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Eightieth year

9893rd meeting

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Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Bonnafont	(France)
<i>Members:</i>	Algeria	Mr. Koudri
	China	Mr. Geng Shuang
	Denmark	Ms. Lassen
	Greece	Mr. Sekeris
	Guyana	Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett
	Pakistan	Mr. Jadoon
	Panama	Mr. Alfaro de Alba
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Hwang
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Sierra Leone	Ms. Karim
	Slovenia	Mrs. Blokar Drobič
	Somalia	Mr. Osman
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame. Barbara Woodward
	United States of America	Ms. Shea

Agenda

Maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Estonia, Poland, Czechia and Ukraine to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Tom Fletcher, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I also invite His Excellency Mr. Stavros Lambrinidis, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Mr. Fletcher.

Mr. Fletcher: Since we briefed the Security Council on Ukraine two weeks ago (see S/PV.9886), airstrikes by the Russian Federation have continued to kill and maim civilians, including children, and destroy civilian infrastructure. A massive strike in the densely populated city of Kryvyi Rih in the Dnipro region last Friday resulted in multiple civilian casualties — the second fatal attack on the city in a week. According to the authorities, 18 civilians were killed, including nine children, and 75 others injured when a children's playground and nearby residential area were hit. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Ukraine, which verified many of the casualties, reported this was the single deadliest strike harming children since February 2022.

In recent weeks, drone attacks have continued to strike cities and cause civilian casualties. Civilian infrastructure — including healthcare facilities, apartment blocks, schools and children's playgrounds have suffered extensive damage. This brutal pattern of civilian death and destruction in populated areas must stop.

Hostilities have also continued in the frontline regions of Kherson, Kharkiv, Donetsk and the border areas of Sumy, causing extensive damage. More than 90 civilian casualties were recorded in those regions last week, according to authorities. I saw the impact of these types of attacks first-hand when I visited Ukraine earlier this year. The families I met in front-line areas near Pokrovsk, in the Donetsk region, to Kupyansk town, in the Kharkiv region, displayed courage, resilience and determination to rebuild their lives and homes, but also understandable exhaustion, anger and despair that these attacks continue.

They are right to be angry, because civilians are paying a devastating price for this horrendous war. OHCHR has now verified the killing of at least 12,910 civilians, including 682 children, and the injury of almost 30,700 across Ukraine from 24 February 2022 to 31 March 2025. The true toll is likely far greater. Nearly 3.7 million people remain internally displaced, with new waves of displacement in the country's north-east due to hostilities. Children and their caregivers are being evacuated from several front-line towns. There are almost 7 million refugees from Ukraine recorded globally, mainly in Europe. Media reports also indicate civilian casualties and damage to civilian infrastructure in the Kursk, Belgorod and Bryansk regions of the Russian Federation. We remain unable to reach an estimated 1.5 million civilians who require assistance in parts of the Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk and

Zaporizhzhya regions under occupation by the Russian Federation. International humanitarian law demands that the parties facilitate rapid, unimpeded access for humanitarian relief for those civilians in need — wherever they are.

Yesterday marked World Health Day, a moment to reflect on the urgent need to safeguard maternal and reproductive health, especially in crisis settings. A new report released by the World Health Organization, the United Nations Population Fund and UNICEF highlights the state of maternal mortality worldwide, including the devastating toll of conflict on women's health. In Ukraine, women and girls are facing a special crisis. Since February 2022, pre-term births have made up nearly 50 per cent of all deliveries, putting both mothers and newborns at high risk. Intimate partner violence, including other forms of gender-based violence, has surged 36 per cent during that period. Displaced women, especially refugees, are among those facing the most severe mental health challenges, with limited access to protection and care.

Almost 13 million people across Ukraine need humanitarian support. The majority are women, children, older people and people with disabilities.

In the first two months of 2025, 290 humanitarian organizations — mainly national non-governmental organizations — reached 1.7 million people with vital aid and services, including emergency support following strikes.

Thanks to the generosity of donors, 17 per cent of the \$2.6 billion needed for the 2025 Ukraine humanitarian needs and response plan, which I launched with Filippo Grandi in January in Kyiv, has been secured, but far more is clearly needed.

And, of course, now we are having to scale back critical programmes. As part of our wider humanitarian reset in response to funding cuts, we and partners are focusing limited resources on just four strategic urgent priorities: supporting front-line communities, emergency response, facilitating evacuations and helping the displaced. Increased financial support is vital to ensure humanitarian operations can continue reaching those most in need. Every contribution makes a difference.

We welcome the announcement of a ceasefire focused on energy infrastructure, as well as negotiations to ensure safe navigation in the Black Sea. Ultimately, the best protection of civilians is for this war to end. Until it does, the negotiating priority — whether as part of a temporary pause or a lasting agreement — must start from the needs and protection of civilians.

While talks continue, the fighting rages on, civilians continue to suffer, and the humanitarian crisis deepens by the day. My two asks today of the Security Council and, indeed, the wider international community go beyond Ukraine alone.

First, I must reiterate that under the international humanitarian law that the Council is here to defend, parties to conflicts must protect civilians and civilian infrastructure. Indiscriminate attacks on civilians are strictly prohibited. There must be limits to how war is waged. At their best, the Council and the member States in this Chamber, have upheld that idea — that even wars have rules. Is that not why we are here? And yet, on my visits from Ukraine to Gaza to the Sudan to Lebanon and to Myanmar — from where I returned yesterday — I am seeing the opposite: that not only are we not standing robustly for international law, but in some cases, we are supporting its debasement. That is the common thread that links those conflicts. And if one's principles apply only to one's opponents, then they are not humanitarian principles.

The world is getting more dangerous for civilians on our watch. Please — Council members can do more to ensure that this era of increasingly belligerent, transactional, self-defeating nationalism is not also remembered as one of callous impunity and brutal indifference, in which the rights of civilians are discarded again and again with

a shrug. If we do not make our stand on that point, consistently and unequivocally, what do we stand for anymore? And how can we expect anyone to listen to us or hope that others will make better choices in the future?

My second ask is for the funding to save lives in an increasingly dangerous environment and in this era of savage cuts. If Council members cannot stop the attacks on civilians — in Ukraine and elsewhere — please at least give us the security to operate and the resources we need to save as many survivors as we can

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Fletcher for his briefing and comments.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Ms. Lassen (Denmark): I thank Under-Secretary-General Fletcher for his sobering briefing.

It was only two weeks ago that we gathered in this Chamber to discuss the terrible humanitarian suffering caused by Russia's illegal war of choice on the people of Ukraine (see S/PV.9886). Today we reconvene, tragically, in the aftermath of yet another Russian mass casualty attack. As we just heard from Under-Secretary-General Fletcher, on 4 April, a missile strike on Kryvyi Rih killed at least 20 civilians, including nine children. A further 61 civilians were injured, again including many children. Russia has said it attacks only military targets. But let us be clear: that was a ballistic missile armed with cluster munitions to maximize casualties that hit residential buildings and a playground in one of Ukraine's most populous cities. That is a display of complete disregard for civilian lives. We condemn those despicable actions in the strongest terms. Attacks can be directed only against military objectives and may never be directed against civilians or civilian objects, as the Under-Secretary-General just underlined.

Despite the scale of the horrors in Kryvyi Rih, we must remember that it was just one of Russia's daily attacks affecting Ukraine's civilian population. Five civilians, including a child, were also killed in Kharkiv on 3 April, and at least 34 civilians were injured. The following night there was another fatal attack in Donetsk. And there were further attacks with civilian casualties in Kyiv, as well as in the Sumy, Donetsk and Zaporizhzhya regions — an endless Russian aerial blitz meant to terrorize Ukraine's civilians.

Russia could end the war today if it would only stop attacking Ukraine. Instead, it is raising new preconditions for even a partial ceasefire while increasing its attacks on Ukrainian civilians, resulting in further humanitarian suffering. Those are not good-faith actions by a country genuinely interested in negotiating a comprehensive ceasefire. They are not the actions of a country that shows any intention to implement the limited ceasefires it claims to have agreed to. Indeed, the deliberate delays and new preconditions raised seem particularly cynical given reports that the missile that struck Kryvyi Rih was fired from the Black Sea.

