

Russia must be held accountable for their crimes in Ukraine: UK statement to the OSCE

Thank you, Mr Chair. On 24 February, the world watched in horror as Russia invaded Ukraine, a sovereign democratic state. Yesterday was International Children's Day – I don't even know where to start to express the heart-breaking and this gut-wrenching impact this devastating Russian invasion is having on the most vulnerable in our society – children. The images being displayed at the Museum of Military History here in Vienna for the next 2 weeks – with thanks to the Polish Chair – tells the story better than any speech or statement, as does hearing the voices of Ukrainian children refugees across Europe.

Tomorrow marks a grim milestone – 100 days since the beginning of this horrific aggression. 100 days, during which Russia has needlessly murdered thousands of men, women, and children. 100 days of attacks on apartment blocks, schools, and hospitals, of Russian distortions, denials, and disinformation. The numbers of Ukrainians dying, injured, displaced, deported, and seeking refuge are all rising, and Russia is hoping that the world will tire of hearing about it. But Mr Chair, our brave Ukrainian friends have instead galvanised themselves in their battle for peace and freedom, and we continue to stand in solidarity. We will not tire. Today, I want to talk about accountability.

The UK has made a clear commitment to support Ukraine's investigations and prosecutions into conflict-related crimes, including the deployment of war crimes experts to the region and releasing additional funding to aid the International Criminal Court in its investigations. Last week, [the UK, together with the US and the EU, announced the creation of the Atrocity Crimes Advisory Group](#), a mechanism aimed at supporting the War Crimes Units of the Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine by ensuring effective coordination of our respective support to accountability efforts. We are determined to hold those responsible for atrocities to account, including military commanders and other individuals in the Putin regime.

Mr Chair, the OSCE is playing a clear and important role in ensuring accountability. We all read about the human impact of Russia's actions in the [13 April Moscow Mechanism report](#): deportations, sieges, targeted attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, and the impact on vulnerable groups. This was the first independent report under the auspices of an international organisation and made clear the facts on the ground between 24 February and 1 April. It confirmed our concerns, including clear patterns of International Humanitarian Law violations by the Russian forces and highlighting credible evidence of war crimes. We must follow up on the experts' findings and we should recognise that Russia's war of aggression has not stood still since the last report was published. Bucha, Irpin, Borodyanka, the shelling of the Kramatorsk railway station, Mariupol, and the renewed offensive in eastern

Ukraine have led to new allegations of atrocities. We must ensure that we continue to support independent and impartial fact finding, with the aim of bringing those responsible to justice.

We must also continue to support the work of OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) which is monitoring the impact on civilians and prisoners of war for violations of International Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law. We remain grateful to Director Mecacci and ODIHR for their expertise, impartiality, and objectivity in investigating and documenting the abuses taking place. It is vitally important work, to ensure accountability for violations. As the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said recently, "accountability is a cornerstone of upholding human rights". We were deeply saddened to hear of reports that a French journalist was killed whilst covering the war, after the vehicle in which he was travelling was hit by shrapnel from a Russian shell in Severodonetsk. We also condemn the killing of journalists and media workers who have lost their lives exposing the truth about the war crimes being committed.

Mr Chair, we may hear today from the Russian Delegation. If we do, it is likely to be a continuation of a narrative we have heard time and again. We have heard many attempts to systematically spread false narratives to justify its illegal and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. The simple truth is that the Russian government is responsible for this horrific war, which is in breach of the UN Charter and OSCE principles. They are responsible for attempting to dismantle the OSCE's presence in Ukraine. They are responsible for rising numbers for the rising number of civilians dying, injured, displaced, deported, and seeking refuge. They are responsible for growing food insecurity. They are responsible for the heart-breaking impact this war is having on children. There are human beings behind this tragedy – mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, daughters, sons, friends – the UK stands together with all of them. We will not tire. We will make the Russian government pay the price of its actions, and we will hold them accountable for their crimes, for as long as it takes.