

Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine: UK statement – OSCE Forum for Security Cooperation

Thank you Mr Chair. Over the past weeks, we have seen that the strong will, courage and remarkable military skill of the Armed Forces of Ukraine has not only minimised Russian gains, but also enabled substantive advances through counter attacks in eastern and southern areas of Ukraine.

As Ukraine continues offensive operations in the north-east of the country, Russian forces have sought to establish a defensive line between the Oskil River and the town of Svatove. This zone is important to Russia, it contains one of the few main resupply routes Russia still controls from the Belgorod region of Russia into Ukraine. Additionally, this line sits along the border of Luhansk Oblast which Russia declared its intent to seize as one of its immediate war aims.

As Russia digs in and attempts to defend this zone, Ukrainian Forces have now begun to conduct offensive operations east of the Oskil River and reports indicate that they are now in control of Bilohorivka, a village located in the Luhansk oblast. It is increasingly unclear whether Russia's front-line forces have sufficient reserves or adequate morale to withstand another concerted Ukrainian assault.

Mr Chair, recent reporting indicates that, despite their purported overall size, sufficient Russian manpower for its invasion of Ukraine remains a key challenge for the Russian military and presents a stark mismatch between ambition and reality. Last July, in this Forum, we discussed the attempts by the Kremlin-linked Russian private military company, Wagner Group, to recruit Russian convicts for service in Ukraine. This has been reinvigorated. A video recently posted online appears to show Wagner owner Yevgeny Prigozhin making a recruitment pitch to prisoners. In the video, Prigozhin emphasises that he is only seeking "fighters for assault units". In return, prisoners have been offered commutation of their sentences as well as cash incentives.

Additionally, numerous reports indicate that the Russian military is deploying mobile recruitment offices throughout Russia to attract "contract soldiers" to fight in Ukraine, selling the proposition as "the choice of a real man". A significant monetary incentive is also being offered to these potential "contract soldiers".

It is a telling indication that the Russian leadership has resorted to bribing its citizens and convicts to join the so-called "Special Military Operation" in an attempt to bolster its force levels.

Separately, Russian military academies are now shortening training courses and bringing cadets' graduation dates forward. Almost certainly to enable the early release of cadets so that they can be deployed more quickly in support

of the Ukraine operation.

Mr Chair, in sum, the impact of Russia's manpower challenge has become increasingly severe. The acceleration of officer cadets' training, the recruitment of "contract soldiers" and Wagner's demand for assault troops suggests that two of the most critical shortages within the Russian military manning crisis are combat infantry and junior commanders.

Further to this, President Putin's decision to impose a partial mobilisation shows he is willing to break his own promises and also sacrifice citizens of Russia for his so-called "Special Military Operation". This mobilisation is a clear admission that President Putin's mission is failing. He and his Defence Minister have sent thousands of their own citizens to their deaths, poorly trained, poorly equipped and poorly led. No amount of threats and propaganda can hide the fact that Ukraine is winning this war, the international community are united and Russia is becoming a global pariah.

Meanwhile, at the FSC, our Russian colleagues would rather we did not focus on Russia's struggles to resource its illegal war of choice. Last week we saw efforts to distract from these setbacks and shift blame onto others by doubling down on tired old narratives, seeking to justify the unjustifiable, to this Forum and the Russian population.

These maladroit attempts to obfuscate the truth fool no one. The clear and unambiguous fact is that it is the Russian leadership who decided to conduct its unprovoked and illegal invasion of Ukraine. Russia was warned that such a reckless act would be a strategic mistake, a strategic mistake that would have strategic consequences. The blame for the impact of these consequences lies solely with the Russian leadership and military – no one else.

Russia's aggressive actions have brought into sharp focus for many countries what was once unthinkable – Russia's willingness to invade a sovereign neighbour. In response, the UK, along with others who seek a secure and stable future in the Euro-Atlantic area, is strengthening its defensive capabilities, including through the NATO Defensive Alliance, to protect against Russia's chosen path of naked aggression.

