

We urge UN member states to condemn the largest forcible annexation attempt since the Second World War: UK at UN General Assembly

Mr President, Excellencies,

In February, the General Assembly met in an Emergency Special Session to condemn Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine.

And today, we meet again to condemn Russia's sham referenda and attempted illegal annexation of the Ukrainian regions of Kherson, Zaporizhzhya, Luhansk and Donetsk: the largest forcible annexation attempt since the Second World War.

Putin is trying to take Ukraine's land, its resources, its identity. In so doing, he is overturning the most sacred principle in the international system: that borders cannot be redrawn by force.

Over seven months into the war, the whole world understands the terrible cost of Russia's invasion.

In Ukraine, families count that cost in the bodies exhumed from mass graves, in the rubble of flattened towns and the lost education for millions of innocent children, and in the growing list of friends and relatives detained or forcibly deported through Russia's filtration process. Even this morning, millions across Ukraine awoke to the sound of air raid sirens as Russia carried out one of the largest bombardments of civilian areas and infrastructure of the war.

Around the world, people and governments are suffering from the unaffordable cost of higher food and energy prices. As a result of Russia's invasion, everyone's lives have been made more difficult – and more insecure. Here in New York, we also see the cost in terms of damage to the UN Charter. The UN Charter enshrines the principle that no threat or use of force shall be made against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state.

We have no way to resolve disputes or achieve the fundamental goals of the UN if we concede this principle – if any rogue head of state can by force or fiat change the borders of another UN member.

This Assembly's call on Russia since the start of its illegal invasion has been simple: end this war and withdraw from Ukraine.

For the sake of Ukraine, Russia and the entire UN membership, we reiterate this call today. We call on Russia to end the war and honour the UN Charter.

Colleagues, at the end of this debate, we will have an opportunity to vote on a resolution to condemn Russia's so-called referenda and illegal annexation. We urge everyone here to vote in support of international law, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states and the UN Charter.

We urge all members to vote "yes" on the resolution.

I thank you.