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Provisional

President: Mr. Abushahab/Mrs. Nusseibeh. (United Arab Emirates)

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Russian Federation.	Mr. Nebenzia
Switzerland	Mr. Hauri
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
United States of America.	Mr. Wood

Agenda

Threats to international peace and security

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Threats to international peace and security

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Ukraine to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs; Mr. Max Blumenthal, journalist, founder and Editor-in-Chief of *The Grayzone*; Mr. Chay Bowes, scholar specializing in small arms and munitions; and Mr. Sergey Radchenko, Wilson E. Schmidt Distinguished Professor, Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.

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

I give the floor to Mrs. Nakamitsu.

Mrs. Nakamitsu: Since the previous briefing to the Security Council on this topic (see S/PV.9325), in May, the provision of military assistance to the Armed Forces of Ukraine has continued, in the context of full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation. Information on transfers of weapons systems and ammunition flows from Governments are available through open sources. Those transfers have included heavy conventional weapons, including battle tanks, armoured combat vehicles, combat aircraft, helicopters, large-calibre artillery systems, missile systems and uncrewed combat aerial vehicles, as well as remotely operated munitions and small arms and light weapons and their ammunition. There are reports that the supply of arms and ammunition has accelerated and expanded ahead of the reported counteroffensive by Ukrainian forces. There are also reports of States transferring, or planning to transfer, weapons such as uncrewed combat aerial vehicles and ammunition to the Russian armed forces for use in Ukraine. Moreover, media outlets have reported on the transfer of major conventional arms, including artillery rocket systems, to other armed groups involved in the war in Ukraine.

The supply of weapons into any armed conflict situation raises significant concerns about the potential

escalation of violence and the risks of diversion. Measures to address the risk of diversion to unauthorized end users and for unauthorized uses are essential for preventing further instability and insecurity in Ukraine, the region and beyond. Such measures include pre-transfer diversion risk assessments, end-user certificates and non-retransfer clauses, effective legal and enforcement measures and post-shipment verifications. To prevent the diversion of weapons, supply chain transparency and cooperation and information exchange among importing, transit and exporting States is required, as well as concrete measures such as marking and tracing, effective accounting and record-keeping practices, the physical safeguarding of arms and ammunition, customs and border control measures and diversion monitoring and analysis.

As I mentioned many times before, transparency in armaments is a crucial confidence-building measure that can serve to reduce tensions and ambiguities among Member States. The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms is a key instrument in that regard. Moreover, the Arms Trade Treaty, the Firearms Protocol and the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, with its International Tracing Instrument, are some of the arms control instruments that have been established by States to prevent the diversion of conventional arms and regulate the international arms trade.

I take this opportunity to welcome the recent conclusion of work by the Open-Ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition and commend the elaboration of a new global framework for through-life conventional ammunition management. The framework is a much-needed instrument to more effectively counter the diversion of conventional ammunition of all types, which continue to fuel instability, insecurity and conflict across the world.

I reiterate my call to States to join relevant treaties and agreements and to fully implement their legal obligations and political commitments under conventional arms control instruments to which they are party, to minimize the risk of the diversion of arms and ammunition. The establishment of the unified weapons register by the Ukrainian Ministry for Internal Affairs and Police, designed to digitize registration, accounting and control activities associated with civilian firearms circulation, is a timely initiative to minimize diversion risks.

The impact of the intensifying war in Ukraine on civilians continues to be an area of serious concern. From 24 February 2022 to 18 June 2023, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights recorded 24,862 civilian casualties in Ukraine, with 9,083 killed and 15,779 injured. The actual figures are likely to be considerably higher.

The vast majority of civilian casualties are a result of the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects. The missile attack in central Kramatorsk on 27 June, which killed 12 people, is a case in point. The Secretary-General has unequivocally urged all sides to avoid the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, as such use is highly likely to result in indiscriminate harm. I take this opportunity to refer to the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas, adopted in November 2022.

In addition to the thousands of civilians killed or injured, the continued and intensified attacks against critical infrastructure and essential services, including energy infrastructure, health and educational facilities, roads and bridges, are alarming. Mines and explosive remnants of war have resulted in widespread land contamination, rendering land unusable for agriculture, while impeding the movement of people. The destruction of the Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant dam is possibly the most significant incident of damage to civilian infrastructure since the start of the war.

Under international humanitarian law, parties to an armed conflict are prohibited from targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure and have the responsibility to take all feasible precautions in the conduct of military operations to avoid, or at least minimize, incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians and damage to civilian objects. The United Nations strongly condemns attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure and calls for their immediate cessation.

The past 16 months have seen immense loss, suffering and devastation in Ukraine. As the conflict has intensified, diplomatic efforts and initiatives by Member States seeking de-escalation and calling for a peaceful settlement have also increased. The United Nations stands ready to support all meaningful efforts to bring just and sustainable peace to Ukraine. In that, we are guided by international law, including the Charter of the United Nations and relevant General Assembly resolutions, as the Secretary-General has repeatedly emphasized.

