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Delegation of Canada

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF CANADA AT THE 1375th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

26 May 2022

On Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson,

As you emphasized in your opening statement, we have now witnessed three months of brutal and unjustified aggression against Ukraine. Russia persists in seeking to destroy Ukraine as an independent State. But the Ukrainian people, who are proud of their identity, are fighting courageously for their country and their freedom, and to remain in control of their resources and their destiny.

This struggle does not concern Ukraine alone. It is also a struggle for global security and order. Ukraine is not an aggressor State. Unlike Russia, Ukraine has shown that it is a reliable and responsible partner for other countries in the global community.

Russia, on the other hand, is resorting to deplorable tactics, namely the blocking of access to resources required for the subsistence of vulnerable populations in all corners of the world, thereby demonstrating its complete disregard for the people affected. Unfortunately, this is not the first time that the Kremlin has resorted to the weaponization of famine and held entire populations to ransom.

Today we are seeing Russia hold an essential resource, namely food, to ransom. The Russian naval blockade in the Black Sea directly threatens the food security of millions of people, particularly on the African continent, which depends on Ukraine for its grain supplies. Russia's blockade is preventing more than 20 million tonnes of grain currently held in silos in Ukraine from being shipped abroad.

Ukrainian farmers did not have any difficulty in exporting their crops before the Russian invasion and the naval blockade by Russia. Before the war, Ukraine had all the agricultural infrastructure and labour force required to produce crops intended for the world's food supply. This supply is in jeopardy today – not because of disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, as our Russian colleagues suggested last week, but as a direct consequence of Russia's war against Ukraine.

Canada condemns the fact that Russia is deliberately targeting and destroying Ukrainian agricultural equipment. Last week, Mayor Kuzmenko testified here to the devastating effect of these actions on the local population. We are dismayed by Russia's actions, which are preventing Ukrainian grain exports from reaching the global markets.

We are likewise concerned about the secondary impacts of food insecurity. As is well known, food security is not just about hunger. Food security also has a bearing on peace, stability and conflict prevention. As United Nations Secretary-General Guterres said: “If you don’t feed people, you feed conflict.” In other words, by blocking grain exports, Russia is willingly and consciously exporting insecurity to countries situated far from Ukraine. This attitude is callous and unjustifiable.

Like all of us, Russia is fully aware that the world was already confronted with the effects of climate change, the pandemic and inflation on food security. It is unacceptable to aggravate this problem needlessly by refusing to allow millions of tonnes of grain to be conveyed to their destination as planned.

Canada reiterates the appeal issued to Russia last week by the G7 Foreign Ministers, who called on it to cease its attacks on transport infrastructure, including ports, so that grain intended for the global markets can reach its destination. The sanctions against Russia do not target essential exports of foodstuffs to developing countries. It is Russia which is cruelly using these foodstuffs as weapons, and the whole world is suffering as a result.

Mr. Chairperson,

We again demand of Russia that it put an end to this pointless war, that it withdraw its troops from Ukraine and that it fully respect Ukraine’s territorial integrity, sovereignty and right to choose its own future. We strongly condemn Russia’s efforts aimed at issuing passports to the residents of the regions that it is occupying, including most recently to people in the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions, and likewise any attempt to justify the territorial annexation of these regions by Russia. As we said last week, Canada will never recognize the illegal annexation of Ukrainian territory.

Canada continues to support Ukraine.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.