

Putin's illegal war of choice is failing: UK statement to the OSCE

Thank you Mr Chair. On 30th September, Putin announced the attempted illegal annexation of the Ukrainian regions of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia. The United Kingdom unreservedly condemns this outrageous and illegitimate act. It represents yet another attack on Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We will never accept the regions of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia as anything other than sovereign Ukrainian territory.

Mr Chair, the announced attempted illegal annexation is just another act of desperation by a Russian leadership under pressure to fabricate a success to sell to their people as a price worth paying for the thousands of Russian service personnel who have been sent to their deaths to fight Putin's illegal war of choice.

On 1 October, Russian forces in the Donetsk Oblast town of Lyman withdrew in the face of Ukrainian advances. Lyman is a significant loss for Russia. Militarily, it was Russia's eastern logistics hub and also commanded a key road that crossed the Siverskyi Donets River behind which Russia was attempting to consolidate its defences. But the loss of Lyman is symbolically important for Russia too – situated within a region that Russia supposedly aimed to “liberate”; attempted to illegally annex; and that Putin promised would be Russian territory forever two days earlier. It is a clear demonstration of the stark mismatch between the Kremlin's rhetoric and reality.

As Ukraine consolidates its advances further in the east and near Kherson in the south, it will become painfully apparent to the Russian people that Putin's contrived fanfare of celebrations and concerts, which accompanied his announced attempts to illegally annex territory, were just part of another lie in his attempt to hide the disastrous truth of his appalling and failing illegal invasion of Ukraine.

Mr Chair, as we have all seen, the Russian people are already realising that the announced “partial mobilisation” is also part of that sham – a desperate attempt to turn the tide of a failed invasion by sacrificing ordinary Russian citizens. On 29 September, just over a week after the mobilisation was announced, President Putin addressed his National Security Council and admitted that “a lot of questions are being raised during this mobilisation campaign, and we must promptly correct our mistakes and not repeat them.” This rather quick public acknowledgement of problems highlights the dysfunction of the mobilisation over its first week. Including that local officials have almost certainly drafted many Russian citizens who are outside the announced scope of the mobilisation. Numerous images and video of chaotic mobilisation centres support Putin's own assessment that his mobilisation is not going well.

Mr Chair, the mobilisation of these Russian citizens will not turn the tide of this war in Putin's favour. The thousands of ordinary citizens sent to war – poorly trained, poorly equipped and poorly led – will not succeed where Russia's professional army – with tanks, paratroopers and artillery – has already failed. And mobilisation is an admission that this is a war, you do not mobilise your population to fight a limited military operation, special or otherwise. You mobilise a population to fight a war – in this case Putin's failing illegal war of choice.

Mr Chair, on 30 September, Russian forces almost certainly struck a convoy south-east of the town of Zaporizhzhia where local authorities report that 25 civilians were killed. The munition involved was likely a Russian long-range air defence missile being used in a ground attack role. We have unfortunately seen the use of high-value air-defence and anti-ship missile systems rerolled to strike ground targets, including civilians and civilian infrastructure before, such as the attack on the Kremenchuk shopping centre in June.

The strike on the convoy last week was an appalling, callous and cowardly attack at a location routinely used by civilians to assemble before travelling to areas of Ukraine under temporary Russian control to deliver aid and pick up relatives. That this strike happened on the same day President Putin signed the illegal annexation agreement for Zaporizhzhia and claimed that Russia would now protect those civilians is particularly deplorable.

The deliberate targeting of civilians is not only abhorrent, but also a blatant violation of international law. The atrocities we see being committed day after day will not be forgotten and those giving or following illegal orders will be held to account.

Mr Chair, Russia's continued aggressive nuclear rhetoric and signalling is also irresponsible. It is designed to distract and deter us from supporting Ukraine. It achieves neither. We continue to call on Russia to de-escalate, starting by ceasing its assault on Ukraine and withdrawing its forces. We urge Russia to tone down its rhetoric regarding nuclear weapons. Russia should seek to reduce tensions and the risk of miscalculation, not increase them.

Mr Chair, the Russian Government's attempt to redraw the map of Europe in blood, and conquer an independent and democratic State by force of arms is an attack on the security and freedom of Europe. The United Kingdom, along with many others, repeatedly warned that this would be a massive strategic mistake and would come at a severe cost.

Mr Chair, as exemplified by [the visit of our Defence Secretary, Ben Wallace, to Kyiv last week](#); our support to Ukraine will remain steadfast until the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence of Ukraine is fully restored. The UK is one of the leading donors of military aid to Ukraine, committing £2.3 billion in 2022 and, [as the Prime Minister announced at UNGA 77](#), this amount will be matched or exceeded in 2023. Just weeks ago we committed to donating more than 120 logistics vehicles in the latest tranche of gifted military equipment.

The UK has also trained more than 27,000 members of the Armed Forces of Ukraine since 2015, including over 5,500 of new recruits in the UK this year, with help from allies and partners. The training teaches troops key skills such as weapons handling, first aid, fieldcraft, patrol tactics, vehicle-mounted operations and trench and urban warfare, which will give them a crucial edge on the battlefield over Russia's professional and mobilised soldiers.

The UK stands in solidarity with Ukraine, including through the ongoing provision of military assistance, as Ukrainians defend their homeland and fight for the simple right to a free, peaceful and prosperous future. Thank you.