



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
1436th MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

27 July 2023

Mr. Chair,

Since President Putin pulled out of the Black Sea Grain Initiative, Russian forces have unleashed a week-long blitz on the city of Odesa, targeting critical port infrastructure, including grain and oil terminals, residential areas, and the city's cultural heritage. These relentless attacks are causing untold suffering and distress to the Ukrainian people, while compounding global famine. We call on Russia to return to the BSGI and immediately stop all attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure. International Humanitarian Law is clear: civilians and civilian infrastructure are illegitimate targets. UN OCHA recently reported that humanitarian organisations in clearly marked vehicles have come under fire while delivering aid in frontline oblasts. We remind the Russian Federation that deliberate attacks against these personnel are a violation of international humanitarian law and may amount to war crimes.

Mr. Chair,

Canada deplores the unacceptable comments recently made by Belarusian President Lukashenko. On Sunday, after he met with President Putin in Saint Petersburg, Lukashenko threatened that Wagner Group fighters, who are now training Belarus' army, were "keen to push across the border into neighbouring Poland". These comments came just two days after President Putin called western Poland a "gift from Stalin" following the Second World War, and promised to defend Belarus if Poland were to attack – a prospect that is entirely specious and fabricated. This is but another effort to distract from Russia's war crimes, other atrocities, and failures in Ukraine. It is a base attempt to destabilise and disengage Poland, one of Ukraine's most dedicated supporters. And it is yet another shameful bid to distort reality to make Russia and Belarus appear as the victims in a war that President Putin unilaterally started. It demonstrates again the subservient supporting role that Alexander Lukashenko has played in Putin's year and a half-long "Special Military Operation". Belarus has allowed Russian forces to stage attacks on Ukraine from its soil. It has allowed Russian forces to recuperate, undergo training, and resupply within its borders. It has allowed Russia to place tactical nuclear weapons on its territory. It is one of five UN Member States to consistently vote against resolutions condemning Russia's war as a violation of the UN Charter, and the only other OSCE participating State to defend Russia's atrocities.

Last week, the Belarusian delegate defended the involvement of the Belarusian Red Cross in the kidnapping of Ukrainian children. This followed the Chief of Belarus' national Red Cross society telling Belarusian state television that they were actively involved in bringing Ukrainian children from Russian-occupied areas of Ukraine into Belarus. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies immediately disassociated themselves from the action of Belarus' Red Cross

and underlined that efforts by national societies against its humanitarian principles would be taken very seriously. It stressed that the Belarus Red Cross chief doesn't speak on behalf of the federation "and his statements do not represent our views." In May, the ICC was provided with material allegedly detailing the forced transfer of 2,100 Ukrainian children from at least 15 Russia-occupied Ukrainian cities to Belarus with Lukashenko's approval. If Belarus indeed wants to conduct a "noble deed", as our colleague claimed last week, it should cease its political and material support to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and immediately return all Ukrainian children allegedly kidnapped and transferred to Belarus back to their parents and rightful guardians in Ukraine.

Canada and its partners and allies, including so many around the table here, will continue to provide Ukraine with the financial, military, and humanitarian support it needs to defend itself against, and to rebuild from, Russia's brutal attacks. Once again, we call upon the Russian Federation to immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraw all its military forces from the territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders, including Crimea. And once again, we call on Russia to release all OSCE personnel and assets immediately. Russia's senseless war must end.

Thank you, Mr. Chair