Ukraine, on the other hand, has taken the first meaningful steps towards peace with its offer of an immediate and complete 30-day ceasefire. It is now for Russia to take genuine steps that respond to Ukraine's offer and build on the momentum without further delay. The objective remains achieving a just and lasting peace, in line with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

That was precisely what the majority of United Nations members clearly demanded on the third anniversary of Russia's illegal full-scale invasion. They stood with the people of Ukraine and reaffirmed their commitment to its sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

In conclusion, Denmark will continue to stand with Ukraine as we, hopefully, move closer towards a comprehensive and enduring peace built on accountability and justice.

Mr. Alfaro de Alba (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): Panama thanks the presidency for convening this meeting and welcomes the timely participation of Mr. Tom Fletcher, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, for his detailed briefing. We acknowledge the attendance of the representatives of the delegations of Ukraine, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Poland and the European Union, who honour us with their participation.

Just two weeks ago, we met in the Council (see S/PV.9886), concerned about the increasing attacks on civilians in Ukraine. We were hopeful about the promise of a supposedly new era of dialogue and diplomatic rapprochement. At the time, we were hopeful, but now that prospect, regretfully, has dimmed. To be able to talk about peace negotiations, ensuring the safety of the civilian population must always be a priority. However, hostilities persist, and attacks continue to affect the civilian population.

Panama regrets the events described by United Nations High Commissioner Volker Türk, in reference to the attacks on 4 April in the Ukrainian town of Kryvyi Rih, in a densely populated area, while entire families, including children, were gathered in a children's playground, restaurants and residential buildings. A first missile strike killed 18 civilians, including nine children, and wounded 62, including 12 children. That attack was followed by another drone strike while rescue operations were being carried out by the emergency services, killing one person and injuring seven others.

Children must never be targeted in war. The images and testimonies are heartbreaking. These deaths are the direct result of violence that does not seem to distinguish between combatants and civilians and particularly affects the most innocent. We therefore insist that, in any conflict, children — regardless of their nationality — must be protected from the horrors of war. Their innocence is not worth their sacrifice.

We therefore consider it appropriate for the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to demand a thorough and independent investigation into this attack, as we would for any attack of this severity. This attack was characterized by the High Commissioner's Office in Ukraine as the deadliest verified attack on children since February 2022.

Panama vehemently reiterates its call for a total cessation of hostilities, respect for the territorial integrity of States and respect for international law and international humanitarian law.

Panama sympathizes with the pain caused by attacks on the civilian population, particularly those affecting children in any armed conflict. We are aware, from our own historical experience, that these wounds endure in societies for generations and are human tragedies with perpetual consequences in the lives of States and individuals.

In that sense, we support the diplomatic and political efforts framed in the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations for a negotiation towards a just and lasting peace that will be possible only if attacks against the civilian population and critical infrastructure are stopped.

Mr. Sekeris (Greece): At the outset, I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Tom Fletcher for his briefing.

Hardly two weeks ago, we discussed in the Chamber the ongoing humanitarian suffering in Ukraine following Russia's continuing and intensifying aggression (see S/PV.9886). Unfortunately, our calls on Russia to immediately cease the targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure have been completely ignored, and Ukrainians are suffering the consequences, as they have in the course of three years of relentless war.

Every day in recent weeks, we have seen new missile and drone strikes across Ukraine, causing dozens of civilian casualties. On 4 April, a single strike in a residential area of Kryvyi Rih, has caused 18 deaths and more than 60 injuries. What is particularly deplorable is the indiscriminate nature of that attack, which also targeted a children's playground, claiming the lives of nine children. Indiscriminate attacks are prohibited under international humanitarian law and, if they amount to attacks directed against civilians, may constitute war crimes.

Greece deplores all attacks against civilians and civilian objects and calls on Russia to immediately cease all attacks against residential areas and critical infrastructure in Ukraine. All parties must adhere to their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law.

Respect for international law and humanitarian law should go hand in hand with accountability for the perpetrators and justice for the victims and remains crucial for a just and lasting peace. We firmly believe that violations of international humanitarian law and war crimes should be thoroughly investigated by the relevant international institutions and that the perpetrators, whoever they may be, must be brought to justice.

Greece has taken note of the latest advancements for peace in Saudi Arabia, following the United States initiative, in the hope that they will lead, sooner rather than later, to a full ceasefire. We also welcome the fact that Ukraine is participating in those deliberations and regret that Russia has not accepted the agreement between the United States and Ukraine for a full and immediate ceasefire. In that respect, the current deadly attacks against Ukrainian civilians are seriously undermining peace efforts and are demonstrating Russia's lack of goodwill.

We hope that the 30-day ceasefire on energy infrastructure and on freedom of navigation and the elimination of the use of force in the Black Sea will be implemented. We echo the Secretary-General's statement that an agreement on freedom of navigation in the Black Sea will be a crucial contribution to global food security and supply chains.

Much more needs to be done to lead from a fragile and partial ceasefire to a just, comprehensive and lasting peace. We need to harness the benefits of inclusive diplomacy if we are to establish a solid framework for peace, security and prosperity. A peace based on the Charter of the United Nations and international law, in full respect of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and on credible and robust security guarantees, which will deter and prevent the recurrence of war in future.

In conclusion, given the regional and global repercussions of the ongoing war, let me reiterate that sustainable peace in Ukraine requires the active engagement of the whole international community.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Before I begin, I would like to note once again the unacceptable practice promoted by the members of the European Union (EU) of inviting an excessive number of delegations representing the EU and NATO, under rule 37. As we have emphasized on many occasions, there is no added value brought to the work of the Security Council by the participation of bloc States in our meeting. We will once again hear the same variations on the same

theme. We regret that the French presidency decided to disregard the Council's rules of procedure.

The formal reason for that the European supporters of the Kyiv regime called for the convening of today's Security Council meeting was a strike carried out by the Russian armed forces on 4 April on one of the restaurants in Kryvyi Rih. The Russian Defence Ministry reported that, as a result of a precision strike with a high-explosive missile on the location of a meeting of unit commanders and Western instructors, the losses amounted to up to 85 servicemen and officers of foreign countries and about 20 vehicles. There is no denying the fact that the operation inflicted damage on the command of both the Ukrainian armed forces and a number of NATO armies that had sent their instructors to Ukraine. In that context, we would like to recall that we have warned on many occasions that troop concentrations and Western officers and instructors sent to assist the Kyiv regime are legitimate targets for the Russian army.

Unfortunately, owing to the unprofessional actions of the Ukrainian air defence, it was the intercepting Ukrainian missile that caused the deaths of civilians in the area adjacent to the restaurant. In any event, that is precisely what is indicated by the characteristics of the warheads that can be seen on the images provided by those who witnessed the deaths of the people near the restaurant. The very fact that a military meeting was held in a residential building located in a densely populated urban area also demonstrates the blatant disregard of the Kyiv regime for the lives of Ukrainian civilians, who are essentially being used as human shields to cover for Kyiv's military activities.

The intended military target was hit, which was confirmed both by objective monitoring means and by Ukrainian social media users. Despite that fact, the Kyiv regime immediately tried to shift the focus away from tangible military losses to accuse Russia of allegedly targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure in Ukraine. According to them, cluster munitions were supposedly being used for that purpose.

As we can see from today's meeting in particular, that version has been actively taken up by the European sponsors of the Kyiv regime. We have on many occasions encountered a situation in which the Ukrainian propaganda machine tried to pass off the consequences of the flawed operation of its own air defence systems as targeted strikes by the Russian air force against Ukrainian civilian infrastructure. However, all those cases, including today's, can be refuted easily thanks to the videos recorded and posted on the Internet by ordinary citizens.