The President: I thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Blumenthal.

Mr. Blumenthal: I thank Alex Rubinstein and Wyatt Reed for helping me prepare this statement. Wyatt Reid is a journalistic colleague of mine who, in October 2022, happened to be in Donetsk when his hotel was shelled by the Ukrainian military, with an apparently United States-made Howitzer, nearly killing him. He was 100 metres away. I am also here with my friend civil rights activist Randy Credico, who was in Donetsk more recently and witnessed regular HIMARS attacks on civilian targets.

I am here not only as a journalist who has spent more than 20 years writing books, producing documentaries and writing articles about conflict and politics in several continents, but also as an American taxpayer who has been dragooned into funding a proxy war that has become a threat to regional and international stability, at the expense of my countrymen and countrywomen. On 28 June, as emergency crews worked to clean up yet another toxic train derailment in the United States, this time on the Montana River, further exposing our nation's chronically underfunded infrastructure and its threats to our health, the Pentagon announced plans to send an additional \$500 million worth of military aid to Ukraine.

The development came as Ukraine's army enters the third week of a vaunted counter-offensive that CNN describes as "not meeting expectations," and even Volodymyr Zelenskyy says is going slower than desired. As Ukraine's military failed to breach Russia's primary defence line, CNN reported on 12 June that Kyiv had "lost" 16 United States-made armoured vehicles sent to the country. What did the Pentagon do? It simply passed that bill down to average United States taxpayers, such as me, charging us another \$325 million to replace Ukraine's squandered military stock. There was zero effort to consult the United States public's position on the matter; and the vast majority of Americans likely did not even know the exchange took place.

The policy I am describing, which sees Washington prioritize unrestrained funding for a proxy war with a nuclear Power in a foreign land, while our domestic infrastructure falls apart before our eyes, exposes a disturbing dynamic at the heart of the Ukraine conflict — an international Ponzi scheme that enables Western elites to seize hard-earned wealth from the

hands of average United States citizens and funnel it into the coffers of a foreign Government that even Transparency International ranks consistently as one of the most corrupt in Europe.

The United States Government has yet to conduct an official audit of its funding for Ukraine. The American public has no idea where its tax dollars are going. That is why this week, we at *The Grayzone* published an independent audit of United States tax dollar allocation to Ukraine throughout fiscal years 2022 and 2023. Our investigation was led by Heather Kaiser, a former military intelligence officer who served in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Among many bizarre payments, we found a \$4.5 million payment from the United States Social Security Administration to the Kyiv Government. We found \$4.5 billion worth of payments from the United States Agency for International Development to pay off Ukraine's sovereign debt, much of which is owned by the global investment firm BlackRock. That amounts to \$30 taken from every United States citizen at a time when 4 in 10 Americans cannot afford a \$400 emergency. We found tax dollars earmarked for Ukraine padding the budgets of a television station in Toronto, a pro-NATO think tank in Poland and, believe it or not, even rural farmers in Kenya. We found tens of millions to private equity firms, including one in the Republic of Georgia, as well as a \$1 million payment to a single private entrepreneur in Kyiv.

Our audit also revealed the Pentagon's \$4.5 million contract with a company called Atlantic Diving Supply to provide Ukraine with unspecified explosives equipment. It is a notoriously corrupt company that none other than Thom Tillis, the Chair of the Senate Armed Services Committee, previously lambasted for its "history of fraud". Yet once again, Congress has failed to ensure that those shady payments and massive arms deals are properly tracked.

In fact, much of the military and humanitarian aid shipped to Ukraine has simply vanished. Last year, CBS News quoted the director of a pro-Zelenskyy non-profit in Ukraine who reported that only 30 per cent of aid was reaching the front lines in Ukraine. The embezzlement of funds and supplies is at least as troubling as the potential consequences of the illicit transfer and sales of military-grade weapons. Last June, the head of INTERPOL warned that the massive transfers of arms into Ukraine means "we can expect an influx of weapons in Europe and beyond" and that "criminals are even now, as we speak, focusing on them".

This May, a group of anti-Kremlin Russian exiles, outfitted with gear supplied by the Ukrainian Government, was hailed by Western politicians for carrying out terrorist attacks on Russian territory using American-made Humvees. Although the group the so-called Russian Volunteer Corps is led by a man who calls himself the "White King" and includes numerous open admirers of Adolf Hitler, described as neo-Nazis in United States mainstream media, the Western weaponization of that militia against Russian forces and Russian civilians has not prompted any outcry from Congress. And while the Biden Administration has promised that it is keeping tabs on the weapons sent, a State Department cable leaked last December conceded that

"kinetic activity and active combat between Ukrainian and Russian forces create an environment in which standard verification measures are sometimes impracticable or impossible".

