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Délégation du Canada
auprès de l'OSCE

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR JOCELYN KINNEAR
ON THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION'S ONGOING AGGRESSION AGAINST UKRAINE
1378 MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL
16 JUNE 2022**

Mr. Chair,

As Russia's brutal, premeditated aggression against Ukraine persists, we continue to receive disturbing reports of the atrocities Russian forces are committing against the Ukrainian people. These acts of illegal and immoral violence are unacceptable.

This week, Amnesty International reported on the Russian forces' attacks on Kharkiv, documenting seven indiscriminate cluster munition strikes in residential areas of the city, including near playgrounds. The report came to the conclusion that the repeated attacks on populated civilian areas and the destruction of civilian infrastructure "constitute war crimes." This Amnesty International assessment aligns fully with the earlier findings of the first Moscow Mechanism mission. That mission also found well-documented cases of cluster munitions being used and that their use, and the extent of civilian deaths, injuries and destruction, was excessive in comparison to the military advantage anticipated. Given this, the report found that the use of cluster munitions by Russia "constituted in each case in which this proportionality rule was not respected a violation of International Humanitarian Law and a war crime".

The findings of Amnesty International and the Moscow Mechanism mission on Russia's indiscriminate and unlawful use of cluster munitions add to the overwhelming allegations of atrocities and war crimes. We all still recall the shooting of unarmed, innocent civilians in Bucha, the bombing of School 21 in Chernihiv, and the unlawful strike on the theatre in Mariupol, even though these buildings had the word children painted in large letters on or beside them. Evidence continues to be collected on these abhorrent attacks on civilians.

War crimes were codified in international law dating back to the late 19th century and early 20th century. These laws were put in place to protect all civilians from unnecessary suffering and inhumane treatment during wartime. What we are witnessing in Ukraine from Russian military forces is a return to a form of war that devalues and discards the lives of civilians and non-combatants, and to a time that we collectively thought, and agreed, was behind us.

Mr. Chair,

Canada calls on Russia to cease immediately the continued shelling of residential areas and the deliberate targeting of civilians. The latest city to suffer relentless bombarding is Severodonetsk, in Luhansk, where the Russian forces have also destroyed all three bridges that lead to the city, cutting off all routes for evacuating civilians.

Mr. Chair,

By continuing this brutal aggression against Ukraine, Russia is deepening the chasm that it has created between itself and the rest of the world. By continuing this clearly expansionist war, Putin is further isolating Russia and the Russian people from the international community.

As the world witnesses the level of violence Russia is deploying to force small cities like Bucha and Severodonetsk to submission;

As more Russians understand that the “liberation” narrative initially promulgated by Putin was never true, as evidenced by the fierce resistance by Ukrainians in Donbas;

As the indiscriminate destruction and killing of innocent civilians continue;

As more people around the world are affected by the food crisis that Russia has precipitated through this war;

As all this continues, Putin is losing. He is losing as Russia increasingly loses the international community’s respect. He is losing as Russian actions strengthen Western resolve and support among European populations for defensive arrangements and spending. And slowly but surely, as all these actions come home to roost, Putin will lose the support of his own people.

Mr. Chair,

Promoting a rules-based international order where human rights are respected and upheld, and where might does not make right, is at the heart of Canada’s foreign policy. This was the key multilateral achievement of the United Nations and of the 20th century. Time has proved that this system works in building peace, security and prosperity, especially here in Europe. It is totally unacceptable that the reckless actions and decisions of a single person put this at risk.

This is why, since the first days of this unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine, Canada – in coordination with its allies, with partners all around this table – has imposed sanctions on Russia, and continues to support Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity unwaveringly.

Mr. Chair,

When Putin recently compared himself to Peter the Great, he made it very clear that he is leading an expansionist war “*to take back and strengthen Russia’s territories*”. Drawing a parallel between Peter the Great’s 18th-century imperial conquest of the Baltic region, and Russia’s 2022 war in Ukraine is a damning confirmation that all the pretexts for this war that we have heard in this Council over the past four months have been blatantly disingenuous. The truth is that this is a neo-imperialist, neo-colonialist war based on the fact that Putin thinks Russia should control other countries. This is a dangerous line of reasoning that has no place in the 21st century and that threatens stability and sovereign equality not only in Europe but around the world.

In a November 1959 letter, Aldous Huxley wrote: “*That men do not learn very much from the lessons of history is the most important of the lessons that history has to teach us.*”

Despotic totalitarian rulers repeatedly learn the wrong lessons from history. And Putin has done the same.

Let us be clear: history will remember Vladimir Putin as the Russian leader who brought destruction to Russia’s neighbours and tyranny and isolation to the Russian people, and who compromised Russia future.

Thank you Mr. Chairperson.