I would just like to recall a few examples here. In November 2022, we were accused of the targeted destruction of residential buildings in Kyiv and Vyshhorod. That was quickly refuted by leaked videos showing the consequences of the operation of air defences. In July 2023, there was a story about the Holy Transfiguration Cathedral in Odesa. At the time, there were plenty of videos on the Internet showing that an air defence missile was launched but, failing to gain the needed altitude, immediately went down and exploded. Then, in the flash of the explosion, the spire of the belfry is clearly visible. Also, there were assiduous attempts to place the blame on Russia for the July 2024 strike on the Okhmatdyt children's hospital, despite the fact that eyewitnesses filmed the very moment in which a Ukrainian air defence missile hit the building. That also includes the attempts to pass off the 24 March school bombing in Sumy as a targeted strike by the Russian armed forces against civilian infrastructure. At the most recent meeting of the Security Council, we convincingly debunked that fake as well (see S/PV.9886).

Even now, the claims by the Kyiv regime are being refuted by what Ukrainian eyewitnesses are recording and posting on social networks. In particular, they clearly show a large volume of smoke and dust, which indicates that a blast fragmentation warhead was used, not cluster munitions. If that had been a cluster munition strike,

there would have been no explosion cloud at all. Instead, the sound of explosions from submunitions in the sky is what would have been heard. According to the eyewitnesses' videos, there were no such sounds.

I would like to reiterate again today what we have already stated many times in this Chamber: the Russian military strikes only military objects and facilities associated with the military capabilities of the Kyiv regime. We have stated on numerous occasions that the Zelenskyy regime continues to deploy air defence systems in residential areas of Ukrainian towns. I would like to put a question to Under-Secretary-General Fletcher: is that not a violation of international humanitarian law? Why is the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs silent about it? In the vast majority of cases, civilians are being killed or suffer as a result of what Ukrainian air defence is doing. In that regard, we strongly recommend to all civilians to stay as far away as possible from the places in which Ukrainian or Western military groups are gathering, because a strike on such a perfectly legitimate military target can be delivered at any point in time.

Ukrainians, of course, are not being told the truth about what has happened. The Kyiv clique will spare no effort to milk the tragedy that they are responsible for to maximize the propaganda effect, and our meeting today is an important element of that strategy. A good illustration of that is the fact that, the very day after the incident, an interview with the head of Ukrainian intelligence, Mr. Budanov, appeared on YouTube. He stated that "there is absolutely no need to know the whole truth; otherwise, people may come up with different opinions." He also added that information should be provided in small doses and that people can only expect to find out the whole truth much later. There is no point in commenting on such utterances — they speak for themselves.

Of course, no one is going to tell the Ukrainians about the atrocities committed by the nationalists in the border region of Kursk oblast, which Ukrainian forces have held since the beginning of August 2024 and from which they are now being pushed out by Russian forces. After the hamlet of Guevo was liberated this morning, the Ukrainian army now controls only two border villages. We spoke in detail about the crimes of the Ukrainian nationalists at the informal Arria Formula meeting on 2 April. And neither is anybody going to tell Ukrainian citizens about the incessant shelling of Russian border towns, which in the past week alone left eight civilians dead and 106 wounded.

We would like to note that information about strikes on Ukrainian military objects in Ukrainian cities is being presented today by the sponsors of the Zelenskyy regime as evidence that Russia is allegedly not ready for peace and is trying to undermine the peace initiatives proposed by the new United States Administration. It is clear that the goal of those attempts is to undermine the American-Russian dialogue and torpedo the potential agreements that the Kyiv regime will have to accept. But I have to disappoint those sponsors — what they are doing is far too obvious, and their statements are far too removed from reality to be believed. They betrayed themselves when they began to say that the possible ceasefire could be used to pump Ukraine with weapons and bring in fresh reserves to the front, thereby showing that their interest is not in stopping military activities but in allowing Ukraine to lick its wounds and resume its war down to the last Ukrainian in pursuit of their geopolitical interests.

The scenario that is being discussed by Russia and the United States has nothing to do with that, obviously, but rather, with finding a sustainable, lasting solution to the Ukrainian conflict. To that end, it is necessary to address the root causes of the conflict, including pumping Ukraine with Western weaponry, which — as we all know — started long before our special military operation began and was being done under the cover of the "Minsk agreements". We are ready to have a

serious and practical dialogue, but we will not allow anyone to deceive us or to use this negotiating process to strengthen the Kyiv regime's military potential. As we have repeatedly stated, demilitarization is one of the goals of our special military operation, and it will be implemented through either military or negotiation means so as to ensure that Ukraine is no longer a threat to Russia.

Accordingly, our negotiation process on issues related to the Ukrainian settlement and other issues continues, in full compliance with resolution 2774 (2025), adopted on 24 February. At the same time, as we agreed with the new American team, Russia has refrained from strikes on Ukraine's energy infrastructure since 18 March; that cannot be said of the Zelenskyy regime, which continues shelling Russian energy facilities basically on a daily basis. Between 4 and 7 April alone, there were 32 such attacks. How does that square with the ceasefire proposal put forward by President Trump? That proves once again that it is impossible to negotiate with the current Ukrainian leadership, which lost its legitimacy almost a year ago, and convinces us once again that no agreements can be reached with the Kyiv clique that usurped power. We hope that our American colleagues also fully understand that. They now have an excellent opportunity to see for themselves the true intentions of those whom the British and European party of war is still backing.

Mr. Hwang (Republic of Korea): At the outset, I would like to extend my gratitude to Under-Secretary-General Tom Fletcher for his briefing. I also welcome the Ukrainian and other European representatives in today's meeting.

Although reports over the past few weeks indicate a partial ceasefire has been agreed upon, it does not seem to be implemented. All the while, casualties continue to mount. And recent developments in Ukraine only serve to underscore that grim reality. Indeed, the horrific Russian ballistic missile attacks on Kryvyi Rih last Friday hit homes, a playground, shops and a restaurant, killing 20 people, including nine children, with more than 70 people injured.

As Under-Secretary-General Tom Fletcher highlighted today, the ongoing, indiscriminate attacks against civilians and civilian objects are unacceptable and indefensible under any circumstances. They are a clear violation of international humanitarian law. Children in particular are enduring deep wounds from the conflict, which will take a lifetime to heal. According to UNICEF, more than 2,500 Ukrainian children have been killed or injured since the war started, and thousands of children have been forcibly separated from their families.

In that regard, the Republic of Korea welcomes all efforts for a swift end to the war and for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace — one that fully respects the principles and spirit of the Charter of the United Nations. Achieving that goal requires a sustainable ceasefire as a first step. But words alone, alongside partial, siloed agreements, are not enough. Instead, a comprehensive ceasefire backed by concrete action and true political will is needed.

While we do not know the full details of the ongoing negotiations of the parties involved, or how long they will take, the situation on the ground seems stalled or even to be moving in the wrong direction. If that trajectory continues, it will lead only to more suffering and casualties. On the basis of our experience of the three-year-long Korean war, during armistice negotiations the intensity of a conflict escalates and casualties on the battlefields surge. In Ukraine, the situation could be worse. We are even witnessing increasing missile and drone attacks on densely populated towns and cities as negotiations are ongoing.

Against that backdrop, there are additional ominous signs that are particularly concerning at the moment. The military cooperation between Russia and North Korea is intensifying rather than waning. That is exemplified by last month's high-level reaffirmation in Pyongyang that their Treaty on Comprehensive Strategic

Partnership, signed last year, will be implemented in full. Also, based on intelligence, the Republic of Korea, in close coordination with its partners, now assesses that more than 3,000 North Korean troops were deployed to the battlefield early this year, in addition to the more than 11,000 soldiers dispatched last year. We reiterate our unequivocal call for Pyongyang and Moscow to immediately cease their unlawful military cooperation, which is a flagrant violation of multiple Security Council resolutions. Those developments cast serious doubt on the sincerity of the political will to achieve a genuine ceasefire.

In conclusion, we believe that achieving a full freeze on hostilities pending the final settlement of the war should be treated as an urgent priority. That would minimize casualties and humanitarian suffering, as negotiations on the complex conditions to bring an end to the war may continue for a while. Of course, we strongly hope that the negotiations will be completed as soon as possible, in a manner that upholds the Charter of the United Nations.

