



Delegation of Canada
to the OSCE

Délégation du Canada
auprès de l'OSCE

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR JOCELYN KINNEAR
ON THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION'S ONGOING AGGRESSION AGAINST UKRAINE
1451st MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

16 November 2023

Mr. Chair,

At yesterday's FSC meeting, Canada spoke about Russia's long disinformation campaign that attempts to justify its aggression against Ukraine and deflect blame for the various crimes of which it stands accused. I would like to elaborate on this here, today.

Disinformation is false information deliberately spread to mislead.

We witness here in the Permanent Council on a weekly basis how Russia uses disinformation in an attempt to divide Ukrainians and their international partners, and to undermine and weaken support for Ukraine.

The Kremlin develops this false content through its official government communications. It funds the creation of disinformation through state-funded media outlets, disseminates disinformation on social media platforms on both official and non-attributed accounts, foreign broadcasting and think tanks.

In Ukraine such tactics put lives at risk by obfuscating facts during a time when access to information is critical.

Let me illustrate this in concrete terms. Much of the disinformation that Russian affiliated actors have spread in Ukraine has been aimed directly at civilians with the goal of influencing their behaviour.

According to the latest report by the Center for Civilians in Conflict, Russian-affiliated actors developed local-level narratives that have been harmful to civilians—obscuring frontline developments, creating panic, complicating civilian efforts to evacuate from conflict-affected areas, and misleading civilians about the availability and nature of critical services.

The Center for Civilians in Conflict collected evidence suggesting Russian disinformation sought to manipulate the movement of civilians to Russian-occupied territory, for example by amplifying and falsifying stories about people being mistreated or failing to receive assistance in Ukrainian-held areas. Disinformation targeted evacuation routes, forcing some people to choose evacuating through front lines because they were too afraid to be misled.

Distressingly, some of Russia's information operations were directed specifically at encouraging the movement of Ukrainian children from occupied territories to Russia to escape war. Russia did not, however, advertise their intent to refuse eventual reunification, nor their intent to transfer them even further away.

Russia continues to spread disinformation to attempt to absolve President Putin and his so-called Children's Rights Commissioner of alleged war crimes. Warrants of arrest were issued for both by the International Criminal Court in February 2023.

Last Friday, in New York, Russia organized a bizarre Arria-formula meeting with known conspiracy theorists as speakers. The Russian Ambassador to the UN accused Western countries of spreading a "mendacious narrative", predictably pointing the finger at others for what Russia is doing. There is no truth to the outlandish accusations made by the speakers. That the room was nearly empty illustrates that the international community sees Russia's disinformation for what it is.

Mr. Chair,

Canada is stepping up efforts to counter disinformation at home and abroad using a fact-based approach, while upholding freedom of expression and media freedom.

We created a dedicated team to help increase Canada's capacity to understand, monitor and detect Russian and other state-sponsored disinformation.

We are dispelling Russian disinformation about its war on Ukraine with facts on our Global Affairs website and social media accounts.

In March 2022, we removed RT and RT France from our airwaves. The continued operation of these two Russian state media outlets, which consistently and falsely present disinformation as facts, is not in the public interest.

Since the start of Russia's full-scale war, Canada has imposed sanctions on 54 individuals and entities that are complicit in the spreading of false narratives that serve as pretexts for Russia's aggression.

More recently, we sanctioned nine individuals who actively disseminate Russian disinformation and propaganda about the war in Ukraine stretching back to the invasion and illegal occupation of Crimea, and six arms-length and state-owned-entities that host and support various platforms for disseminating disinformation, including mass media, newspapers and websites.

We are also funding projects that enhance strategic communication capacity in Ukraine and build the capacity of Ukrainians in the face of disinformation.

Finally, Mr. Chair,

We will neither falter nor tire from exposing Russia's lies about its actions in Ukraine. We believe that truth is important for accountability and will continue to support Ukraine against Russia's weaponization of information.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.