The Biden Administration not only knows that it cannot track the weapons it is shipping to Ukraine, but it also knows it is escalating a proxy war against the world's largest nuclear Power and daring it to respond in kind. We know that because back in 2014 — and the timeline is very important — NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said that the war started following a United States-backed coup d'état. President Barack Obama rejected demands from Kyiv to send lethal offensive weaponry because, as *The Wall Street Journal* put it, he had a

"long-standing concern that arming Ukraine would provoke Moscow into a further escalation that could drag Washington into a proxy war".

When Donald Trump entered office, in 2017, he attempted to hold the line on Barack Obama's policy but was soon branded a Russian puppet by the Beltway press corps and the Democratic Party for refusing to send Raytheon's Javelin missiles to the Ukrainian military. His reluctance to send the Javelins became a central theme of his impeachment and, predictably, he relented.

As the United States-made offensive weaponry began to reach the front lines of Donbas, the collective West exploited the Minsk accords to "give Ukraine time" to arm up, as former German Chancellor Angela Merkel put it. In January 2022, the United States announced a \$200 million arms package to Ukraine. Follow the timeline. By 18 February, observers from the Organization for Security and Cooperation (OSCE) in Europe reported a doubling in ceasefire violations,

with OSCE maps showing the overwhelming majority of targeted sites on the side of pro-Russian separatists in Donetsk and Luhansk. Five days later, Russia invaded Ukraine.

Since then, the United States and its allies have been scurrying up the escalation ladder at every opportunity. A former State Department official complained after meeting with Ukrainian counterparts,

“[t]hings we couldn’t give in January because it was escalatory were given in February [...] and things we couldn’t give in February we can in April. That has been the distinct pattern, starting with, for crying out loud, Stingers”.

President Joe Biden himself said in March 2022,

“[t]he idea that we’re going to send in offensive equipment and have planes and tanks [...] don’t kid yourself, no matter what you all say, that’s called ‘World War III’”.

Just more than a year later, Biden changed his tune, backing a plan to provide F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine, after pressuring Germany to send in the tanks he once feared would provoke World War III. It would only take two months from the time that Ukraine received Lockheed-made HIMARS from the United States for the Ukrainian military to begin targeting critical infrastructure, using them to strike the Antonovka bridge over the Dnipro River and, once again, two months later in a test strike on the Kakhovka dam, as the *The Washington Post* reported,

“to see if the water level of the Dnieper River could be raised enough to stymie Russian crossings”.

Three weeks ago, the Kakhovka Dam was destroyed, triggering a major environmental catastrophe, which caused mass flooding and contamination of the local water supply. Ukraine of course blames Russia for the attack but has produced no evidence. Around the same time, Ukraine also baselessly accused Russia of planning a provocation at the Zaporizhzhya nuclear plant, which triggered a resolution by Senators Lindsey Graham and Richard Blumenthal, who is of no relation to me, calling on NATO to intervene directly in Ukraine and attack Russia if such an incident occurred. The move by Blumenthal and Graham thus established a de facto red line for initiating United States military action, much like the one set down in Syria which, as a former United States diplomat commented to journalist Charles Glass, “was an open invitation to a false flag operation.”

Will we see another Douma deception, but the next time in Zaporizhzhya, with nuclear consequences? Why are we doing this? Why are we tempting nuclear annihilation by flooding Ukraine with advanced weapons and sabotaging negotiations at every turn? We have been told by people like Senator Dick Durbin that Ukraine is literally in a battle for freedom and democracy itself and that therefore anyone who opposes military aid to Ukraine opposes the very defence of democracy, according to the same logic.

Where is the democracy therefore in Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s decision to ban opposition parties, criminalize the media outlets of his legitimate political opponents, to jail his top political rival and his deputies, raid Orthodox churches and jail clergymen? Where is the democracy in the Ukrainian Government’s imprisonment of Gonzalo Lira, an American citizen, simply for challenging the official narrative of Ukraine’s war? And where is the democracy in Zelenskyy’s recent decision to suspend elections in 2024 on the grounds that martial law has been declared? The answer is that Ukrainian democracy is harder to find these days than the country’s Commander-in-Chief Valery Zaluzhny. Senator Lindsey Graham has offered a much grimmer and more on-the-mark rationale for supplying Ukraine with billions of dollars in weapons. As the senator boasted during a recent visit with Zelenskyy in Kyiv, “[t]he Russians are dying ... It’s the best money we’ve ever spent.”

Graham has also said that Americans are ready to fight this war down to the last Ukrainian. While official casualty numbers are strictly classified, we must worry that Ukraine is well on its way to fulfilling the Senator’s ghoulish fantasies. As a Ukrainian soldier complained this month to *Vice News*, we don’t know what Zelenskyy’s plans are, but

“[i]t looks like extermination of its own population — like of the combat-ready and working-age population. That’s it.”