At this juncture, it is critical for the Security Council to speak with one voice in calling for an immediate stop to the fighting on all battle fronts. The Republic of Korea will continue to cooperate with the international community to restore peace and ensure post-war construction in Ukraine.

Ms. Shea (United States of America): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Tom Fletcher for his briefing.

We extend sincere condolences to the families of those killed in the Russian Federation's ballistic missile strike in a residential neighbourhood of Kryvyi Rih, next to a children's playground, which killed at least 20 people, including nine children, and injured more than 70 civilians. We understand the missile carried a cluster warhead, accounting for the horrific loss of life. That attack is sadly only one in a series of terrible tragedies that have occurred over the past three years. It reminds us why ending the war as soon as possible must remain our focus. As the Council agreed in February, the killing and devastation must stop. Far too many civilians, especially children, have needlessly suffered and died while going about their daily lives.

The United States is committed to achieving a just and lasting peace. In bilateral engagements with both Russia and Ukraine, the United States has proposed a comprehensive ceasefire. In March, Ukraine's representatives informed us that they were ready to accept the proposal. The Russian Federation's representatives insisted on more limited agreements, which would cover only strikes on energy infrastructure and the elimination of the use of force in the Black Sea. Ukraine indicated agreement with those proposals.

To achieve the goal of peace, both Ukraine and Russia must fully implement the ceasefire commitments that they already made in Riyadh. Those initial steps, if fully implemented, would protect lives and improve livelihoods. Even more importantly, they could offer a basis for expanding a comprehensive ceasefire and negotiation towards a final, durable peace.

We call on Russia and Ukraine to fulfil their commitments. The world is watching. We call on both sides to exercise restraint and demonstrate that their commitment to peace is real. In particular, we urge the Russian Federation to bear in mind that strikes such as those on Kryvyi Rih and executions of prisoners of war have the potential to damage peace efforts and all dependent discussions. The 4 April missile strike further underscores the need for an end to this devastating war. And we will ultimately judge President Putin's commitment to a ceasefire by Russia's actions.

The United States remains ready to act as a partner on the path to peace. We call on all United Nations States Members to join us in supporting efforts to achieve

peace and in opposing any effort to widen or prolong the conflict. I say again, this war must end. We will have no patience for bad-faith negotiation or violation of commitments.

Mrs. Blokar Drobič (Slovenia): I would like to begin by thanking Under-Secretary-General Fletcher for his briefing. I also wish to thank him and all of his colleagues, particularly those who work tirelessly on the ground, in the most difficult of circumstances.

We are in the third consecutive year of the unabated devastation of a sovereign country. After tens of thousands of civilians have been killed or injured and after the destruction of civilian infrastructure that will take hundreds of billions of dollars to reconstruct, Russia's aggression is not diminishing in the slightest. The attack on Kryvyi Rih on Friday is a case in point. What seems to have been a missile carrying a cluster munitions warhead spread shrapnel across a densely populated residential area, including a playground. Twenty lives were lost in a heartbeat; half of them were children. That makes the attack on Friday the deadliest single strike to harm children since the war began.

We have heard claims that a high-precision strike was launched to target a military group that had been meeting at a restaurant at the time — an attempt to justify it as a military target. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has already disputed that account, stating that all the witnesses reported that there had been no military presence in the area at the time. I echo Under-Secretary-General Fletcher in underlining that, even in times of war, civilians and civilian infrastructure must be protected. Attacks against civilians and civilian objects are a clear violation of international law, in particular international humanitarian law, and must not go unpunished. All those responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity must be held accountable.

We need peace in Ukraine. Attacks such as the one on Kryvyi Rih are not only causing death and suffering among civilians but also run counter to ongoing peace efforts. Slovenia remains hopeful that the United States-led initiative will produce results. Effective moratoriums on strikes on energy infrastructure and a truce in the Black Sea might be the necessary first steps in that regard. However, more than ever, we need a verifiable and lasting ceasefire that will pave the way to negotiations on enduring peace in Ukraine. Ukraine has already taken the first step by agreeing to a full ceasefire, and we call on Russia to follow suit.

Slovenia will continue to advocate for peace, just as it has done since the beginning of the aggression. We will continue working in the Council and elsewhere towards a just and lasting peace between Ukraine and Russia in line with the Charter of the United Nations.

Ms. Karim (Sierra Leone): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this briefing. I also thank Under-Secretary-General Tom Fletcher for his important briefing. We welcome the participation of the representative of Ukraine in this meeting.

As we mark the 1139th day of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, Sierra Leone remains deeply concerned about the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. Over the past month and even in this period of indirect negotiations, reported intense Russian drone, missile and bomb attacks have targeted numerous cities and villages, particularly along the eastern, southern and north-eastern fronts. Those attacks have caused significant damage to civilian infrastructure, including to residential areas, shopping centres and energy facilities, directly threatening the safety and well-being of the affected population.

As tragically reported, on 4 April in Kryvyi Rih a missile strike hit residential areas and a playground, resulting in 19 fatalities, including nine children, and

leaving many more injured. The United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine has reported that 12,654 civilians have been killed and more than 29,000 have been injured since 2022. UNICEF reports that more than 2,500 children have also been killed or injured in the conflict. With children consistently being harmed in major attacks since the beginning of 2025, we can only hope that a ceasefire is reached soon to prevent further destruction of Ukraine's next generation. Sierra Leone therefore continues to underscore the critical importance of adherence to international humanitarian law, which prohibits attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure. Protecting civilian lives must remain the highest priority in any conflict, as consistently reiterated by members of the Council.

When we examine the various dimensions of the dire humanitarian situation, it is also concerning to note that the World Health Organization (WHO) has reported that more than 3.7 million men, women and children remain internally displaced in Ukraine, having been forced to flee their homes. Moreover, landmines and unexploded ordnance now contaminate an estimated 139,000 square kilometres of Ukrainian territory, further endangering civilians, particularly children, upon their return to their communities.

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has reported that approximately 36 per cent of Ukraine's population requires some sort of humanitarian assistance. That highlights the severe impact of the conflict on the local population and the urgent need for increased humanitarian aid. We commend health-cluster partner organizations, including WHO, for their continued efforts in delivering life-saving health services to those in need. Sierra Leone emphasizes the critical importance of sustained and flexible funding for humanitarian and recovery programmes in Ukraine. That includes the collective humanitarian health response, which has received only \$23 million of the \$130 million it requires. Since January 2025, several health cluster organizations have had to halt their mobile and essential health services due to funding suspensions, affecting approximately 1.5 million people and 587 health facilities.

What drives the dire humanitarian situation is the continuing hostilities. Sierra Leone reiterates that the conflict will not be resolved through military means. We therefore call on all parties to negotiate in good faith in the United States-led talks, while taking into consideration the legitimate concerns of all the parties involved. We urge negotiators and intermediaries to approach those discussions objectively, mindful of the contextual underpinnings of the conflict.

In conclusion, Sierra Leone reaffirms its commitment to supporting international efforts aimed at alleviating the dire humanitarian situation in Ukraine. As we move forward, it is essential that all parties prioritize the protection of civilians, respect for international humanitarian law and the facilitation of humanitarian access to ensure the delivery of life-saving assistance to those in need. We call for an immediate cessation of hostilities and full respect for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Fletcher for his briefing.

The crisis in Ukraine has dragged on to this day. The fighting has still not stopped, and ordinary people are suffering immensely. Under no circumstances should civilians and civilian infrastructure be the target of attacks. The parties to the conflict should strictly observe international humanitarian law and do their utmost to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure. The international community and humanitarian agencies should make every effort to provide humanitarian relief in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.

The Ukraine crisis is now at a critical juncture with regard to a negotiated settlement. Although the situation on the battlefield remains complicated, momentum for peace talks has emerged, and a window for peace is opening. China welcomes the recent talks between Russia and the United States and between Ukraine and the United States and encourages all efforts towards peace. As the conflict is taking place on the European continent, it is only natural for Europe to play its role in favour of peace. We support the participation of all the parties concerned and all stakeholders in the peace negotiations process in order to properly address the root causes of the crisis and reach a peace agreement that is fair, lasting, binding and acceptable to all parties. The Ukraine crisis involves complex problems. Marked differences in the parties' positions and proposals on a range of key issues remain. Restoring peace will inevitably require persistent efforts and remains a daunting task. It is our hope that the international community will make more rational voices heard in favour of a ceasefire and peace talks so as to foster a climate and conditions conducive to a political settlement of the crisis.

