



Delegation of Canada
to the OSCE

Délégation du Canada
auprès de l'OSCE

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR JOCELYN KINNEAR
IN RESPONSE TO THE ADDRESS BY THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE OSCE CHAIRMAN-IN-OFFICE ON GENDER
1383rd MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

21 July 2022

Mr. Chair,

We thank the CiO Special Representative on Gender Equality, Ms. Liliana Palihovici, for her presentation.

Ms. Palihovici,

As you highlighted, the situation of women in Ukraine as a result of Russia's ongoing aggression is the most urgent and dire challenge we face right now. As you noted, almost 90% of Ukrainian refugees fleeing as a result of Russia's invasion of Ukraine are women and children. The fracturing of families increases the vulnerability of women and girls to sexual and gender-based violence and trafficking, by a factor of three. We, as participating States, need to do our utmost to protect Ukrainian women and children against the risks of trafficking, and from falling victim to sexual violence. To do this most effectively, we should work through relevant OSCE structures. It is crucial that gender equality and the rights of women remain a priority in times of war, even more than in times of peace.

Ms. Palihovici,

We welcome your call to speed up implementation of our gender equality commitments and invest in improving national policies to tackle all forms of violence against women. I can assure you that Canada is doing so.

Domestically, we are in the last year of implementing our 6-year *National Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence*. As part of this, in 2021, we launched our *National Action Plan [to End Gender-Based Violence]*, which recognises that we still have to address, as a priority, the over-representation of Indigenous women and girls among victims and survivors of gender-based violence and domestic violence. Indigenous women and girls are twice as likely to experience physical or sexual assault in their lifetime, and six times more likely to be killed, compared to non-Indigenous women in Canada. The Government of Canada is committed to working with its civil society partners and with the Indigenous communities to improve this unacceptable situation.

In addition, Canada has been implementing its Second National Action Plan (2017-2022) for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, and we are developing our Third National Action Plan, to be launched in 2023, which will aim to further support women's full participation in peace efforts and in security and defence sectors; to prevent and address impunity for conflict-related sexual violence; and to consolidate women's and girls' empowerment.

As we have underscored in this Council before, understanding the diversity and complexity of the needs of different populations affected by conflict leads to a risk-assessment approach that responds to the needs of the most vulnerable. We had been supporting the Government of Ukraine in developing its own National Action Plan using this approach before Russia launched its war of aggression against Ukraine in February.

Ms. Palihovici,

We recognize and applaud the efforts that you highlighted of our friends in Poland, Hungary and Austria, in helping Ukrainian refugees settle or transit safely, and in assisting them to access accommodation, job markets, health services and education for their children. To my colleagues representing these countries, and others who have responded similarly: we are grateful for your generosity and for opening your doors and assisting those in need as a result of this unprovoked and illegal attack by Russia against a sovereign neighbour.

We also try to play our part from afar. To date, Canada has committed \$320 million in humanitarian assistance to provide emergency health services, shelter, water and sanitation, and food to Ukrainians affected by the war. We recently allocated \$7 million to support those impacted by sexual and gender-based violence, and nearly \$40 million in new security and stabilization programming, including to advance accountability for human rights violations, with a particular focus on cases of sexual and gender-based violence.

Mr. Chair,

Once more, we find ourselves focusing on Russia's aggression against Ukraine in yet another report from an OSCE Special Representative. This is because Russia's aggression is the main security threat in the OSCE region, and the gravest danger for sexual and gender-based violence that women face in Ukraine. This is the sole responsibility of Russia. Russia started this war, and Russia must stop it, immediately.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.