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Délégation du Canada
auprès de l'OSCE

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR JOCELYN KINNEAR
ON THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION'S ONGOING AGGRESSION AGAINST UKRAINE
1438th MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

7 September 2023

Thank you for the floor, Mr. Chair.

I would like to start by offering my deepest condolences to our Ukrainian colleagues for all those killed and wounded by the missile attack on Konstantynivka yesterday. This is yet another terrible attack by the Russian Armed Forces, and our hearts are with the families of the victims.

Because I visited Konstantynivka in 2021, I also wanted to take a minute to recall the small but important role in played in the OSCE's Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine – as the last home to the SMM's long-range UAV program. Many here will recall that the SMM's long-range UAV program began to suffer from increased jamming starting in March 2021, which worsened over the subsequent months with the result that the SMM's capacity to monitor military movements on the ground in the non-government-controlled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk was severely reduced. Many UAVs were unable to take off and two long-range UAVs even crashed and were destroyed. You will of course all also recall that early 2021 was the same period that the Russian Federation began building up its troops all along Ukraine's borders, in preparation, as we now know, for its full-scale invasion in February 2022.

To counter this jamming and to continue monitoring in the NGCAs, the SMM moved its long-range UAV base from Stepanivka to just outside Konstantynivka in September 2021. Wwe hen my colleague Rick and I visited in October 2021, and met with the SMM monitors there. They were deeply concerned about the decreasing visibility into the NGCAs and what it might signify, and like all OSCE staff I've met, they were consummately competent and professional, and deeply committed to the importance of their work. As we all know now, Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine only a few months later. And yesterday, the little city of Konstantynivka became the latest innocent victim of Russia's unjustified and unprovoked aggression against Ukraine and its people.

Mr. Chair,

It is back-to-school time in Europe, and children everywhere are returning to class for another year of learning and growing.

Sadly, hundreds of Ukrainian children will never again return to school. Just yesterday, a teenage boy was killed in a horrific attack perpetrated by Russia on a market in Kostyantynivka. The attack killed 16 people and injured over 30 others. Canada condemns this attack in the strongest possible terms. Intentionally targeting civilians is a war crime.

Indeed, Russia's war sets a different tone for the beginning of the school year in Ukraine.

In a year and a half, more than 3,200 schools have been damaged and more than 300 destroyed. According to UNICEF, over 5 million children now face obstacles to education.

While some children are going back to damaged schools, about one-third of Ukrainian children have no choice but to study at home due to persistent and unabated attacks. Half of refugee children living outside of Ukraine will not return to school this year at all.

At school, some children will learn how to prepare for missile attacks. Others, tragically, will be too traumatised to learn anything at all. In temporarily occupied territories in eastern and southeastern Ukraine, children are forced to learn propaganda that denies their culture and history, and glorifies the aggressor state, Russia.

And we do not forget the nearly 20,000 children who have been forcibly deported from Ukraine to Russia, often from their caring family and relatives. This is a reprehensible act, and one for which the perpetrators will answer.

Russia's illegal, unprovoked and unjustifiable war against Ukraine is a gross injustice to an entire generation of Ukrainian children. No child anywhere should learn to the sounds of air sirens and artillery. We call on Russia to end this war, to withdraw its troops and military equipment from all of Ukraine's internationally recognized territory, and return Ukraine's children to their homes.

Mr. Chair,

We draw the Council's attention to detained political prisoners in temporarily occupied Crimea. There are currently at least 180 Crimean political prisoners, most of them Crimean Tatars, being held by Russia. Many of them have urgent medical needs that are not being met, leaving them vulnerable to suffering, decreasing health, and death.

The reported treatment of political prisoners detained by Russia on the legitimate territory of Ukraine is abysmal, and may amount to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment, and torture.

There are rules, even in war time. We call on Russia to respect its obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law. We urge it to immediately release all forcibly disappeared individuals, and all political prisoners. Their detention is not lawful.

Mr. Chair,

We are disappointed that the Russian Federation continues to refuse any effort to return to the Black Sea Grain Initiative, despite repeated calls by world leaders to do so. Instead, the regime in Moscow is attempting to absolve itself of any responsibility for the dire situation it created, by trying to point the finger at others.

Yet Russia is waging an unprovoked and unjustifiable war. Russia withdrew from the deal. Russia is targeting and destroying agricultural facilities. Russia weaponises global food security for political ends on the back of the world's poorest and most vulnerable. The fault lies solely with Russia. No amount of disinformation can hide that.

Finally, Mr. Chair,

Canada considers Moscow's so-called elections in temporarily occupied Ukrainian territories this week to be nothing more than a farce. We will never recognize their results. No amount of political theatre can legitimize Russia's illegal annexation of Ukrainian territory, and its unjustifiable war, in the eyes of the world. Thank you, Mr. Chair.