Since the day that the conflict broke out in Ukraine, China has been calling for a political solution through dialogue and negotiation. President Xi Jinping has put forward four points on what should be done, underscoring that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries should be respected, the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations should be observed, the legitimate security concerns of all parties should be given due regard and all efforts for peace should be supported. Those four points have consistently served as a lodestar for China on the Ukraine issue and form the basis for the six-point consensus proposed by China and Brazil. China has dispatched a Special Envoy to engage in diplomatic mediation and, together with Brazil and other countries of the global South, it established the Group of Friends for Peace on the Ukraine crisis. Developments in the situation prove that China's proposals are objective, fair, rational and pragmatic and reflect the broad consensus of the international community. China will continue to work with the international community to build consensus for peace, support peace efforts and play a constructive role in the political settlement of the crisis.

Mr. Osman (Somalia): Let me begin by thanking Mr. Tom Fletcher, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, for his comprehensive briefing on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine. I also want to welcome to this meeting the representatives of Ukraine and the region.

The detailed assessment provided helps to inform us of the challenges facing civilian populations and the urgent need for continued humanitarian access. The recent incidents in civilian areas have resulted in deeply concerning civilian casualties, including children. International humanitarian law is clear on the obligation to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure during armed conflict. The broader impact on civilian infrastructure across multiple regions continues to compound the humanitarian challenges faced by local populations. Those developments have occurred at a crucial moment, when diplomatic initiatives led by the United States have shown some promise. The recent agreements reached in Jeddah demonstrate that dialogue can yield tangible results. However, the continued impact on civilian populations underscores the urgent need to strengthen those diplomatic channels and ensure their effective implementation.

In the light of those developments, the Security Council might consider the following steps: first, supporting enhanced humanitarian access to affected populations; secondly, strengthening mechanisms for civilian protection in accordance with international humanitarian law; thirdly, encouraging the full implementation of recent diplomatic agreements; and fourthly, promoting conditions conducive to sustained dialogue and de-escalation.

Diplomatic efforts provide a foundation for further constructive engagement and improved conditions for civilian populations. The path forward requires sustained commitment to diplomatic solutions and unwavering adherence to international humanitarian law. The Council's role in supporting both immediate humanitarian needs and a longer-term peaceful resolution remains essential.

In conclusion, my delegation reiterates its call for the further strengthening of the protection of civilians, support for humanitarian access and the creation of conditions conducive to a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

Mr. Koudri (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Tom Fletcher, for his valuable briefing.

On many occasions, Algeria has expressed, and continues to express, its deep concern about the targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure, which constitutes a flagrant violation of international law, including international humanitarian law. Although everyone here agrees on the need to protect civilians, we continue to record a heavy loss of innocent civilian life, including women, children and the elderly. Monitoring reports also continue to indicate the destruction of civilian infrastructure owing to the ongoing conflict in the region. Moreover, for more than three years, people have continued to suffer in Ukraine and Russia, where huge numbers of unarmed civilians have no choice but to flee conflict zones and move in search of a safe place to shelter themselves and their families, awaiting a long-awaited final solution. Algeria has also highlighted and reiterates the repercussions of the war, not only on the peoples of the region, but also on many regions of the world, especially developing countries, which are facing unprecedented food and energy crises. In the face of those daunting challenges, we remain firmly convinced that continued escalation has never been feasible and does not offer the desired peace to any of the parties. Furthermore, the logic of polarization will only exacerbate tensions and move us further from any prospect of achieving sustainable peace in the region. We would therefore like to emphasize the following points.

First, Algeria renews its call on the two parties to show a spirit of responsibility, prioritizing the safety of civilians and civilian infrastructure and fully respecting their international obligations. We also express our hope that the ongoing diplomatic efforts recently initiated by the United States will lead to a comprehensive and sustainable ceasefire. In that regard, we appreciate the efforts of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Secondly, we also renew our call to abandon the logic of escalation and confrontation and to engage in a comprehensive and constructive dialogue in good faith, with the aim of reaching a just, lasting and peaceful settlement of the conflict. Only diplomatic efforts and constructive negotiations can reach a sustainable solution, based on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and taking into account the legitimate security concerns of both parties.

Thirdly, now more than ever, the international community must redouble its diplomatic efforts to bring the views of the parties concerned closer together and create the conditions conducive to facilitating dialogue and negotiations to end the crisis. We urgently need to put an end to the war and its dire repercussions, which have exhausted the peoples of the region and burdened the entire world, especially developing countries. Algeria remains committed to supporting any inclusive diplomatic efforts aimed at ending the suffering and ending the war in a peaceful and sustainable manner.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett (Guyana): I thank Under-Secretary-General Fletcher for the updates provided and welcome the participation in this meeting of the representatives of Ukraine, Czechia, Estonia and Poland and the observer of the European Union.

We were distressed to receive several reports from the Ukrainian authorities about ballistic missile strikes in Kryvyi Rih on Friday, in which 18 persons reportedly perished, including nine children, and 62 others were injured. In their communication to the Security Council, Ukraine also indicated that the missile was equipped with a cluster warhead and struck residential buildings, playgrounds and other civilian infrastructure. They also informed that earlier attacks in Kharkiv on 3 April resulted in five civilian mortalities and injured more than 30, while, on the night of 6 April, ballistic missiles targeted the city of Kyiv, and attack drones struck the surrounding region, again resulting in civilian casualties. Guyana is deeply alarmed that the calls of the Security Council and the international community for the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure and for the parties to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law continue to go unheeded. We reiterate that civilians should not be collateral damage in any armed conflict. International humanitarian law dictates that all efforts must be made to avoid civilian casualties and that civilians must not be targeted at all.

Guyana was hopeful that the promising momentum generated at the start of the year would finally bring an end to the war and that the parties would embark on a diplomatic process towards achieving lasting peace. We are therefore deeply concerned that those escalatory actions are taking place against the backdrop of ongoing efforts to achieve a ceasefire. We reiterate our call for the parties to the conflict to demonstrate strong political will and engage in good faith towards ending the conflict peacefully and with full respect for the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The scale of the destruction and ensuing humanitarian crisis is immense. More than 42,000 civilians, including children, have been reportedly killed or injured since February 2022; 11 million have been forced to flee their homes, with almost 7 million now living as refugees in other countries, as Under-Secretary-General Fletcher recalled, and 3.7 million internally displaced. Many others have been abducted, arbitrarily detained and subjected to conflict-related sexual violence and abuse. Even after the war ends, we fear that many more will be killed or injured as Ukraine now has one of the highest prevalence of explosive remnants of war and landmines globally.

The war has had and continues to have, a devastating toll on the lives and livelihoods of civilians. The latest joint Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment report puts the cost of direct damage at \$176 billion by the end of 2024. Moreover, the report estimates that the total cost of reconstruction and recovery in Ukraine over the next decade will be \$524 billion for both the public and private sectors.

Even with such a detailed assessment, the full impact of the war remains incalculable. No assessment can adequately capture the human cost of war. What value can one place on the sanctity of human life, on the trauma and social and psychological impacts that will be carried for generations? Regrettably, those cannot be quantified. At what point is enough enough?

Guyana continues to stress that there is no military option that brings lasting peace. We therefore continue to advocate for a diplomatic solution to end the war and insist that the United Nations, and by extension the Security Council, live up to its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security and play a more active role in supporting the ongoing peace efforts.

In conclusion, Guyana reiterates its call for the parties to the conflict to prioritize the protection of civilians and comply with their obligations under international law, including international human rights law and international humanitarian law. We also call on Member States to scale up support for the humanitarian response in Ukraine and to support the work of the United Nations and other agencies that are

working around the clock to save lives and respond to the needs of those displaced. We will continue to work with fellow Member States in support of the ongoing efforts to achieve lasting peace.

