

# Speech: UK committed to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity

Thank you very much Mr President. Thank you to the Under-Secretary-General and the Assistant Secretary-General for briefing the Council today.

The United Kingdom is committed to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We do not and will not recognize Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea. The illegal seizure of Crimea by Russia in March 2014 is in direct contravention of the UN Charter. The action threatens international peace and security and it has global consequences.

Mr President, if I may, I will address the issue of the election. Like my European and American colleagues, we do see these so-called elections as illegitimate. They are the latest example in the Russian campaign to destabilise Ukraine. They are a clear breach of the Minsk Agreements, and they're illegal under Ukrainian law. In plain speaking Mr President, they are a charade, and a grisly one at that.

This is why the United Kingdom with other Members of this Council called for this meeting today. The international community must stand together to condemn these illegal acts. Russia could demonstrate her commitment to the rules-based international system by using her considerable influence on the separatists to ensure that these so-called elections do not take place.

To be clear Mr President, if the elections were free and fair and with proper security conditions as stated in the Minsk Agreements, that would be a different matter. But the conditions for free and fair elections will not exist – will never exist – when Russia continues to deny international access to eastern Ukraine. Support for illegitimate so-called elections is the latest attempt by Russia to destabilise Ukraine.

As other representatives have done today Mr President, I'd now like to raise other recent actions that are deeply concerning.

Firstly as recorded by the Special Monitoring Mechanism, the increasing militarization of Crimea is nothing short of alarming. We urge Russia to desist from destabilising transfers of weapon systems and troops to the peninsula, and to demonstrate her commitment to regional stability.

Secondly, opening the Kerch bridge is yet another flagrant violation of Ukraine's sovereignty. Russia's systematic harassment and detention of both Ukrainian and third country flagged vessels in the Sea of Azov since April is yet another attempt to destabilise Ukraine and also its economy.

And thirdly, we are concerned by Russia's ongoing cyber-attacks on Ukraine which attempt to interfere with Ukraine's financial, energy and government sectors.

Mr President, I'll now turn to humanitarian issues. As the Assistant

Secretary-General has demonstrated in her briefing, the humanitarian impact of this conflict continues to have a devastating effect for those that live on both sides of the line of contact. What we heard about mines, what we heard about injuries, what we heard about millions being at dire humanitarian risk ought to shock us. The lack of access for humanitarian organisations in non-government controlled areas is making a very large contribution to this crisis.

We strongly urge the Russian-backed separatists to grant safe and unhindered access so essential humanitarian assistance can be delivered to the 1.8 million people in need within non-government controlled areas. We also urge donors to respond to the annual UN Humanitarian Response Plan for Ukraine, which remains woefully under-funded.

In conclusion Mr President, we urge all sides, and particularly the Russian-backed separatists, to commit to full implementation of the Minsk Agreements, beginning with a comprehensive ceasefire and withdrawal of heavy weaponry. This is the best way to achieve stability for Ukraine and end suffering of the Ukrainian people.

To be clear, it was Russian aggression in 2014 that gave rise to this conflict with complete disregard for international law. Russia has a responsibility, particularly as a Permanent Member of this Council, to desist from destabilizing behaviour and to use its considerable influence on the separatists to ensure the Minsk Agreements are implemented and this conflict brought to an end.