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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

1528th MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL

17 July 2025

Mister Chair,

Russia's full-scale invasion has now lasted more than three years, during which the evidence of its violation of international law has continued to grow.

Earlier this month, the European Court of Human Rights found that, between 2014 and 2022, Russia committed widespread and systematic abuses of human rights in Ukraine. These include inter alia violations of the right to life, the prohibition of torture, freedom of expression, and access to education. The Court described these actions as a flagrant disregard for the European Convention on Human Rights.

These findings are not isolated. Since 2022, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights' Ukraine Monitoring Initiative has come to similar conclusions based on extensive interviews and witness testimonies. In its seventh interim report, covering developments between December 2024 and May 2025, ODIHR has documented a sharp increase in civilian casualties, driven by Russia's intensified use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

The report also confirms ODIHR's previous findings on the widespread and systematic use of torture by the Russian authorities against arbitrarily detained Ukrainian civilians and POWs, including conflict-related sexual violence. ODIHR has collected information about attempts by Russian authorities to alter the status and character of the Russian occupied territories of Ukraine in violation of IHL including through coerced citizenship and the imposition of Russian curriculum in schools. These are not isolated abuses, but part of a broader, systematic campaign to exert control over occupied populations.

We are concerned that the report also highlights a significant increase in fabricated trials of Ukrainian civilians and prisoners of war (POWs) by the Russian authorities.

We also note the concerns that ODIHR has raised in regard to arbitrarily detained civilians and their inclusion in exchanges of POWs, and their conclusion that: "The detention of civilians who do not pose an imperative security threat would be tantamount to hostage-taking, which is prohibited under IHL."

Addressing the human dimension of the war is a critical priority, and we call on Russia to abide by their obligations under IHL in relation to the treatment and return of POWs, to unconditionally release all unlawfully detained civilians, and to facilitate the return of deported and transferred children.

Monsieur le Président,

La Russie tente de détourner ces preuves en rejetant la légitimité des institutions internationales. La semaine dernière encore, elle a dénigré la création du Tribunal spécial pour les crimes d'agression, qualifiant cette initiative de « vaine » et de « risible ». Cette initiative juridique crédible, mise en place grâce à la coopération multilatérale, est fondée sur l'état de droit.

De même, la Russie a cherché à discréditer nous discréditer, affirmant que nous ignorons les victimes du côté russe. Les souffrances des civils, qu'ils se trouvent en Russie ou en Ukraine, sont le résultat de la décision de la Russie de mener cette guerre. La propension de la Russie à refuser de reconnaître sa propre responsabilité face aux propres victimes civiles et militaires russes reflète la vraie nature de son calcul expansionniste : la vie humaine a peu d'importance même quand elle paie le prix de ses décisions.

Monsieur le Président,

Il en est de notre responsabilité collective de guider notre réponse à l'agression russe à travers des preuves et des institutions dont découlera les conséquences nécessaires à la stabilité et à la paix.

Nous ne permettrons pas que la clarté de ces conclusions soit brouillée par le déni ou la désinformation. Les rapports de l'OSCE, les arrêts de la Cour européenne des droits de l'homme et la création du Tribunal pour le crime d'agression sont des outils essentiels dans la quête de justice et de responsabilisation.

A l'occasion de la Fête de l'État Ukrainien, nous rendons hommage à la résistance inébranlable de l'Ukraine face à l'agression.

Le Canada continuera d'appuyer l'Ukraine sur les plans politique, diplomatique et économique, ainsi que par des mesures de responsabilisation, aujourd'hui et à l'avenir.