Mr. Jadoon (Pakistan): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Tom Fletcher for his briefing.

Just a couple of weeks ago, the Council met to discuss the devastating humanitarian impact of the Ukraine conflict (see S/PV.9886). Regrettably, its toll on civilians and civilian infrastructure continues to mount. We express our sympathies with the families and loved ones of all those affected by the ongoing conflict.

We would like to make the following two points on the matter under consideration today.

First, Pakistan remains deeply concerned by the disproportionate impact of the conflict on civilians. The protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure is an obligation under international law and international humanitarian law and must be fully and consistently respected by all parties.

Secondly, it is vital that access and the protection of humanitarian workers be ensured. The parties are under an obligation to ensure conditions that allow unimpeded access for humanitarian workers, while ensuring their protection.

On 24 February, the Council implored a swift end to the conflict and a lasting peace between Ukraine and the Russian Federation (see S/PV.9866). The subsequent limited ceasefire agreement reached last month on halting attacks against energy infrastructure and in the Black Sea is a welcome development. We hope that the parties will earnestly abide by their commitments and use the momentum for achieving a comprehensive and permanent ceasefire, leading to a just, lasting and durable peace.

Pakistan's position on the Ukraine conflict has been consistent. From the outset, we have advocated dialogue and diplomacy for the immediate cessation of hostilities and a peaceful resolution.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate Pakistan's support for the ongoing diplomatic efforts aimed at a just and durable settlement of the conflict through a constructive and inclusive process, in full respect of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and the relevant multilateral agreements, and addressing the legitimate national security interests of all sides.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): I would like to start by joining others in thanking Under-Secretary-General Fletcher for briefing us today.

As we have heard, on Friday, Russia's ballistic missile attack in Kryvyi Rih struck a residential area in the city, resulting in the deaths of 20 people, including nine children — the youngest of whom was just three years old. At least 70 people were injured. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights described that as the deadliest single strike harming children since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion. As High Commissioner Türk said, that attack was an unimaginable horror — nine children were killed, most while playing in a park, as a military weapon exploded into shrapnel above them.

We also saw attacks this weekend on Kharkiv and Kyiv, resulting in at least five more civilian deaths and many more injured.

Therefore, we find ourselves here once again to condemn yet more Russian attacks that have killed and injured many Ukrainian civilians in violation of the Charter of the United Nations and Russia's responsibilities as a permanent member of the Security Council.

President Putin continues to stall the ceasefire proposal, dragging his feet and insisting on maximalist conditions, while intensifying drone and missile attacks upon Ukrainian cities, which have now resulted in the deaths of nine more innocent children. The Kremlin's actions reflect no desire for peace that I can detect. They are the actions of a Government that remains hell-bent on destroying Ukraine; a Government that disdains mediation efforts and holds cheap the lives of civilians.

Under United States leadership, a ceasefire proposal is on the table. The ball has been in Russia's court for weeks now. It is time for the Kremlin to stop stalling; it is time to show that it is committed to peace, as it claims to be.

President Zelenskyy has made Ukraine's will clear. He wants to see the war end and has agreed to a full, immediate and unconditional ceasefire, subject to Russia's agreement.

It is time for the killing to stop. It is time for the Kremlin to end its aggression against Ukraine and to uphold its obligations under the Charter of the United Nations. It is time for President Putin to agree to a full and immediate ceasefire as a vital step towards negotiations to end the war for good.

Our message to the Kremlin is that we will not be deterred by its reckless and barbaric actions. The United Kingdom will continue to stand resolutely by Ukraine to secure a just and lasting peace, in line with the principles of the United Nations Charter.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of France.

I would like to thank Mr. Fletcher, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, for his briefing, every sentence of which resounds like a scathing repudiation by Russia of the peace efforts of the United States and Ukraine, the aggressed nation.

Two days ago, Mr. Volker Türk, High Commissioner for Human Rights, described Russia's strike on Kryvyi Rih as an unimaginable horror, saying,

"The use of an explosive weapon with wide area effects by the Russian Federation in a densely populated area — and without any apparent military presence — demonstrates a reckless disregard for civilian life."

The facts are clear. In recent days, Russia has stepped up its attacks on residential areas in several Ukrainian towns. On Friday, in Kryvyi Rih, 20 people, including 9 children, were killed. The following day, Russian forces launched a large-scale attack across the whole of Ukraine.

Indiscriminate strikes and the targeting of civilian infrastructure are far from the only suffering that Russia is imposing on the Ukrainian people. It is high time that Russia returned the Ukrainian children it has deported to their families and stopped the summary executions, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment and sexual violence against Ukrainian prisoners of war, all crimes that have been amply documented by the United Nations. It must stop targeting humanitarian personnel. Russia's secondary strike on Kryvyi Rih on 5 April, while relief operations were under way, is contrary to all the principles of international humanitarian law. Those violations must cease and will not go unpunished.

Even as Russia lashes out at the Ukrainian population, it claims to support a ceasefire. But what are we talking about? A month ago today, Ukraine accepted the American proposal for a complete and unconditional 30-day ceasefire. That courageous decision was not followed by any response from Russia.

On the contrary, Russia is piling on maximalist preconditions while stepping up its military operations. Just yesterday, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that,

“Vladimir Putin supports the idea of a ceasefire, but a number of problems must be resolved, [in particular] the Kyiv regime’s inability to control several extremist groups [and] plans for the further militarization of Ukraine”.

These “outstanding issues”, as Russia calls them, in an expression fraught with innuendo, are nothing more than unacceptable conditions for any sovereign State.

As far as the Black Sea is concerned, Russia is making the entry into force of a ceasefire conditional on compliance with five exorbitant requirements, the same ones that led to the end of the Black Sea cereals initiative in July 2023. It continues to use global food security as a tool, blaming the West when its own agricultural exports are actually increasing.

Russia is not negotiating in good faith; it is procrastinating, and its objective remains Ukraine’s capitulation. But we, the French and the Europeans, are not standing still, and we are continuing to work on ways to secure peace. That is the purpose of the meeting held in Paris on 27 March at the initiative of the President of the Republic, with Ukraine and 30 of our partners.

The peace must be just, lasting and in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. In other words, it must protect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, as reaffirmed by the General Assembly on 24 February. Our commitment to that goal will not waver. In the short term, France supports efforts towards a ceasefire and calls on Russia to cease its operations, beginning with those affecting civilians and civilian infrastructure

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

Ms. Hayovyshyn (Ukraine): I thank the French presidency for convening today’s Security Council meeting, and I am grateful to Under-Secretary-General Fletcher for his substantive briefing.

My delegation called for this meeting because the Russian Federation does not want a ceasefire. Every missile, every drone strike, killing people every day proves that Russia wants only war. It has not only failed to cease its attacks on Ukrainian civilians, but it has significantly escalated the scale and lethality of its assaults.

Sunday, 6 April was a day of mourning in Ukraine after the most brazen attack, carried out on 4 April, which, according to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, was the deadliest single strike harming children that the United Nations has verified since the start of Russia’s full-scale invasion in February 2022. The Russian Federation launched an Iskander-M ballistic missile at a residential neighbourhood in the city of Kryvyi Rih, killing 20 people, including nine children. More than 60 civilians, including 12 children, sustained injuries of varying severity. The youngest victim was a three-month-old baby.

Staying silent about the fact that it is Russia killing children with ballistic missiles is wrong and dangerous. It only emboldens the scum in Moscow to continue the war and keep ignoring diplomacy. Weakness has never ended a war. That is why we are thankful to each and every Member State whose representatives have spoken out. Our whole country is mourning the children killed by the Russian terrorists in Kryvyi Rih. According to Russian representatives, these are military targets in Ukraine. Tymofiy, forever three years old; Radyslav, forever seven years old; Arina, forever seven years old; Herman, forever nine years old; Mykyta, forever 15 years old; Danylo, forever 15 years old; Alina, forever 15 years old; Kostiantyn, forever 16 years old; Nikita, forever 17 years old. Danylo and Alina were a couple and were buried together yesterday.

