

The devastating impact of Putin's war of choice on the children of Ukraine: UK statement to the OSCE

Thank you, Mr Chair. Earlier this week the esteemed Norwegian Ambassador hosted an important Human Dimension Committee meeting on children and armed conflict. We heard from varied speakers and delegations about the appalling suffering of Ukraine's children as a result of President Putin's war of choice. This is what I would like to focus on today.

Since we last met, we have been horrified by the ongoing atrocities perpetrated Russia on Ukrainian soil, including recent attacks on Odesa resulting in civilian casualties. This includes the reported death of a three-month old baby, killed by a missile attack in Odesa. Sadly this is just one example among far too many, including the horrors seen in Irpin and Bucha.

The ongoing impact of Russia's illegal and unprovoked war on Ukraine's 7.5 million children – on their health, education and family life – is harrowing. On 24 March, UNICEF reported that in one month of war, 4.3 million children had been displaced; this represents more than half of the estimated child population of Ukraine. In that month, according to OHCHR, at least 78 children were killed and 105 injured. The true toll was likely far higher. On 22 April, Ukraine's Prosecutor General's Office stated that 208 children had been killed and 386 children injured since the war began. We are grateful to Prosecutor General Venediktova for her efforts to raise the profile of how children have been affected by the war.

Russia continues to launch its indiscriminate attacks on critical civilian infrastructure, children's homes, schools, hospitals, and the water systems and power plants they rely on. The places where children and civilians shelter from Russia's onslaught of violence continue to be damaged and destroyed.

Ukraine's Ministry of Education and Science has reported that nearly 1,500 education institutions have suffered bombing and shelling, and 102 of them have been destroyed completely. According to Save the Children, this amounts to an average of 22 schools a day coming under attack in Ukraine since the start of the war, with military operations disrupting the education of 5.5 million children remaining in the country. In areas temporarily under the control of Russian armed forces there are worrying reports of Russian troops interfering in the education of Ukrainian children – putting pressure on teachers to teach in Russian and according to the Russian curriculum.

Russia's actions have harmed families' livelihoods and economic opportunities, leaving many parents without sufficient income to meet their basic needs and unable to provide adequate support for their children. As we raised last week, many Ukrainians – including children – have been forcibly

deported against their will to Russia. The social and psychological trauma experienced by children will be felt for years to come.

[The UK is proud to be playing a leading role in the humanitarian effort in Ukraine](#), delivering vital equipment and life-saving medical aid to those most in need, including a focus on children. The total offer of humanitarian and economic support to the current Ukraine crisis is around £400 million. We are matching pound for pound the public's first £25 million for the DEC Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal. [And the Prime Minister announced earlier in the week that we are providing new ambulances, fire engines and funding for health experts and life-saving medical supplies.](#)

Mr Chair, the facts are clear: President Putin's war is a war that children are paying the price for. The international community must come together and act together to hold Russia to account for its crimes. The Russian government must be held responsible for its actions and end this suffering. It must end its attack on civilians in all their forms, pull back their troops from the entire territory of Ukraine and stop this war. The UK remains unwavering in our support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, within its internationally recognised borders. We will not rest until President Putin's aggression fails in Ukraine. We stand with Ukraine.

Thank you. I kindly request that you attach this statement to the journal of the day.