Indeed, military cemeteries in Ukraine are expanding almost as rapidly as the northern Virginia McMansions and beach-front estates of executives from Lockheed Martin, Raytheon and assorted Beltway contractors benefiting from the second-highest level of military spending since the Second World War. They are the real winners of the Ukraine proxy war, not average Ukrainians, Americans, Russians or Europeans. The winners are people like Secretary of State Tony

Blinken, who spent his time between the Obama and Biden Administrations launching a consulting firm called WestExec Advisors, which secured lucrative Government contracts for intelligence firms and the arms industry. Blinken's former partners at WestExec include Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines, Central Intelligence Agency Deputy Director David Cohen, former White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki and almost a dozen current and former members of Biden's national security team. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, for his part, is a former, and possibly future, board member of Raytheon and a former partner of the Pine Island Capital Partners, an investment firm, which collaborates with WestExec and which Blinken himself has advised. Meanwhile, the current Permanent Representative of the United States to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, is listed as senior counsel at the Albright Stonebridge Group, a self-described commercial diplomacy firm, which also finesses Government contracts for the intelligence and arms sectors, which was founded by Madeleine Albright, infamously known for her comments that the deaths by sanctions of half a million Iraqi children were worth it. While middle-aged Ukrainian men are ripped off the streets by military police and sent to the front lines, the financially and politically connected architects of this proxy war are planning to walk through the revolving door to reap unimaginable profits once their time in the Biden Administration is over. For them, a negotiated settlement to this territorial dispute means an end to the cash cow of close to \$150 billion in United States aid to Ukraine.

In conclusion, when the United States — my country and a Permanent Member of the Security Council — has fallen under the control of a bipartisan regime that seeks to perpetuate a proxy war for, in the words of Joe Biden, “as long as it takes”; which considers diplomacy synonymous with unilateral coercive measures to “turn the rouble to rubble,” as Biden has pledged to do; and whose leadership subverts negotiations in order to pursue profit, while refusing to properly inform its own citizens what they are paying for and pushes the sons and brothers of its supposed Ukrainian partners out onto a killing field in order to bludgeon a geopolitical rival; and when both Zelenskyy and members of the United States Congress call for pre-emptive strikes on Russia that have nothing to do with Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, the Council must take action to enforce the Charter. The Charter is clear that the Security Council must use its authority to guarantee

the pacific settlement of a dispute, particularly when it threatens international security. That should not only apply to Russia and Ukraine. The Council has an obligation to strictly monitor and restrain the United States and the illegal military formation known as NATO.

The President: I thank Mr. Blumenthal for his briefing.

I would like to remind briefers to limit their interventions to 10 minutes.

I now give the floor to Mr. Bowes.

Mr. Bowes: Despite well more than a year of frenzied and what is now recognized as a loosely regulated supply of incalculable numbers of weapons to Ukraine, sources within the country still maintain that it needs an escalating volume of heavy and light weapons and ammunition to conduct its operations. It is now also glaringly apparent that what began as NATO supporting a Ukrainian military that it had built since the beginning of the civil war in the east in 2014 has in real terms become a proxy conflict in which Ukraine supplies manpower with ever-diminishing operational capability to support a de facto NATO operation in order to prevent a Russian military victory in Ukraine, and thereby avert the potentially terminal impact such a victory would have on the operational, political and reputational survival of NATO itself. It is critical that the reality of the situation is seen for what it actually is.

That is indeed the very real escalating concern of NATO planners and their political funders, particularly in the ever-hawkish Anglosphere, The same geostrategic reality also, of course, drives the seemingly perpetual escalation of military aid to Ukraine. All of that is despite the tens of billions of dollars of weapons in various states of operability already being delivered to a country that the United States has described, as recently 2019, as endemically corrupt and, in many sectors of society, essentially lawless. It is crucially important that we are clear as to the kind of country to which such vast amounts of weapons are being delivered. I would like to cite the United States *2019 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, published by the Department of State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. This is a shocking report that maintains that unlawful and arbitrary killings and torture are widespread, as is the abuse of detainees by law enforcement personnel. It also mentions,

“harsh and life-threatening conditions in prisons and detention centers; arbitrary arrest and detention; substantial problems with the independence of the judiciary; restrictions on freedom of expression, the press, and the internet, including violence against journalists, censorship, and blocking of websites”.

Control of the press is widespread. It goes on to cite serious concerns regarding Government corruption and crimes involving violence or the threat of violence targeting persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities — which I presume includes the Russian-speaking minority in the east of the country — and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community. It is into that cauldron that the Western Powers are pouring incalculable volumes of weapons and munitions and money.