The attack on our children was carried out with exceptional cruelty. The Russian ballistic missile was equipped with a cluster warhead, deliberately designed to maximize casualties. It targeted a purely residential area during early Friday evening — a time when many families were gathering ahead of the weekend. The missile landed near a playground and tore through homes, schools and a restaurant.

In addition to the ballistic missile, the Russian Federation launched attack drones against Kryvyi Rih during the rescue operation. The drone attack killed at least one person and injured seven others. There is no deeper vileness or hatred towards our people. That aligns with the so-called double-tap attacks perpetrated by terrorist organizations and replicated en masse by Russian Federation in its terror campaign against Ukraine and the Ukrainians.

We categorically reject Russia's blatant falsehoods about alleged military targets in the area. Facts from the crime scene make it clear: there were no military objectives in the vicinity. Russia's true aim was deliberate terror against civilians. Russia must be held accountable for everything it has done. To end this war, it is necessary to put pressure on them — real pressure — without wasting time on empty talk.

We thank the Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, whose team visited the site the following day to document the damage and identify the victims. It reported extensive destruction caused by shrapnel striking buildings, playground swings and slides, trees and open ground. I reiterate that all witnesses and footage from cameras inside and outside the local restaurant debunked the lies and disinformation we heard from the Russian representative today, and hear constantly. It confirms that there was no military presence at the restaurant or in the surrounding area at the time of the strike.

We appreciate the efforts of UNICEF and its partners on the ground, who are supporting affected families and coordinating with local authorities to deliver emergency assistance. We welcome their call for an immediate end to attacks on civilian areas in Ukraine.

A resolute international response to Russian atrocities is crucial. Such terror must never become the norm. We call for both strong condemnation and decisive actions. The Russian Federation must stop its terror against the Ukrainian people; respond to the United States proposal for an immediate, interim 30-day full ceasefire, which Ukraine has accepted; and end its war of aggression against my country. Unfortunately, yet not surprisingly, the Russian Federation has refused to support a full ceasefire initiative. Almost every day, in response to that proposal, Russia targets Ukrainian cities and villages with drones, bombs, artillery and ballistic and cruise missile attacks.

As Security Council members already underscored, not even two weeks have passed since the most recent Security Council meeting on Ukraine (see S/PV.9886). But that was long enough for Russia to cause significant loss of life and widespread destruction.

On 26 March, in a massive attack on civilian infrastructure and residential areas in Kharkiv and the Kharkiv region, at least 12 civilians, including two children, were injured. On the same evening, Dnipro and the Dnipropetrovsk region were the target of one of the most intense drone attacks in three years; at least three civilians were injured.

On 27 March, swarms of deadly Shahed drones attacked residential areas of Dnipro, Kharkiv and other Ukrainian cities. Dozens of civilians, including children, were injured. On the same day, an artillery strike was carried out on Kherson, killing one woman and injuring one man.

On 28 March, a massive attack with 172 strike drones caused destruction across the country. In Dnipro, at least four civilians were killed and 25 were injured, including a pregnant woman.

On 29 March, in a missile strike on Kryvyi Rih, nine civilians were injured, three of whom were hospitalized. That same evening, a massive attack on Kharkiv killed two civilians and injured at least 35 others, including five children.

On 30 March, in attacks across Ukraine, drones, artillery and guided aerial bombs hit the Cherkasy, Kherson, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhya, Dnipro, Sumy and Kharkiv regions. In Kupyansk, Kharkiv region, one of the 15 guided aerial bombs struck a five-storey residential building, injuring at least four civilians.

On 31 March, another drone attack on Kharkiv injured at least three civilians.

On 1 April, artillery shelling of Krasno-Limansky, in the Donetsk region, destroyed a utility building. Body fragments were found and handed over for identification.

On 2 April, a massive overnight attack with 74 drones and approximately 50 guided aerial bombs targeted the Kharkiv, Odesa and Sumy regions. In Kharkiv, at least eight people, including three children, were injured.

On 2 April, a Russian strike on Druzhkivka, Donetsk region, and on Kharkiv, where drones hit a 16-story residential building, injured at least five civilians, including a 10-year-old boy and a 65-year-old woman. On the same day, a ballistic missile attack on Kryvyi Rih killed at least 4 civilians and injured 14, including at least two children, aged 8 and 6.

On 3 April, a drone strike on residential buildings in Kharkiv killed at least five civilians, including a 12-year-old girl, and injured 34, including two children. Twenty-eight buildings were damaged, leaving residents without gas, electricity or heating. The Kyiv, Sumy, Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk and Zaporizhzhia regions also came under attack that day.

On 4 April, in Brovary, Kyiv region, a Russian drone attack injured two civilians. In Dnipro, another massive overnight drone attack injured at least three civilians and caused multiple fires. On the same day, the Russian Federation struck Kostiantynivka and Rodynske, in the Donetsk region.

Moscow speaks about peace while launching brutal strikes daily on densely populated residential areas in major Ukrainian cities. Those strikes are abhorrent and appalling war crimes that constitute a grave violation of international humanitarian law. With those barbaric attacks against Ukrainian civilians and children, Russia demonstrates its complete disregard for international peace efforts led by the United States. Russia shows an unrelenting will to continue its war of aggression against Ukraine. Let us keep it in perspective: Moscow has not moved one inch away from its genocidal and maximalist war aims. Russia continues to focus on the elimination of Ukraine as a State and of Ukrainians as a nation. It is now crystal clear that Russia is the major and only obstacle to peace. On the other hand, Ukraine has always been — and remains — committed to peace. We have taken concrete steps towards peace, unlike Russia, which continues to drag its feet and commit atrocities.

Only the pressure of the world on the Russian Federation and all collective efforts to strengthen Ukraine, our air defence and our forces — only those factors will determine when the war ends. Ukraine has clearly demonstrated its desire for peace and its commitment to giving peace a chance. No one wants peace more than our people. We need strong measures and decisive actions to push the Russian Federation towards peace before it kills more children and ruins the lives of more families. We can see that Putin does not want to end the war; he is looking for ways

to preserve the option of reigniting it at any moment, with even greater force. That is exactly why all forms of pressure on Russia must continue: strengthening our ability to defend ourselves, maintaining sanctions and ensuring that diplomacy — that any conversation with Moscow — leaves it no opportunity to kill. If there is a ceasefire, it must be unconditional — one that does not allow for the destruction of life.

We will rebuild buildings and entire cities demolished by the Russian attacks. Ukraine is already managing to do that. But we will never return the lives of the people. Russia must be held responsible for this war, and it will be. We continue working closely with our American and European partners to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace for Ukraine and Europe based on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and with clear security guarantees.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Mr. Lambrinidis.

Mr. Lambrinidis: I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting and, of course, Under-Secretary-General Fletcher for once again highlighting the consequences of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

Let us recall why we are in this Chamber once again today. We have entered the fourth year of Russia's unprovoked and illegal war of aggression against an independent country and a Member of the United Nations. And while Ukraine sues for peace, Russia continues its relentless attacks on Ukraine's civilians and civilian infrastructure. The past week has provided ample evidence of Russia's lack of interest in any ceasefire, with daily, deadly attacks. Russia's latest attack on the Ukrainian city of Kryvyi Rih reportedly killed 20 people, including nine children, most of whom were playing in a park. It was the deadliest single strike involving children, as verified by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, since the start of the full-scale invasion in 2022.

Russia's campaign of systematic air strikes against Ukraine's civilians and critical civilian infrastructure violates international humanitarian law and must stop immediately. How many times have we said that in this Chamber? How many times has Russia simply not listened? As stated on Sunday by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights,

“The use of explosive weapons with wide area effects by Russia in a densely populated area — and without any apparent military presence — demonstrates a reckless disregard for civilian life.”

There can be no impunity. Russia and its leadership must be held fully accountable for waging a war of aggression and for other most serious crimes under international law.

