

# Russia's attack on Ukraine threatens global food security: UK statement to the OSCE

Thank you, Mr Chair and thank you to the Mayor of Okhtyrka for being here today and for your powerful testimony of recent Russian attacks against his city since the start of the war. The sad and horrific stories of indiscriminate attacks on civilian infrastructure and residential areas, including missile strikes, is hard to hear. You should not have to get used to death. We express our deepest condolences for all of your citizens and defenders killed by ruthless Russian fire.

Mr Chair, [last week I highlighted the destruction of Ukrainian cultural property, an attack on Ukraine's very identity](#). Yesterday marked 78 years since the Soviet Union's campaign to forcibly deport the entire Tatar population from their ancestral homeland of Crimea. We remember the thousands who died due to starvation, disease, abuse and hard labour.

Today Ukrainians are again facing repression, deportation and destruction of culture and identity. This is a direct result of Russia's illegal actions. Every day we hear more accounts of the unlawful killing of civilians, of families torn apart, and of once peaceful towns and villages reduced to rubble. Tens of thousands have reportedly lost their lives and millions have been displaced.

Millions more across the globe are at risk, as Russia's crimes exacerbate the global economic outlook with sharply rising food and fuel prices, threatening global food security. I want to focus the core of my statement on this area. Until 24 February, Ukraine was one of the largest exporters of grains, feeding up to 400 million people worldwide. But because of Russia's unlawful actions, including attacks on infrastructure across Ukraine, naval blockades and looting of grain, the country is now almost entirely unable to export its produce. Russia is choking off Ukraine's grain exports.

Widespread and indiscriminate use of Russian munitions, generating unexploded ordnance, is killing and maiming agricultural workers in their fields. There have been multiple reports of grain being stolen from temporarily Russian-controlled areas of Zaporizhzhia, Kherson, Donetsk and Luhansk. We have heard of agricultural equipment and vehicles being destroyed or looted by Russian forces, jeopardizing the growing seasons. The World Food Programme has reported that one in three Ukrainian households are now food insecure. This is unacceptable.

In addition to the disruption of Ukraine's agriculture, Russia's blockage of ports and destruction of infrastructure threatens global food systems. As we speak, around 25 million tonnes of grain is being held hostage by Russia, through its blockade of the Black Sea ports. Even before the war, 55 countries, mostly in Africa and Asia, were already in acute hunger crises,

emergency or famine conditions. Russia's aggression against Ukraine is compounding these threats. The loss of grain currently stored in Odesa could impact up to 43 million people already one-step away from famine; a sustained Russian stranglehold on Ukraine's economy and agricultural output will affect hundreds of millions well into the future. With 1.7 billion people in over 100 countries now facing food, energy and commodity price rises, the global impact of Russia's war is growing.

President Putin continues to demonstrate a callous disregard for human life. He could end the blockade of the Black Sea ports; he could release the grain; he could end this bloody conflict and prevent further death and suffering, but he chooses not to.

The UK remains steadfast in our support for Ukraine. [Alongside fellow G7 members, we call on Russia to end its blockade and all other activities that impede Ukrainian food production and export.](#)

The impact of Russia's aggression and shameful actions are being felt by people everywhere, in the OSCE area and beyond. This is particularly the case for the poorest. We will not stand by whilst the world's most vulnerable populations suffer at the hands of Russia. [With international partners, we have secured the largest ever World Bank commitment to low income countries, releasing \\$170bn to support nations faced with economic hardship as a result of Russia's invasion.](#) We will work across international fora, such as the newly created Global Alliance for Food Security, to seek joint solutions to those problems worsened by an ever-isolated Russia.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate the UK's clearly established position: the Russian government is responsible for its actions and Russia's government will bear the consequences of its actions. We are unwavering in our support of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. We condemn Russia's efforts to undermine Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity through recognition of the so-called Donetsk and Luhansk 'People's Republics' as independent, its illegal annexation of Crimea and its illegal and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. We stand by Ukraine.