On the front lines, meanwhile, military progress for the now serially depleted Ukrainian military is undeniably strategically insignificant, particularly in the context of the long-vaunted and publicized counter-offensive, where all qualified and objective independent and non-aligned analysts must agree that Ukraine is failing to achieve even the necessary initial breakthroughs against well-prepared and well-resourced Russian lines of defence. It is very interesting to hear the paid expert contributors in Western media encouraging an almost perverse stiff-upper-lip look-the-other-way attitude when faced with the undeniably brutal losses that Ukraine has undeniably suffered.

Those young men dying in their thousands are, in my considered view, the most foremost victims of the perpetual escalation in military aid to Ukraine. They are attempting to advance in close order in daylight across minefields into pre-zeroed artillery kill zones, often in 30-year-old second-rate NATO-supplied armoured personnel carriers, like the United States M-113 — a lightly armoured steel box that first entered service in 1960 and is a veteran of another United States foreign policy disaster, namely, the Vietnam War. They may be accompanied by a handful of German Leopard tanks, many of which are decades old and grossly unsuited to the Ukrainian steppes, or maybe by what are supposed to be mine-resistant vehicles, all of which have been shown now to be exceptionally vulnerable to Russian anti-tank warfare systems and attack helicopters, and the brutal reality of in-depth Russian minefields.

All of that occurs with no meaningful air support, let alone air supremacy, which Russia commands with its in-depth air defence systems and a large fleet of

modern multi-role fighters. The idea that those assaults, which are essentially amounting to suicidal full-frontal attacks on in-depth prepared defences, are allowed to continue is, in my view, deeply cynical and, I would suggest, sinister. No modern NATO military strategist or senior officer would suggest that those manoeuvres are anything but an inhumane ticket to tragedy when commanding their own troops, yet when it comes to the young Ukrainian men mounting those assaults being decimated, they are silent. They accept the Ukrainian Government’s ban on reporting from the front lines on the vast losses in men and material that evoke scenes more similar to the Somme or Passchendaele.

The ideology that an increasingly depleted Ukraine can indeed defeat Russia on the battlefield in eastern and southern Ukraine, somehow reclaim Crimea and subsume an unwilling ethnic Russian population back into a chaotic and essentially failed State governed from Kyiv is a delusion.

The quality of some of the equipment that the United States has urged its smaller NATO allies to donate to Ukraine is at best repairable and at worst outright lethal — not to the Russian defenders, but to the Ukrainian operators. Several of those incentive deals have been done to entice NATO countries to dump all their vehicles into a desperate Ukraine on the promise of replacement with better, or at least younger, equipment. In one case, Germany replaced 40 BMP-1A1s — one of the oldest versions of that Soviet troop carrier — for the Greek army, with 40 Marder infantry fighting vehicles through a Ringtausch programme, the Soviet air armour then being forwarded to Ukraine. The same type of deals have been widespread regarding the hasty requirement to feed Ukraine’s Soviet-era artillery, such as the Grad multiple launch rocket system, with post-Soviet States in Eastern Europe offering hundreds of thousands of rounds of artillery and rockets to the country in return for replacement systems.

Surely the morality of that is deeply questionable. Of course, there is one fiscal beneficiary — and that is of course the NATO military-industrial complex, of which the United States is by far the biggest player globally. A recent *The New York Times* article outlined how profiteering and incompetence have further complicated the chaotic landscape in Ukraine when it comes to the flood of heavy and light weapons into the country. According to that article,

“Ukraine has paid contractors hundreds of millions of dollars for weapons that have not been delivered,

and some of the much-publicized arms donated by its allies have been so decrepit that they were deemed fit only to be cannibalized for spare parts”.

Or, indeed, they have been scrapped. The Ukrainian Government has revealed documents that show, as of the end of last year, Kyiv had paid arms suppliers more than \$800 million for contracts that went completely or partly unfulfilled.

Two of the individuals involved in the purchasing of that equipment, according to *The New York Times*, said that as of early spring, hundreds of millions of dollars had been paid, including to State-owned companies, for arms that never materialized. Volodymyr Havrylov, Ukraine’s Deputy Defence Minister, said: “We did have cases where we paid money and we did not receive”. I would like to point out again that some of those contracts are with State companies, according to *The New York Times*.

It is very important that we try to show the sheer scale and volume of weapons flooding into Ukraine since last year. The United States alone has committed well over \$40 billion worth of military aid to the Kyiv Government. The European Union and other States have also contributed tens of billions into what we know to be one of the least regulated States on Earth when it comes to control of corruption and institutional accountability. In addition, Ukraine has spent billions of dollars of its own money on the private arms market — possibly the most difficult area in which to ascertain any kind of transparency.

It is worth recalling that, over the 20-year period of the United States intervention in Afghanistan, the United States Department of Defense paid various companies about \$108 billion in contracts for work performed in the country, with one third of that contract spending remarkably going to undisclosed recipients — domestic and foreign businesses that are not uniquely identified in the publicly available contracting databases. That information is from a landmark piece of work done by the Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs at Brown University in Rhode Island, United States of America, as part of its “Costs of War” research project on the Afghan misadventure.

