

# Disinformation and hate speech pave the way for war crimes and genocide

Thank you President. Let me thank Albania for convening this important discussion. Let me also thank all our briefers for their compelling presentations.

As we said in the Council debate on identity and conflict hosted by President Kenyatta last year, history has shown us what happens when identity is weaponised.

From the Holocaust to Rwanda to Bosnia, propaganda, disinformation and hate speech have paved the way for war crimes, atrocities and genocide.

Writing recently, Anne Applebaum observed: "...while not every use of genocidal hate speech leads to genocide, all genocides have been preceded by genocidal hate speech."

President, Russian propaganda and rhetoric towards Ukraine is therefore profoundly disturbing. And Ms Tsybulska has given us plenty of examples today.

State-controlled media in Russia is tightly governed by the Kremlin, which has for years repeated hate speech directed at Ukraine and Ukrainians.

This has seen senior Russian figures deny that Ukraine has a right to exist or that the Ukrainian identity is separate to that of Russia's.

There have been relentless false claims, notably by President Putin, that the Ukrainian government are "drug addicts and neo-Nazis". There has been hate speech from former President Dmitry Medvedev that Ukrainians are "scum and freaks".

And there has been the gross falsehood from Foreign Minister Lavrov and other Russian diplomats that Ukrainians were carrying out a genocide in Donbas. An allegation that has no basis in fact.

Time will tell the full human cost of Russia's invasion.

This Council is already aware of reports of mass graves and summary executions in Bucha, Irpin and Mariupol; and widespread reports of sexual violence.

Investigations into these atrocities are underway. International justice will determine who should be held accountable.

President, let me close with two point points.

Digital and social media platforms are powerful vectors for propaganda, disinformation and hate speech. We note efforts made by media companies to

address this – and we thank Mr Cohen for his participation today. We call on them to strengthen their work in this regard.

Secondly, Article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights expressly prohibits any propaganda for war, and any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence.

Hate speech can also be a war crime.

We call on the Russian Federation to comply with its obligations and stop making such statements.

Thank you.