

# Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine: UK OSCE statement, 16 March 2022

Thank you Mr Chair. This statement is delivered under the topic raised by Ukraine and I request that this be accurately reflected in the Journal of the Day.

Mr Chair, it is now nearly three weeks since President Putin launched his premeditated and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine and, as we have heard today, our Russian colleagues persist in playing the role of the Kremlin's storytellers, peddling their lies in an attempt to justify Russia's military action against Ukraine.

In February, during the run up to the invasion, more than 100 different stories promoting unfounded claims around pre-texts for invasion were identified as being disseminated by Kremlin-controlled media. Accompanied by baseless rhetoric and disinformation, our Russian colleagues blindly attempted to falsely cast Ukraine as a threat – but they fooled no-one.

And here and now, our Russian colleagues continue to lie in transparent attempts at disinformation to provide continued pretexts for military action. Last week, along with my Ukrainian and US colleagues, we exposed Russia's absurd accusations and lies surrounding the false notion that Ukraine sought to pursue offensive biological and nuclear weapons capabilities. That my Russian colleague's public reaction to delegations speaking the truth was "amazement" says it all.

Mr Chair, I would urge our Russian colleagues, who have a unique position in Vienna to see uncensored news from around the world reporting the truth, to take a moment. To consider their position, responsibilities and legacy as diplomats and citizens of Russia and stop their complicit propagation of President Putin's lies to their own people.

Whilst these lies continue, the Kremlin's war machine lumbers on. Frustrated by staunch Ukrainian resistance, the Russian military has increasingly resorted to attacking indiscriminately from distance using: Multi-launch Rocket Systems, Iskander Ballistic Missiles, Artillery, Air-to-Ground Attack and cruise missiles to attack all major Ukrainian cities, critical national civilian infrastructure, including sea ports, residential areas, and even hospitals. Russia is using cluster munitions and thermobaric rockets, weapons designed to inflict maximum damage wherever they are deployed.

Mr Chair, we heard my Russian colleague's ridiculous claims that Ukraine was responsible for the impact on commercial shipping in the region. I would note that it is Russian naval forces that have established a distant blockade of Ukraine's Black Sea coast, effectively isolating Ukraine from international maritime trade. And, it is Russia that has targeted several foreign flagged

commercial vessels over the past weeks. Russian naval forces are also continuing to conduct missile strikes against targets throughout Ukraine.

Russia has unleashed a horrendous amount of violence on the Ukrainian people. In particular, the atrocious and indiscriminate destruction of Mariupol and the resulting civilian casualties is unforgivable. It should sit heavily on all of us in this room (including our Russian colleagues) as humans, diplomats, and military advisers. The UK has offered technical support to the International Criminal Court in bringing those responsible for war crimes in Ukraine to justice – including support in the immediate priority of gathering and preserving evidence. Russian commanders carrying out war crimes should know they cannot act with impunity. The world is watching, and their actions risk landing them in a jail cell. Nobody is forgotten, and nothing is forgotten.

Mr Chair, my Russian colleague again insisted that the so-called “Special Military Operation” is going to plan. But it is not. For the first time this week, Russia has finally admitted so. The Chief of Russia’s National Guard, Viktor Zolotov, announced it should my Russian colleague need the reference. Russia is paying a high price for each advance as the Ukrainian Armed Forces continues to offer staunch resistance across the country.

The Ukrainian people’s response in the defence of their homeland against a foreign invasion has been stoic, united and defiant. From President Zelenskyy’s leadership from Kyiv to the thousands upon thousands of Ukrainians who have volunteered to join the territorial defence, their displays of courage, determination, and resolve will go down in history.

The United Kingdom, along with many others, repeatedly warned that any Russian military incursion into Ukraine would be a massive strategic mistake and would come at a severe cost. In this regard, we continue to support Ukraine, our friends, in their fight for their homeland.

We have so far provided Ukraine with nearly 4000 light, anti-armour defensive weapons systems or NLAWs, and we will shortly begin delivery of a small consignment of anti-tank Javelin missiles as well. These help Ukraine defend against the armoured forces threat it faces.

The UK Government has also taken the decision to explore the donation of Starstreak, high velocity, man-portable anti air missiles. This defensive weapon system would allow the Armed Forces of Ukraine to better defend their skies.

Mr Chair, I would reiterate, all of our support to the democratic sovereign nation of Ukraine is defensive in nature and will help them defend themselves against this Russian war of aggression.

We will make the Russian government pay the price of its actions. The UK stands with the Ukrainian people in their fight for their homeland. We will work with our partners – for however long it takes – to ensure that the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the independence of Ukraine is restored.

Thank you. And I ask that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.