Those vast sums would suggest to the novice taxpayer that Ukraine is receiving high-technology supplies, but in a reflection of the poor quality of Western donations and the brutal battlefield attrition rate, as much as 30 per cent of Kyiv’s arsenal is under repair at any given time.

That, again, is according to a source reported by *The New York Times* in a separate article. It also suggests that a recent delivery of 33 self-propelled Howitzers donated by the Italian Government were basically good only for scrap. The Italian Defence Ministry had stated that the vehicles had been decommissioned many years ago, but Ukraine had asked for them to be overhauled and put into operation anyway, given the urgent need for a means to face Russian aggression.

A Pentagon Inspector General’s report released last May also illustrates some of these serious issues. An American unit was supposed to ship 29 high-mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicles — a very small amount of equipment — to Ukraine from a depot in Kuwait. The cost of that action bears no remote link to any sort of strategic imperative whatsoever. By the time it actually arrived in Poland, only three of the vehicles were actually battle-worthy. The tires were rotten and had to be replaced at huge cost, basically choking up the whole supply chain.

The same thing has happened with M-777 Howitzers, which were a much-vaunted game-changer in the long line of much-vaunted game-changers that were going to turn the tide of the war in Ukraine, according to Western media. Instead, the M-777 Howitzer has become a sitting duck for Russian loitering munitions. We have verifiable evidence that over 100 of those units have been destroyed in the field in Ukraine. By the way, the Pentagon report also says that at least one of the M-777 Howitzers was in such bad shape that it would have killed the operators trying to use it. That is in the Inspector General’s report that was concluded in March 2022.

Similarly, Britain’s Defence Secretary Ben Wallace has announced the planned transfer of AS-90 Howitzers in Ukraine to great fanfare: “We stand with Ukraine”. In fact, when we look into that transfer, we see that those Howitzers were unserviceable or in varying states of readiness and ended up being scrapped or used for spare parts.

The haphazard distribution of small arms across the country is probably just as disturbing, if not more so, in the context of the Ukrainian conflict. Long before the Russian military operation in Ukraine began last February, various reports were highlighting the dangers to civil society of the widespread distribution of small arms and ammunition across the country. Max Blumenthal has referred to some of those reports.

In February 2022 Ukrainian authorities, remarkably, began to distribute tens of thousands of assault weapons, rifles, grenades and millions of rounds of ammunition to the general population. In one incident alone, six kilometres from the centre of Kyiv, thousands of weapons were distributed to anybody willing to carry them. Some 18,000 portable assault weapons, rifles and pistols with ammunition were handed out to untrained civilians within days of the Russian intervention. That was confirmed to the British Broadcasting Corporation by Vadym Denysenko, Ukraine's Interior Ministry adviser.

It is impossible to imagine or even speculate as to the volume of illicit and official small arms now circulating in the country, which is experiencing catastrophic levels of dysfunction and destruction, criminality and corruption. I do not need to cite the various INTERPOL reports in that connection or Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who suggested that there are Western anti-tank weapons now on the borders of Israel in the hands of the enemies of Israel. I will not quote those because they are widely known and have been mentioned by other briefers.

That leads to my next point, which I am anxious to make, regarding the potential destructive power of every single military-grade weapon in the wrong hands — the unthinkable destruction a single anti-aircraft weapon could have on the periphery of any European airport. We have all seen the tragic consequences of the brutal terror attacks at the Bataclan theatre in Paris in November 2015, where 130 innocent civilians died and 416 were injured. The attackers carried Zastava M70 assault rifles, which had been previously deactivated and reactivated for the attacks. The M70 is a Serbian copy of the Kalashnikov rifle, the most common weapon — now circulating in the tens or hundreds of thousands in Ukraine. It is a lethal and capable weapon — easy to use, easy to conceal and, in the wrong hands, capable of delivering catastrophic destruction and firepower.

Unfortunately, given the huge scale of saturation of Ukrainian society with such weapons, it is absolutely inevitable that significant numbers of those weapons have been and will continue to be sold on the black market to the highest bidders, particularly in a society racked by conflict, societal breakdown and the ensuing lawlessness that brings. It does not take vast numbers of weapons to cause significant civil strife and lead to severe local and potentially national escalation of conflict.

In my own country, British forces colluded with loyalist paramilitary gangs through the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s to terrorize and murder hundreds of innocent civilians over decades with relatively minuscule amounts of weaponry — actually less than hundreds of firearms. The Irish Republican Army was able to mount a serious threat to the British State itself with relatively small amounts of weapons and explosives. Thousands were killed and injured during a decades-long conflict sustained by a relatively small arsenal of weaponry. When the Irish Republican Army decommissioned its arsenal, it was found to have only 1,000 rifles, 2 tons of Semtex explosive and seven surface-to-air missiles. Yet that was enough to mount a sustained and significant threat to the British State.

