

Speech: Delivering Long-Term Peace in Ukraine

Thank you very much indeed, Mr President. And can I join other colleagues in welcoming our three Ministers at this important session today. I'd also like to thank the briefers from the UN and also the OSCE for their account, and also for the work that they and their teams do on the ground. The United Kingdom joins others in welcoming the opportunity for the Security Council to receive an update on the situation in eastern Ukraine. And as other speakers have said, Mr President, we stand in solidarity with the Ukrainian people.

Since 2014, the fighting in eastern Ukraine has continued unabated. The Under Secretary-General set out some compelling facts of what is happening on the ground. But I think for me, Mr President, one of the most shocking was that there have been over 100,000 violations of the ceasefire. That's 100,000 too many, but 100,000 is a very, very large number. And we should just think about what that really means for the people on the ground. Not only the conflict, but also the resulting humanitarian situation as the Assistant Secretary-General said, and also the potential for long-term environmental damage. These are the many reasons why the topic of Ukraine needs to be on the Council's agenda and to be repeatedly discussed here.

It's not just about Ukraine, Mr President, though that is the subject of today's meeting. I want to just express my agreement with what my Swedish colleague said about Ukraine, Georgia, and the rules-based international order. The situation on the ground remains highly volatile as we heard. The deterioration in the security situation along the lines of contact in Donetsk underlines the total failure of the latest recommitment to the ceasefire. I join others in repeating the appeals for respect of the laws of war. Despite being agreed by the Trilateral Contact Group on 26 March, it was only 10 minutes before Russian-led forces shelled Avdiivka. And they did so with weapons proscribed under the Minsk Peace Agreements. I think this demonstrates the complete disregard that the Russian-backed separatists have for the ceasefire and for attempts to grant some relief to the civilian population of eastern Ukraine. Can I once again, Mr President, urge all those involved to recommit to the ceasefire at the Trilateral Contact Group meeting which will take place on 30 May.

The United Kingdom also remains extremely concerned by the threats posed to civilian infrastructure and the potential for long-term environmental damage. Very many speakers have today highlighted the Donetsk water filtration station and I would just like to add our voices to that. We are also concerned by the threats from the separatists to turn off the points at the Yukon mine. Flooding the mine risk contaminating the water tables with radiological waste. More generally, Mr President, I would like to urge Russia to intervene with the separatists to avoid actions that would cause environmental damage and which could have a huge humanitarian impact on the civilian population for years to come. Support and respect for the safe zones around key civilian infrastructure is crucial if we are to prevent further

humanitarian suffering. And let us not see a repeat of the past winter where, despite international humanitarian assistance, as the Assistant Secretary-General said, food insecurity doubled from 600,000 to 1.2 million people.

A number of speakers, Mr President, have cited Crimea. We share the view that the annexation of Crimea four years ago by Russia is illegal and it is in violation of the first principle of international law. General Assembly Resolutions 68-262, 71-205 and 72-190 reaffirm the internationally recognized borders of Ukraine and the absence of any legal basis to change the status of Crimea. These resolutions characterized Russia as an occupying power. They noted the primary responsibility of states to promote and protect human rights. And they called on Russia to uphold all of its obligations under applicable international law. Despite this, Russia continues to ignore calls in the General Assembly for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to visit Crimea, most recently in December last year.

We have heard from the OSCE and from the UN how millions of Crimeans remain outside the monitoring mechanisms of the UN, which means there is no one who can easily help them. We call on Russia, as a permanent member of the Security Council, to uphold the international rules-based system and to respond positively to the General Assembly's calls.

I'd like now Mr President to turn to MH17. I thank the Dutch Minister for his statement and for the important role the Dutch are playing along with other members of the Joint Investigative Team in pursuing justice for the victims and their families. Of the 298 victims, there were 10 British nationals. We commend the Joint Investigative Team for its professional, impartial and independent investigation.

Mr President, my Foreign Secretary, like other colleagues, is on record as saying we now have clear evidence that the missile that brought down MH17 belonged to the Russian army. The United Kingdom fully supports the Netherlands and Australia in their request to the Russian Federation to accept state responsibility for its part in bringing down Flight MH17 and to engage with them in bilateral negotiations. All member states, and this includes Russia, need to fulfil their obligations under Security Council Resolution 2166 to provide any requested assistance to the investigation.

Mr President, since 2014, over 10,300 people have been killed, and 25,000 injured in Ukraine. 3.4 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, particularly along the lines of contact. And there are real risks of an environmental disaster. If Russia truly cares about the people of the Donbas, she should end the fighting that she started, withdraw her military personnel and weapons, and cease support for the separatists in line with her obligations under Minsk. And she should show political commitment, as Ambassador Apakan highlighted, through engaging constructively and in good faith in negotiations to deliver long-term peace.

Thank you Mr President.