

Report by OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine: UK response, May 2022

Thank you Mr Chair. I would like to thank Ambassador Villadsen for his briefing on the important work of the Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine (PCU).

The UK commends the professionalism and dedication with which you and your team have continued to operate under extremely challenging circumstances. That – as you have said – the PCU has delivered nearly all of its planned projects, across all three OSCE dimensions, is testament to the Mission's enduring relevance and adaptability. It is evident from the breadth of your portfolio and your extraordinary record that the PCU continues to deliver excellent value for money.

Indeed, your work is even more important now than ever. After Russia forced the closure of the Border Observation Mission and Special Monitoring Mission, the PCU is the only remaining field operation in Ukraine, and this Organisation's sole operational mechanism on the ground.

In addition, the problems that the Mission seeks to address are of a greater magnitude and urgency than ever before. It is imperative that the PCU be able to continue to carry out its critical work.

This work includes thematic areas of Rule of Law and Human Rights, Human Security, Economic, Environmental, Military-Politico and Democratisation and Good Governance. The UK wholeheartedly supports PCU projects in all of these essential areas, as well as the wider Strategic Plan. Today, I would like to focus my statement on three priority areas in the post-conflict context: explosive ordnance; human trafficking and social and psychological support during and after wartime. In all of these areas, the PCU's achievements are significant, and its future role will prove even more so.

We share your deep concerns expressed today about risks to citizens posed by unexploded ordnance and other dangerous remnants of war. We applaud the substantial work that the PCU has already done in this area, including increasing Ukraine's mine action capacity and launching an awareness-raising campaign to educate the public on the substantial risks of unexploded ordnance. The OSCE must act, through the PCU, to prevent further unnecessary devastating injury and loss of life, particularly in the context of Russia's illegal and unprovoked invasion.

President Putin's war of choice has displaced, according to the latest UN reports, eight million Ukrainians internally, and approximately six million externally, placing them at heightened risk of trafficking. The PCU's work has been integral to mitigating these risks – by informing this vulnerable population about the risks, highlighting available assistance hotlines in various European countries and by conducting consultations with vulnerable groups across Ukraine. But again, while the PCU has made a commendable start, efforts must be sustained and expanded – the need remains considerable.

The UK also recognises the instrumental work begun by the PCU in addressing the psychological impact, particularly on children, of the Russian government's war of aggression. A generation of children have experienced indescribable horrors, the impact of which will endure long after Putin has failed in Ukraine. The PCU has organised and delivered online training sessions, including for psychologists of law enforcement agencies and those who work with families and children. Every single Ukrainian has been psychologically affected by Russia's unprovoked invasion in some way. Our task as an international community is vast, and the PCU will continue to be indispensable in tackling it.

Mr Chair, we have made clear our support for the PCU's mandate, and the prolongation of that mandate. Russian armed forces have retreated from many of Ukraine's cities, but they leave behind them a trail of destruction and human suffering: including unexploded ordnance, widespread displacement and psychological trauma. The PCU, with its present mandate, its expertise and its experience, is exceptionally well-placed to rebuild what Russia has destroyed. It must be allocated the resources to continue its vital work, which the host nation clearly needs and is requesting.

The UK remains committed to the restoration of Ukraine's security, stability and prosperity. We are grateful to the PCU for its tireless commitment to rebuilding Ukraine, and to promoting reform across a broad range of issues. Ambassador Villadsen, please accept our thanks for all of the work conducted by you and your excellent team, in these most testing of circumstances. I wish you continued success.