As I have mentioned many times, more weapons were handed out over a period of days to civilians in Kyiv in the context of the Ukrainian conflict than these numbers themselves. They are absolutely minuscule, but they demonstrate the potential for a relatively small armed group on either side to exert disproportionate influence in any post-conflict period, which could lead to the collapse of any accommodation or agreement. It is the proliferation of those weapons that potentially could lead to decades of instability, not only in other parts of Europe and further afield, but in Ukraine itself.

Finally, and to wind up, I recently spent some time in the city of Belgorod, which has come under sustained attack from Ukrainian artillery and drones. I visited the town of Shebekino and a large displaced persons centre that the Government is providing to tens of thousands of ordinary civilians who had to flee their homes due to the indiscriminate shelling of civilian targets. I stood with an 83-year-old woman as she asked me what she had done to deserve a high-explosive Ukrainian drone to target her home in a civilian terror attack in Voronezh.

I saw those villages burning. I heard the artillery strike, and I have to tell the Council that weapons being supplied by NATO and its allies to Ukraine are being wilfully used to target civilian populations on a daily basis in Donbas, Lugansk, Belgorod — all miraculously invisible to the western media. It is incumbent on all here that have any influence to convey the reality of the conflict to their own people in order to avoid the increasingly dangerous spiral of escalation that leads us further towards the absolutes, at the expense of compromise.

I owe it to the men and women and children who I met in the conflict zones, with whom I had the privilege to speak, to convey the reality of increased militarization in the region. I urge the Council to seek accommodation and peace and to respect the democratic mandate of those who have expressed it. Settlement will come, and it is my absolute belief that it is up to those in Washington D.C. and London, now fuelling the conflict with endless escalatory military aid to Ukraine, to decide where and when that settlement occurs, either at the negotiating table or on the battlefield. In that connection, we have an expression in Ireland — he who pays the piper calls the tune.

The President: I thank Mr. Bowes for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Radchenko.

Mr. Radchenko: It is an honour to speak to the Council and to follow such eloquent presentations.

Russia is conducting a war of aggression against Ukraine, a terrible war that has already cost many tens of thousands of lives. Russia has resorted to indiscriminate bombing of civilians. Its troops have committed atrocities, including torture, rape and killing. Russia has violated the principles of the United Nations, which it helped craft at the end of the Second World War. Just yesterday, Russia's Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov, claimed in an interview that no one has ever sent him the list of rules for the rules-based international order. That list exists; it is called the Charter of the United Nations, and here is what it says in Article 2, paragraph 4:

“All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, or in any other matter inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations.”

The United Nations Charter was signed on 26 June 1945, in the wake of the most destructive war the world has ever seen — a war of those who sought to enslave the world by conquest and brutality against those who stood up against aggression, who fought shoulder to shoulder for their freedom and dignity.

In July 1937, after several years of gradual encroachment through the creation of various puppet State, imperial Japan invaded the Republic of China. The Japanese armies brutally fought their way across China. The Chinese Government appealed for international help and received it. None other than

Moscow provided China with hundreds of aircraft and even pilots who played a crucial role in the Chinese resistance effort, in particular in the Battle of Wuhan, in the spring of 1938. Were it not for Soviet and, later, American help, the aggressor would have triumphed, and China would have fallen.

After the Second World War broke out in Europe and German armies laid waste to neighbouring countries, the United States stepped up to the task, both by committing its troops and also, crucially, by providing Lend-Lease aid to those countries fighting against Hitler's aggression, including the Soviet Union. Between 1941 and 1945, the United States provided the Soviet Union with \$11 billion worth of aid, which is over \$200 billion in today's dollars — an amount second only to that provided to the United Kingdom. That aid included over 14,000 airplanes; 12,000 armoured vehicles, including 7,000 tanks; over 8,000 artillery pieces, including anti-aircraft weapons; over 400,000 jeeps and trucks and 197 torpedo boats.

Policymakers in Berlin may well have been concerned at the time that such an ambitious effort by the United States prolonged the war because it made it more difficult for Germany to defeat and enslave the Soviet Union. But it is worth reiterating that those supplies were the Soviet Union's lifeline. Without them, the Soviet Union would have most certainly been overrun by the Third Reich, the United Nations would never have won and Mr. Max Blumenthal and Mr. Chay Bowes would never have joined us today to tell us about the very heavy, completely unacceptable burden of supporting freedom. Why are we doing this, Mr. Blumenthal asks rhetorically. The answer is so that Mr. Bowes can come here and tell us how terrible it is to support a victim of unprovoked aggression, how terrible it is to help people under attack, how terrible it is to resist imperialist conquest.

