

Reinforced OSCE meeting on the situation in and around Ukraine: UK statement, 22 February 2022

Thank you Mr Chairman for convening us at such a critical time.

Yesterday, Vladimir Putin recognised the so-called 'Donetsk People's Republic' and 'Luhansk People's Republic' as independent states. Overnight, he declared he would – again – send Russian troops into those areas – areas which are the sovereign territory of Ukraine.

This would be a violation of Russia's commitments under the Minsk agreements. It violates the UN Charter. And repudiates core principles on which the OSCE was founded, of sovereign equality; of the inviolability of frontiers; respect for territorial integrity; and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

Mr Chairman, we condemn Russia's actions. Russia must withdraw all forces from Ukraine immediately. They have no grounds to be there.

The [Special Monitoring Mission \(SMM\)](#) reported no unusual military activity by Ukraine. Russia's claims of a Ukrainian threat to the Donbas region is a fabrication, an obvious pretext for their own aggressive action.

At every step, Ukraine has sought to reduce tension, whilst Russia's response to requests for transparency has been to boycott meetings, to accuse others of hysteria, and to spread disinformation. Every step of the way, Russia has lied, obfuscated and delayed.

Ukraine has pursued diplomacy through the Normandy Format and the Trilateral Contact Group. It has enabled the Special Monitoring Mission to carry out its work, unlike Russia's proxies who systematically attempt to restrict the Mission's movement. Ukraine has welcomed the Renewed European Security Dialogue. And Ukraine has used [the Vienna Document](#) for the purpose for which it was designed – to seek transparency and reduce tensions.

Russia, by contrast, has rejected the diplomatic efforts of Ukraine, of France, and of Germany in the Normandy Format over the last eight years, as well as the OSCE's Chair-in-Office and Special Monitoring Mission. Last time we met at this level in the OSCE, Russia said they would not engage in the proposed Renewed European Security Dialogue. They have boycotted every meeting that Ukraine has called under Chapter Three of the Vienna Document. How absurd that Russia should mount the biggest military manoeuvres since the end of the Cold War, and then claim that the Vienna Document does not apply.

We call again for Russia to abide by its commitments in this organisation, to engage seriously with the Renewed European Security Dialogue, and to respond to the offers of talks in the NATO-Russia Council and the US-Russia strategic stability talks.

This is not the first time Russia has invaded Donbas. Let no-one be fooled: it follows a military intervention in 2014, and eight years of barely disguised Russian control over these territories. It follows their invasion of Georgia in 2008, their illegal annexation of Crimea and agitation in the Donbas in 2014, their longstanding presence in Moldova, and their destabilising activities right across Europe. We must be absolutely resolute in our response.

Only by following up our words with real action can we ensure no other sovereign nation faces the situation that Ukraine faces today. That responsibility now sits on all of our shoulders.

That is why the UK, in close coordination with the European Union and United States, believes that Russia must pay a heavy price. The UK will be announcing later today tough new sanctions. These will be a first step, with more to follow if Russia does not pull back. I urge our partners around the table to take similar steps.

And we must remain vigilant. Russia continues to station troops around Ukraine – the largest force assembled in Europe since the Cold War, from 150,000 to 200,000 troops, and we have seen it fabricate a series of events, which do not stand up to any level of scrutiny, to justify the use of force against a fellow participating State. We again call on Russia to reverse this build-up.

Mr Chairman, I want to finish by assuring Foreign Minister Kuleba that our support for Ukraine will not waver. We commend the restraint of the Ukrainians on the line of control in the face of Russia's provocations and aggression. We will continue to provide economic, defence and political support. And we will stand by the people of Ukraine. I call on other participating States to do likewise. And Mr Chairman I request that this statement be attached to the journal of the day. Thank you.