for future violations of Russia's obligations under the international

laws that they freely signed up to, including the Helsinki Final Act . Those guilty of atrocities must be held to account. The Kremlin must be held responsible for its actions. The Moscow Mechanism report, as the first independent report under the auspices of an international organisation, was important in confirming our fears. We will make every effort to support the ICC investigation into potential war crimes in Ukraine currently underway, as well as other international investigations as appropriate.

Mr Chair, we will continue to use all the tools available to ensure that President Putin fails in his unprovoked, premediated and unjustified war. Yesterday we announced new sanctions on key leaders in Russia's army – targeting those commanding the front line to commit heinous acts – and individuals outside of Putin's military who are actively supporting his illegal invasion of Ukraine. On 13 April, we announced sanctions on 178 individuals – in coordination with the European Union – targeting those who prop up Russian-backed illegal breakaway regions of Ukraine. In addition, on 14 April the UK banned the export of key oil refining equipment and catalysts, degrading Russia's ability to extract and export oil products.

We will also continue to help Ukraine to defend itself. The UK has increased military support of lethal and non-lethal aid, bringing the total so far to £450m. We will continue to provide more defensive equipment, in response to requests from the Ukrainian Government to defend their sovereignty, including providing training when it is required on the equipment that we have provided to the Ukrainian Armed Forces.

Mr Chair, Ukraine is fighting for the right of its citizens to live peacefully in its own territory. The UK stands with Ukraine and will always defend the Ukrainian people's right to choose their own destiny. We are working with our international partners to find a long-term security solution so that Ukraine could never be attacked in this way again. Ukraine deserves peace.

Thank you, Mr Chair. And I kindly request that you attach this statement to the journal of the day.