The European Union reiterates its support for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine, based on the Charter of the United Nations and international law. We welcome all efforts towards reaching such a peace. We welcome the efforts by the United States in that regard and by Saudi Arabia in hosting talks. In those talks, Ukraine has demonstrated its readiness to accept a ceasefire without preconditions, which would constitute an important step in the direction of peace. Russia, on the other hand, decidedly has not. Instead of reciprocating, it has put forward preconditions for a partial ceasefire. We call on Russia to show its willingness to achieve peace without further delay. The European Union is ready to play its full part in supporting upcoming steps, together with Ukraine and other partners. I stress once again that there can be no negotiations on Ukraine without Ukraine, and no negotiations that affect European security without Europe.

In conclusion, I reaffirm the European Union's unwavering support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, within its internationally recognized borders. The European Union will continue to support Ukraine for as

long as it takes, and as intensely as needed, to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace, in line with international law, including the Charter of the United Nations.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Czechia.

Mr. Kulháněk (Czechia): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting.

Czechia aligns itself fully with the statement delivered by the representative of the European Union. Allow me to offer a few additional remarks in my national capacity.

Although not a member of the Security Council, Czechia appreciates this opportunity to voice our profound moral outrage at Russia's recent attacks on civilian targets in Ukraine. From the outset, Czechia has unwaveringly supported Ukraine in its rightful exercise of self-defence, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, against Russia's unprovoked and unjustified full-scale invasion. Moreover, Czechia has welcomed a substantial number of war refugees — nearly half a million in total — most of whom are women and children. As this brutal war of choice continues to rage dangerously close to our borders, we join others in yet again unequivocally condemning Russia's aggression. Russia's actions represent not only a direct threat to peace in Europe, and therefore to our own national security, but also fundamentally undermine the Charter of the United Nations and its most sacrosanct principles of territorial integrity and national sovereignty.

Today we find ourselves at a crucial juncture. Even as we witness diplomatic efforts aimed at securing a ceasefire, and despite Ukraine's clear readiness to fully embrace it, Russia continues and even intensifies its relentless attacks on Ukrainian civilians and civilian infrastructure. Russia's brutal targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure over recent days demonstrates, beyond any doubt, who truly seeks peace and who, instead, is determined to prolong a ruthless war of territorial conquest.

How else can we interpret the barbaric act of launching a missile loaded with explosives into the Ukrainian city of Kryvyi Rih, killing at least 20 innocent people, including nine children? Suffice it to say, that has been independently verified by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. That latest atrocity is Russia's true response to all international diplomatic efforts and reveals precisely how much Russia values peace. No one, not even Russia itself, can hide from those appalling facts or ignore that grim reality. We all earnestly desire an end to the bloodshed, the senseless killing and the widespread destruction. Indeed, all that suffering can end immediately. All that is required is for President Putin's Russia to cease the senseless violence and withdraw its invading forces from Ukraine's sovereign territory.

Let me conclude by reaffirming my country's steadfast and unwavering commitment to Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, within its internationally recognized borders. Czechia will continue to support Ukraine for as long as necessary and with all the determination required to secure a comprehensive, just and lasting peace, fully consistent with international law, including the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Estonia.

Mr. Tammsaar (Estonia): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the three Baltic States: Latvia, Lithuania and my own country, Estonia. We align ourselves with the statement delivered by the representative of the European Union.

We thank Under-Secretary-General Fletcher for his valuable input and commend the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Ukraine for its admirable efforts in mobilizing and coordinating aid to people whose lives have been upended by the war.

Since the Security Council last convened to discuss Russian aggression against Ukraine, two weeks ago (see S/PV.9886), Russia has significantly stepped up its killing of Ukrainian civilians and attacks against civilian infrastructure. The deliberate shelling of the civilian population in Kyiv and Kryvyi Rih over the weekend is yet another war crime. Among the 20 civilians killed in the Russian ballistic missile strike in Kryvyi Rih, nine were children. That abhorrent bombing, with cluster munitions, of a residential area and a playground was conducted with the only aim of sowing fear and terror. That is another reason Russia deserves to be listed in the annexes to the annual report on children and armed conflict, for carrying out grave violations against children in Ukraine. According to verified data, Russia has killed more than 600 Ukrainian children since the beginning of the full-scale invasion in 2022, while the real number might be much higher. In addition, the abductions and deportations of Ukrainian children continue, for which the International Criminal Court has already issued arrest warrants for Putin and Lvova-Belova, which constitute another reprehensible violation of international law.

Russia does not act alone in its neocolonial and imperial madness. The involvement of Iran, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Belarus in Russia's aggression against Ukraine must stop immediately. The transfer of weapons between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Russia and the involvement of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's troops, fighting on Russia's side, constitute a major escalation with far-reaching global consequences.

Since Russia's invasion, Ukraine has repeatedly expressed its unwavering commitment to reach a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in line with the Charter of the United Nations. To exemplify its commitment, Ukraine has agreed to a full and unconditional ceasefire. In contrast, Russia rejected the ceasefire proposal, has not taken any credible steps towards reaching peace, engages in ethnic cleaning and social engineering on the occupied territories of Ukraine and keeps on raising its political demands. It is evident that Russia is deliberately dragging its feet in an attempt to deceive United States negotiators, to conquer more Ukrainian territory and to terrorize Ukraine's civilian population. As the Russian attacks against Ukraine have intensified significantly during the past month, it is high time to also increase international pressure and to force Russia into peace in Ukraine.

In conclusion, we continue to stand by Ukraine and reiterate our collective efforts aimed at reaching a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine, in line with the Charter of the United Nations, international law and relevant resolutions of the General Assembly.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Poland.

Mr. Miarka (Poland): Poland aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the representative of the European Union.

We are grateful for the briefing provided by Under-Secretary-General Fletcher at the outset of the meeting.

Last week we witnessed another series of heinous Russian attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure in Ukraine. We want to express our deepest condolences

to the families of those affected by the horrific Russian attack in Kryvyi Rih, an account of which was provided in detail by our Ukrainian colleague moments ago. That attack, the deadliest involving children since the beginning of the war, clearly indicates that the Kremlin has not even one iota of interest in any ceasefire. Instead of striving to achieve peace, Russia is systematically carrying out air strikes against civilians and the civilian infrastructure of Ukraine, blatantly violating international law. As stressed many times before, Poland stands in solidarity with Ukraine in the face of Moscow's war of aggression.

Russia continues to spread lies and disinformation, engage in manipulation and accuse Ukrainians of violating humanitarian law. Moscow is sincere about one issue, though, and its actions prove that very clearly: its final goal is to destroy Ukraine's statehood. Public statements made by Russia's Ministry for Foreign Affairs show that Moscow is trying to falsely present itself as a victim and expecting the world to provide it with security assurances, preferably at the expense of the legitimate security interests of its neighbours.

It is most curious that, despite Moscow's continuous pursuit of imperial and neocolonial ambitions, as clearly demonstrated in Georgia in 2008 and in Ukraine since 2014, it is still trying to argue that its aggression is somehow an emanation of its supposedly peace-loving predisposition. Blaming others is much easier than looking at the man in the mirror, which should be the first step for Russia and its leadership if they are truly interested in peace. While Ukraine has agreed to a ceasefire without preconditions, Moscow has regrettably decided to decline the opportunity. Once again, we call on Russia to fully and unconditionally engage in efforts aimed at achieving peace. We welcome the United States efforts to accomplish that and Saudi Arabia's role as a host of peace talks.

In conclusion, Poland remains committed to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine on the basis of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. We support efforts aimed at reaching such a peace, taking into account that no negotiations on Ukraine should be held without Ukraine and that no negotiations affecting Europe should be conducted without Europe.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Under-Secretary-General Fletcher to respond to the comments and questions raised.

Mr. Fletcher: To respond very briefly to the question from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation put to me about international humanitarian law, in particular about how it applies to the military presence in residential areas, I think that it is important to address that, as it comes up in many of the crises with which we are dealing right now. There are three key points to be made.

Importantly, all parties to the conflict have to take constant care to spare civilians and protect civilian objects. The second point is that that means that an attacking party must do everything feasible to verify targets and take all feasible precautions in the choice of tactics and weapons. And yes, that also means that the defending party should, to the maximum extent feasible, avoid locating military objectives within or near densely populated areas and remove the civilian population, where possible, from the vicinity of military objectives.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.