Mr Chair, the Kremlin's conspiracy theories and self-serving propaganda that seek to portray Russia – the aggressor who has unleashed horrendous violence on Ukraine – as the victim, is nothing more than the textbook delusion of an oppressor who has severely miscalculated.

As our Ukrainian friends have so aptly demonstrated: "Courage is fire, bullying is smoke."

Finally Mr Chair, I would note that just yesterday, it was reported that Russia is pressing ahead with plans to carry out a referendum in temporarily controlled areas. Any Russian attempt to hold sham referenda on the sovereign territory of Ukraine would have no legitimacy and will be met with a coordinated response from Ukraine's partners.

Mr Chair, the UK stands in solidarity with Ukraine, including through the

ongoing provision of military assistance, as Ukrainians defend their homeland and fight for the simple right to a free, peaceful and prosperous future.
Thank you

Death of Mahsa Amini in Iran: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon's statement

Press release

Foreign Office Minister Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon has issued a statement following the death of Mahsa Amini in Iran.



Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon said:

The death of Mahsa Amini in Iran following her arrest for alleged dress code violations is shocking. We are extremely concerned at reports of serious mistreatment of Ms Amini, and many others, by the security forces.

We urge the Iranian government to investigate the circumstances of her death with rigour and transparency, and to hold to account anyone responsible.

We call on Iran to respect the right to peaceful assembly, to exercise restraint and to release unfairly detained protesters. The use of violence in response to the expression of fundamental rights, by women or any other members of Iranian society, is wholly unjustifiable.

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Defence Procurement Minister speech at Defence Vehicle Display 2022

It's my pleasure to welcome you all to this year's Defence Vehicle Display.

Especially as this is not just my first DVD but my first official engagement as a defence minister.

It is an excellent venue to showcase our finest vehicles and equipment.

I'm not entirely new to Defence, having spent six years as the UK representative to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and latterly Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee on the assembly.

So, I am well aware of your many successes as well as some of the challenges you face.

But the truth is, for all of us here today, this event comes at a time of great change.

The passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II has brought with it not merely a sense of deep loss for the wonderful monarch that led by example for more than 70 years.

But also, a sense of uncertainty, as the values she came to embody – kindness, tolerance, and a belief in democracy – now seem at risk across the world.

Indeed, even as we speak, Ukrainians are bravely pushing back the invading Russian force, and as we discover the atrocious war crimes committed by the Russians, our resolve must remain resolute.

If we are to protect our values and safeguard the international order in this new era, we need to strengthen Defence.

That's why last year our Integrated Review and Defence Command Paper began transforming our forces to make them more resilient, more persistent and more agile.

Our Armed Forces are now being instilled with a campaigning mindset, that enables them to be ever present wherever we are needed around the world.

A mindset epitomised by our new self-sufficient Brigade Combat teams and Ranger Regiments.

But those documents were also clear that we couldn't achieve our aims without the very best capability.

You only need to look to Ukraine and the incredible gains they've made in recent weeks to see the difference the most advanced kit can make on the ground.

I am proud that the UK has played a key role, foremost among European nations, in supporting those efforts, whether it's our armoured Wolfhounds or Stormer vehicles fitted with anti-air missile launchers.

And that kind of cutting-edge capability is what we're all here for today.

Take a stroll around the exhibition and you will see some of the finest examples of equipment in the land domain on display.

Not least our Boxers – the cornerstone of our Armoured Brigade Combat Teams – able to swiftly cover long distances no matter the environment nor the weather. And I am pleased to see so many of our partner nations on the Boxer programme here today.

As well as Boxer, you will find everything from our Challenger 3 main battle tanks in the Off-Road Area, to the latest drones and four-legged robots from our Future Capability Group, and much more besides.

Whilst we are still learning the lessons from Ukraine, it is clear that we cannot take anything for granted.

In the coming years, it is vital we continue to build on these successes in order to stay ahead of the curve.

That's why we launched the Defence and Security Industrial Strategy, which provided the foundations for a step-change in relations between government, industry and academia.

