



Delegation of Canada
to the OSCE

Délégation du Canada
auprès de l'OSCE

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR VÉRONIQUE PEPIN-HALLÉ
ON THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION'S ONGOING AGGRESSION AGAINST UKRAINE
1489th MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

26 September 2024

Madam Chair,

Two years ago from the 23 to 27 September 2022, the Russian Federation organized sham referenda in four regions it occupies in Ukraine – Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhya and Kherson. The referenda were hastily organized after the Ukrainian army liberated vast swathes of its internationally recognized territory from Russian control.

143 States demanded in a General Assembly resolution that the Russian Federation immediately reverse its decisions related to the status of the four abovementioned regions, qualifying them as “a violation of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine and inconsistent with the principles of the United Nations Charter”.

The Russian Federation placed residents under pressure to perform a referendum, just as it did a year later to perform elections.

The UN Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Rosemary DiCarlo said at the time that de-facto authorities, accompanied by soldiers, went door to door with ballot boxes. The referenda were held during active armed conflict, in areas under Russian control and outside Ukraine's legal and constitutional framework and cannot therefore be called a genuine expression of the popular will. It was widely reported that people were coerced or threatened to cast their vote.

Undeterred, the Russian Federation attempted to annex the four above-mentioned territories.

ODIHR and RFOM strongly condemned Russia's attempted annexation, noting it “clearly runs contrary to the preemptory norm of international law prohibiting the acquisition of territory by force”.

In September 2023, Russia held sham municipal elections in the four regions it attempted to annex and Crimea, engineered to secure a win for President Putin's party, in so-called elections the UN qualified as legally groundless. Once again, people were coerced to voting booths and casted their votes under the watchful eyes of heavily armed Russian soldiers.

Canada does not recognize the legitimacy neither of the attempted annexations nor sham elections.

For us, nothing has changed. We recognize the same borders of Ukraine as we did when we recognized its independence in 1991.

This repeated disregard for international law represent a profound betrayal of the responsibility the Russian Federation has as member of the UNSC, and commitments Russia has made in this organization. The lack of respect for its own role in maintaining global peace and security and international law highlight the current Russian leadership's unreliability as a global partner for peace.

Madame la Présidente,

Lundi dernier, la Commission d'enquête de l'ONU sur l'Ukraine a publié son dernier rapport, dans lequel elle témoigne de nouvelles preuves quant à l'emploi courant par les autorités russes de méthodes de torture, contre les civils et les prisonniers de guerre ukrainiens, tant dans les territoires ukrainiens occupés que sur celui-là même de la Fédération de Russie.

Les récentes enquêtes de la Commission ont permis d'identifier des éléments communs dans l'utilisation de la torture par les autorités russes, renforçant la conclusion selon laquelle il y a pratique systématique. L'un de ces éléments est la cohérence des pratiques dans ces centres où des Ukrainiens sont détenus sur le territoire de la Fédération de Russie, et la reproduction de ces pratiques dans plusieurs grands centres pénitentiaires russes situés dans les zones occupées de l'Ukraine.

La vie des Ukrainiennes et Ukrainiens dans les territoires occupés est extrêmement difficile. Nous soutenons le droit légitime de l'Ukraine à l'autodéfense et sa lutte pour reprendre le contrôle total de son territoire légitime.

Merci, madame la présidente.