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Delegation of Canada

**STATEMENT BY
AMBASSADOR VÉRONIQUE PEPIN-HALLÉ, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF CANADA TO THE OSCE, AT THE 1580th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

8 October 2026

The Russian Federation's ongoing aggression against Ukraine

Mr. Chair,

Since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, investigators have documented repeated attacks harming civilians and found violations of international humanitarian law, including its foundational principles.

Already in the early stages of Russia's full-scale invasion, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine described failures to take feasible precautions as demonstrating a "pattern of disregard" for the requirement to minimize civilian harm.

In many incidents examined by the Commission or others like the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, investigators found no military presence at or near the site, failures to verify that targets were military objectives, and/ or failures to take feasible precautions to minimize civilian harm.

When confronted with these findings, the Russian Federation's reaches for its well-worn list of deflections: blame Ukrainian air defences, invoke an unspecified military objective nearby, allege that the incident was staged or fabricated, or dismiss independently verified findings as Western propaganda or anti-Russian bias.

Colleagues have spoken about recent cases. Please allow me to take a look at the track record.

Stories of civilian infrastructure claimed as military targets by the Russian Federation abound:

In 2022 in Mariupol, a maternity ward was said to being used for military purposes. UN investigators found that it was a functioning hospital, identified no military target nearby and qualified it an indiscriminate attack, noting failures to verify whether the target was a civilian object.

Then at the Mariupol Drama Theatre, hundreds of civilians were sheltering at what had become a gathering point for evacuation. At Kramatorsk railway station, a large crowd of civilians had similarly gathered hoping to evacuate. The Commission found that the civilian harm in both attacks was excessive in

relation to the possible military advantage and concluded that the attacks were indiscriminate and disproportionate.

The same year in Chernihiv, a Russian cluster-munition attack struck the Regional Children's Hospital while civilians were queuing for water on the premises. The UN Commission of Inquiry concluded that there were no military objects nearby. The previous day, Russian munitions struck an area where more than 200 civilians were queuing for bread, killing at least 14 and injuring 26, concluding the Russian Federation failed to take reasonable precautions to minimize civilian harm.

In 2023 in Hroza, UN investigators found that all 59 people killed in this Russian strike were civilians and that no military personnel or other legitimate military target were present at or near the site of the strike.

In the strike on a residential building and warehouse in Uman in 2023, the Commission specifically examined whether Ukrainian air defence had caused the Russian missile to deviate. Both objects had served military purposes more than 20 years earlier. The Commission found no military presence at either site, found it unlikely that Ukrainian air defence had caused the missile to deviate, and concluded that the attack on the residential building was indiscriminate.

In the case of the Okhmatdyt Children's Hospital in 2024, OHCHR examined the impact site, assessed that the hospital was directly struck by a missile, and not damaged by falling air-defence debris as claimed by the Russian Federation.

Mr. Chairperson,

Unfortunately, these are just a few examples among many others. The continuation of this aggression keeps subjecting civilians to further suffering. We saw proof of this yesterday.

Every civilian life lost is a tragedy, regardless of which side of the border it is lost on. We want to put an end to these many tragedies, but we cannot ignore their causes.

The war currently ravaging Ukraine – and its consequences, which are being felt far beyond Ukraine's borders – were not inevitable. The Russian Federation took the unilateral decision to use force against its neighbour. It did so despite its international obligations, despite the warnings issued to it by numerous States, and despite the foreseeable consequences of such a decision.

That is why the responsibility for bringing this aggression to an end cannot be separated from the responsibility for having started it. Russia took the decision to start this war. It can take the decision to end it.

Thank you.