What's crucial about DSIS is the way it finally recognised industry as a strategic capability in its own right.

The purpose of the Land Industrial Strategy, which was published earlier this year, was to take those partnerships to the next level.

We've seen the success already of our Defence BattleLab in Dorset, which is uniting industry and academia with the facilities they need to test-drive innovative kit.

And today you will hear about how the Army are taking a major step forward in shaping investment over the next three years in new integrated protection systems for our land forces.

This funding marks an exciting opportunity for industry to work with our Defence Science and Technology Laboratory to make our vehicles so much stronger and more resilient.

Whether it's improved sensors and compact energy storage or new counter munition systems and directed energy weapons.

This isn't just a great chance to transform our Army but to drive growth in the economy at the same time.

The land industrial base already supports around 20,000 jobs across the UK, while our ground combat system exports comprise 7% of total defence exports – which is almost £6 billion over the past 10 years.

But as more and more nations increase their investment in Defence, there will be more and more opportunities arising to sell kit to trusted allies and increase our share of that £45 billion-plus ground combat systems market.

This will bring investment back so that we can then reinvest in the continued strengthening of our forces.

I began by talking about the end of an era. But I firmly believe that if we work together we can not only preserve the mighty values that were the hallmarks of Queen Elizabeth II, but seize the moment to turn this age of challenges into an age of opportunity.

Speaking of new eras, I'm delighted to hand over to Lieutenant General Sharon Nesmith, newly appointed Deputy Chief of the General Staff.

Sharon's appointment comes at a crucial time for Defence and I'm looking forward to hearing her thoughts as someone else who is adjusting to a new role.

I'm also looking forward to hearing the Director General for Land plans for how DE&S will equip and support our armed forces now and in the future.

Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you.

[No further role for charity regulator over sale of Trevalga estate in Cornwall](#)

Press release

The Charity Commission has concluded that it has no further regulatory role regarding the trustees' decision to sell the Trevalga estate.



The Charity Commission has concluded that it has no further regulatory role regarding the decision of the trustees of the Gerald Curgenven Will Trust (registered charity number 1147365) to sell the Trevalga estate near Boscastle in North Cornwall.

The regulator has been examining the decision-making of the trustees to seek assurance that they have been acting in line with their legal duties and responsibilities in relation to the proposed sale.

Local residents had raised concerns about the validity of the sale, pointing to their interpretation of the provisions of the charity's governing document.

Officials for the regulator met with the trustees of the charity, and thoroughly assessed the matter, including the concerns raised by those affected. The trustees demonstrated to the Commission that it is within their powers to sell the Trevalga estate, and that their decision was made independently and in compliance with their legal duties.

The Commission has therefore determined that it has no further role regarding the sale.

Under charity law, trustees have wide discretion to make decisions in the best interests of their charity. The Commission has no remit to make decisions on behalf of trustees, or to overrule decisions legally made by trustees. Instead, the Commission's role is to determine whether the trustees have followed proper processes, and acted in line with their legal duties in reaching any decision concerning their charity.

Tracy Howarth, Assistant Director of Casework, said:

This has been a period of great uncertainty and anxiety for the residents of Trevalga and I know that this outcome will come as a further disappointment for those impacted.

However, having thoroughly assessed the matter, we have concluded this is not a matter in which the Commission can intervene. In this instance, we are satisfied that the trustees' decision-making and the process followed have complied with the law and our guidance. It is therefore right that we have concluded our case.

Notes to Editors

1. The [Charity Commission](#) is the independent, non-ministerial government department that registers and regulates charities in England and Wales. Its purpose is to ensure charity can thrive and inspire trust so that people can improve lives and strengthen society.

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World's first International Plant Health Conference to set global agenda on biosecurity and address challenges in plant health

The world's leading authorities on plant health and biosecurity will come together for the world's first ever International Plant Health Conference (IPHC), co-organised by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, the Secretariat of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and Defra.

