

Putin is resorting to more cruel, brutal, deadly methods in Ukraine: UK statement to the OSCE

Thank you Mr Chair. The start of this week marked eight months of Russia's illegal and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. Eight months of suffering, destruction and loss, at the hands of Russian Forces and President Putin. Eight months of Russia's failure to subjugate the Ukrainian people and their democracy. Eight months of Russian government lies and disinformation.

Just this weekend, the Russian government baselessly tried to claim that Ukraine was planning actions to escalate the conflict in Ukraine through the use of a dirty bomb. There is no reason to suggest that Ukraine would use such a device in its own territory, against its own people and Russia has provided no evidence to support its claims.

As Ukraine has reconfirmed in the last few days, it has no nuclear weapons, no dirty bombs and no plans to acquire any. The IAEA has unambiguously stated they have no proliferation concerns and as reiterated today, Ukraine has offered to open its sites for further inspection.

Russia has a history of making false claims to provide a pretext or cover for its own actions. Russia has demonstrated its disregard for global nuclear security through its illegal takeover of the Ukrainian nuclear power plant at Zaporizhzhia, and Russia is the only State which has repeatedly raised the prospect of nuclear weapons use during the course of its illegal invasion.

The Russian government is hoping to distract and de-sensitise the world from what is really happening on the ground in Ukraine – the continued killing and injuring of Ukrainian civilians and the targeting of critical national infrastructure by the Russian military. An adviser to Ukraine's energy minister has reported that as much as 40% of Ukraine's energy infrastructure has been seriously damaged, with approximately 1.5 million households left without electricity following more strikes on Saturday.

This is a concerted campaign by Russia to deplete Ukraine's energy generating capabilities ahead of winter. Families are being forced to cook their evening meals on the side of the street, using open fires; hospitals are dependent on back-up generators, jeopardizing patient safety; parents worry how they will keep their children warm at night; police have even reported that many air raid sirens don't have the electricity to warn of other potential airstrikes. The devastating impacts are being felt across all areas of civilian life – from education; to sanitation; to communications, through to the meeting of fundamental human needs such as warmth, food and clean water.

The Russian government and the Russian military are knowingly and systematically plunging millions into cold and darkness, weaponising energy in an attempt to crush the courage and strength of the Ukrainian people.

Attacks disproportionately killing civilians, and destroying objects indispensable to the survival of civilians, are prohibited under international humanitarian law and may constitute war crimes. It is barbaric.

In Kherson, the Russian government is attempting to forcibly remove and resettle Ukrainian citizens. Mr Chair – this is not an evacuation; it is deportation. Preparing for the oncoming Ukrainian counter-attack, we have heard credible reports of the looting of an entire city by Russian forces – including emergency service vehicles and medical equipment being taken to Crimea. Russian officials and senior military officers, installed to oversee the sham referenda and attempted illegal annexation are now fleeing, leaving newly mobilised and inexperienced Russian servicepersons to their fate.

President Putin is resorting to more cruel, brutal, deadly methods. But as we have seen time and time again in these past eight months, the resilience and strength of the Ukrainian people in the face of such adversity is truly admirable. They are not alone in this struggle. The UK, with our partners, will continue to support Ukraine militarily, financially, with humanitarian assistance and through sanctions, to ensure they can protect their people, defend their country and restore territorial integrity and sovereignty to the whole of Ukraine.

As we approach winter, the unity of the international community, the outrage at Russia's continued disdain for human life and the standing up for international rules, laws and principles must not and will not fade away. Ukraine is not only defending its right to exist as a sovereign and democratic country; Ukraine is defending the right of all peoples of all States to live in freedom, without fear of aggression from authoritarian regimes. We have so much gratitude. We stand by you now and for as long as it takes.