

Putin is losing on the battlefield: UK statement to the OSCE

Thank you Mr Chair.

On 8 October, an explosion damaged the Kerch Strait Bridge. A crucial logistics route for Russia's militarisation of illegally annexed Crimea, the bridge also plays a key role in moving heavy military vehicles & equipment as well as fuels, oils and lubricants to the southern front of Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine. Accordingly, substantial damage to this bridge will almost certainly have a significant impact on Russia's already strained ability to sustain its forces under pressure in southern Ukraine.

In an address to his Security Council on 10 October, President Putin stated that the intense barrage of missile attacks he had unleashed across Ukraine was in retaliation for the attack on the Kerch Strait Bridge. He also threatened a harsh response to any further attacks on Russian territory.

Mr Chair, I would like to be very clear on two points:

- Opened in 2018 by Putin himself, the construction of the Kerch Strait Bridge was a violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. It is a bridge built by Russia on Ukraine's territory.
- Putin's attempt to portray Monday's barrage of missile strikes as a show of strength in retaliation of the Kerch Bridge incident fools no one. When Putin is losing on the battlefield, he takes the war to the Ukrainian people instead.

Mr Chair, the appalling wave of missiles strikes which took place on 10 October targeted civilian national infrastructure across Ukraine. It appears to have been the most extensive day of long-range strikes since the first days of Russia's illegal invasion and the first time since June 2022 that the centre of Kyiv was targeted. Strikes on residential buildings, playgrounds, a pedestrian bridge and the National Philharmonic; as well as multiple power black outs and disruption to water supplies and communications remind us that once again Ukraine's civilians are paying the terrible price for Russia's barbaric actions.

President Putin claimed that the strikes were carried out with precision long-range ground, naval and air launched weapons. Such weapons in Russia's arsenal include Iskander, Kalibr, and the Kh-101, all of which claim accuracies of under 50m and some as low as 2m. So, there are only a few possibilities as to why so much civilian infrastructure was struck, either: Russia severely overestimates its precision strike capability; Russian military planners were grossly incompetent in their targeting; or the Russian military deliberately conducted premeditated attacks targeting residential

buildings, cultural sites and areas where children may have been present.

Russia took these actions in full knowledge of what would ensue: destruction, injuries and death. Such attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure are not only abhorrent; they are war crimes and a blatant violation of international law.

Mr Chair, we and others have repeatedly called on Belarus to stop supporting Russian aggression, including allowing Russia to use Belarusian airspace to launch stand-off airstrikes and Iranian UAVs against Ukraine. Lukashenko's announcement on Monday that a regional military group will deploy to Belarus' borders in response to a contrived threat does nothing but further stoke instability in the region. Since 24 February, it has been overwhelmingly clear to the world from which side of the Belarusian/Ukrainian border the threat is emanating and it is not Ukraine.

Mr Chair, the announced deployment of Russian and Belarusian forces into a joint military task force is yet another manufactured distraction from Putin's faltering invasion: more defeats in the east; more defeats in the south; more Generals sacked; more demoralised troops; more discontent amongst the Russian population; and more critique from Russia's elites.

The miscalculations continue to mount. Putin and the Russian military leadership have consistently underestimated the will, determination and courage of the Ukrainian military and civilians to defend their homeland from a brutal and barbaric invader. They continue to fail to understand that every horrendous attack strengthens the Ukrainian resolve and that of its friends, like the UK, who remain steadfast in our support – for however long it takes – to ensure that the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the independence of Ukraine is fully restored.

Thank you.