More than 500 policymakers, academics and experts from over 74 countries will convene at the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre in London to address current and future plant health challenges, including the impacts of climate change, food security, environmental protection, facilitating safe trade, and new pest and disease pathways, such as e-commerce. Held on 21-23 September, delegates will share knowledge and discuss global scientific, technical and regulatory issues, alongside actions to tackle these existential threats to our society, economy and environment.

The [Food and Agriculture Organization \(FAO\)](#) of the [United Nations](#) estimates that each year up to 40 percent of global crop production is lost to plant diseases, costing the agricultural trade over USD 220 billion, whilst invasive insects cause losses of at least USD 70 billion. The risks to food security, international trade, biodiversity and our precious natural environment as a result of current and future outbreaks are all too real. Strengthening global standards of biosecurity, applying the IPPC and international plant health standards, as well as fostering greater international collaboration and raising public awareness and engagement with these challenges will be paramount to safeguard the global economy and environment for generations to come.

Nicola Spence, United Kingdom Chief Plant Health Officer, said:

Plant health and biosecurity are fundamental to life on Earth. Plants provide 80 percent of the food we eat and 98 percent of the oxygen we breathe. In a changing climate, ensuring their continued health and vitality will be critical to safeguarding food security, safe international trade and a thriving natural environment for future generations.

The United Kingdom upholds amongst the highest standards of biosecurity in Europe but there is much more to do to secure our future resilience – here and around the world. I look forward to coming together with international experts from a range of disciplines to discuss how to tackle the varied and mounting challenges facing our precious plant life.

Jingyuan Xia, Director of Plant Production and Protection Division said:

Climate change and human actions have altered ecosystems and created new niches where plant pests and diseases can thrive. When combatting pests and diseases, farmers should adopt, and policymakers should encourage the use of, environment-friendly methods such as integrated pest management.

Applying international plant health standards helps reduce the use of pesticides and poisonous substances, which kill pollinators, natural pest enemies and organisms crucial for a healthy environment. These result in healthier crops with less residues, leading to better human, plant and animal health.’’

Osama El-Lissy, Secretary, International Plant Protection Convention, said:

The first International Plant Health Conference is an important advancement of our work in protecting plants from pests and diseases. We are very pleased to partner with Defra who shares FAO’s and IPPC’s common goals. We cannot underestimate the impact that plant pests and diseases have on global food security, livelihoods, the environment and economies.

To achieve our goals and contribute to food security, protect the environment and facilitate safe trade, I encourage donors and governments to invest in building plant health capacity, research and outreach. Let us keep our collective efforts going and take bold action to sustain the momentum. When we protect plants, we protect our health and our lives.

Across the three days of the IPHC, plenary sessions will explore a range of scientific, regulatory and technical issues, including:

- Regional perspectives on tackling ongoing pest and disease outbreaks, including *Xylella fastidiosa*, fall armyworm and coconut rhinoceros beetle.
- How to increase the use of electronic phytosanitary certificates to make trade safer, faster and cheaper.
- The development and adoption of early warning systems for pests and diseases to increase vigilance and preparedness for future outbreaks.

Moreover, the IPHC aims to promote positive behavioural change through greater public engagement with biosecurity issues. For example, the importance of not bringing home plants, trees, fruit and seeds from overseas, as doing so could inadvertently cause pests, diseases and invasive species to be introduced or to spread in new areas. This aligns with the United Kingdom Government's long-running 'Don't Risk It!' campaign, which featured on the Animal and Plant Health Agency's Gold Medal-winning stand at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show 2022.

Protecting plant health is critical in achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Healthy plants contribute to achieving food security for all (SDG 2 Zero Hunger) and promotes responsible food consumption and production (SDG 12). Protecting plants helps protect biodiversity and the environment from the impact of plant pests (SDG 13 and 15), and facilitates safe trade, in turn providing decent work and boosting economic growth (SDG 8). The International Plant Health Conference supports the delivery of the [IPPC Strategic Framework 2020-2030](#).

For more information, visit the [International Plant Health Conference website](#).