



Delegation of Canada
to the OSCE

Délégation du Canada
auprès de l'OSCE

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR VÉRONIQUE PEPIN-HALLÉ
UNDER AGENDA ITEM:**

The Russian Federation's ongoing aggression against Ukraine

1535th SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL

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Madame la Présidente,

La Russie tente d'exercer son pouvoir non pas par le dialogue, mais par la guerre.

Alors que les dirigeants mondiaux étaient réunis à New York pour l'Assemblée générale des Nations unies, le président Poutine a fait passer son message par des attaques missiles et de drones armés.

Hier encore, les autorités ukrainiennes ont fait état d'au moins sept civils tués et de plus de quarante blessés à travers le pays. Ces attaques sont systématiques et quotidiennes. L'Ukraine n'a pas connu un seul jour de paix depuis plus de 3 ans, et dans certaines régions, depuis plus d'une décennie.

La Russie n'a aucun droit légitime sur l'Ukraine. Son agression est illégale et ne repose que sur le désir de régner sur l'Ukraine par la force.

Parmi les pratiques les plus horribles figurent la déportation illégale et le transfert forcé d'enfants ukrainiens ce qui constitue une violation grave du droit international humanitaire et des droits de la personne.

Cette pratique s'inscrit dans un schéma plus large d'abus commis par la Russie dans les territoires temporairement occupés de l'Ukraine, notamment de la suppression de l'identité ukrainienne, le refus d'offrir une éducation en langue ukrainienne, l'endoctrinement, y compris le recrutement d'enfants-soldats, et la séparation des familles.

Madam Chair,

Thousands of Ukrainian children remain in Russia and the occupied territories, separated from their loved ones and communities, while only around 1,600 have been successfully returned to Ukraine to date.

The return of these children is both a humanitarian imperative and a central element to achieving a just and sustainable peace in Ukraine.

The Prime Minister of Canada and the President of Ukraine co-chaired a leader-level meeting of the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children on the margins of the 80th session of the UN General Assembly. Leaders, the First Lady of Ukraine Olena Zelenska and Diana Fox Carney, Spouse of the Prime Minister of Canada, senior representatives from Member States and international organizations, all gathered to strengthen collective efforts to secure the safe return of Ukrainian children who have been illegally deported or forcibly transferred by the Russian Federation.

The International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children aims to coordinate joint efforts, share information, align resources, and advocate internationally to bring Ukrainian children home and reunite them with their loved ones and communities.

It has been steadily working towards this goal.

Among recent developments, leaders highlighted ongoing and new initiatives under the Coalition, including:

- the launch of a pilot tracing mechanism for these children;
- practical support to facilitate returns, including mediation
- and expanded investment in recovery, reintegration, and rehabilitation initiatives

We welcome the European Union and Andorra's decision to join the Coalition, further strengthening the collective commitment to this vital cause.

Upcoming initiatives will include Ukraine tabling a UN Resolution calling on Russia to return Ukrainian children, and a Summit of the Coalition, to be hosted by the European Commission.

We are grateful to all our partners.

Madam Chair,

In New York, Prime Minister Mark Carney and President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called for sustained international unity and stressed the urgency of intensified global engagement.

It demands our continued attention. We remain undeterred in our determination, and we will not be distracted by Russia's attempts to distort facts or sow doubt.

Our priority is rooted in this one task: bringing these children home. And we call on all who have not yet joined us to do so, because no single country can face such a challenge alone.

These acts are part of a bigger threat, one where Russia also makes further attempts to destabilize the region not just in Ukraine, but by including through malign influence campaigns. Such as the one aimed at undermining the democratic reforms the Moldovan government has been undertaking. Since 2023, Canada has sanctioned individuals and entities who have actively promoted and disseminated Russian disinformation in Moldova to justify Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

These actions are unacceptable, and Canada fully supports the government of Moldova, as well as Ukraine, and its efforts to implement democratic reforms, counter malign Russian interference, and regain full sovereignty of their internationally recognized borders.

Thank you, Madam Chair.