I am a historian, and historians bring the past to the present in order to gain a better understanding of what the future may hold.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine is not a historically unprecedented development. Wars of aggression have happened before. Unprovoked invasions have happened before. They tend to have consequences, one of which is the tendency of the invaded party to resist the invader and ask for outside assistance. This idea was enshrined in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, which is a provision that sadly no one has shown to Sergei

Lavrov, and speaks of “the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence”. It is by that inherent right that Ukraine has turned to the world with a plea for help. It is by that inherent right that so many nations have contributed to Ukraine’s defence by sending much needed military aid. If anything, those nations have not gone far enough, for Russia continues to occupy internationally recognized Ukrainian territory posing a great threat to international peace and security.

The great Carl von Clausewitz, who incidentally served in the Russian army during the Napoleonic invasion of Russia, once noted that the aggressor “is always peace-loving”. That is, the aggressor would gladly invade its neighbours peacefully unless it will meet with organized resistance.

(spoke in Russian)

Clausewitz was right.

Russian complaints regarding external support for Ukraine do not detract from the following facts.

First, the Russian Federation invaded Ukraine on trumped-up reasons, not the opposite. Secondly, the Russian Federation continues to violate international law by waging a war of aggression against a neighbouring State. Thirdly, the Russian Federation is continuing to bomb Ukrainian cities, including Kramatorsk just yesterday, where the Russian Federation, by way of a missile strike, destroyed civilian infrastructure, specifically a restaurant, resulting in the death of innocent civilians, including three children. Fourthly, the Russian Federation has been so bold as to demand that the West not supply Ukraine with weapons to defend itself against a treacherous attack. Fortunately, the Security Council is capable of differentiating between truth and lies, between those defending themselves from aggression and those who wage wars of aggression, and between those who are truly peace-loving and those who are hiding behind lofty statements about striving for peace but actually think only of war.

The President: I thank Mr. Radchenko for his briefing.

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

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) *(spoke in Russian)*: At the outset, we would like to thank Mrs. Nakamitsu, Mr. Blumenthal and Mr. Bowes for their comprehensive briefings.

To Mr. Radchenko, I would say the following: let us not be hypocritical with regard to the rules-based international order. The rules-based international order is not the United Nations Charter; it is a set of rules thought up by a small number of countries — primarily Western countries — which are being then portrayed by them as universal. We fail to understand what is happening; whereas Mr. Blumenthal and Mr. Bowes spoke to the topic at hand, gave us useful details with regard to weapons supplied to Ukraine and the way they are being financed, Mr. Radchenko gave us a historical lecture, and we do not understand the reason for choosing him as a briefer.

As we just heard from our briefers — not all of them, of course — threats stemming from Western weapons being supplied to Ukraine are continuing to grow and multiply. It is happening as our former partners from the West continue to make incessant attempts to once again shift all blame for what is going on in Ukraine onto Russia, inconsistencies in the narrative they are promoting are obvious. Western countries are doggedly trying to make the international community forget that the crisis in Ukraine, just like Western arms supplies to Kyiv, began long before the special military operation. Thanks to revelations from a whole host of high-ranking politicians at the time, we know today that pumping Ukraine full of weapons and working to prepare it for war with Russia was planned and carried out for all these years, under cover of the Minsk accords, which were backed up by concomitant Security Council resolutions, although neither the Western countries nor Kyiv ever intended to implement such accords.

All the while, civilians in Donbas were subjected to mass shelling. Of course, Russia could not remain indifferent. Today, though, Kyiv’s Western patrons are trying to put a new spin on the state of affairs, saying that they only began to arm Ukraine when the special military operation began in order to repel the so-called Russian aggression. This scheme over the last 18 months has become something akin to a supporting a private military company called Ukraine, with weapons supplied by NATO, using mainly old stockpiles, its supplying countries financing their domestic military enterprises on the sly, with these companies making exorbitant profits, whereas the ones fighting and dying by the tens of thousands on the battlefield are Ukrainians. One of our briefers mentioned today that United States Senator Lindsey Graham told the head of the Kyiv regime during their meeting that this

scheme — and the resulting deaths of Russians — was the best money the United States ever spent in its efforts to help Ukraine.

Today the cumulative amount of military assistance the United States and its allies have provided to Ukraine is over \$55 billion. The fact that these weapons are being used to shell civilian infrastructure and are resulting in civilian deaths — and there is a great deal of evidence that that is the case — in no way ruffles the West, the so-called peace-loving West. Western countries are not only pumping the Kyiv regime full of weapons in an unbridled fashion, but they are also training Ukrainian forces and nationalist battalions on their own territories, providing intelligence to the Ukrainian army for target setting, and even approving strikes conducted with Western weapons.

Yet the Western countries are assiduously asserting that they are not involved in this conflict. They are supposedly neutral. Nevertheless, international law, including the provisions of the Hague Convention of 1907 and the norms of customary international law, which prohibit such actions by neutral States, are unequivocal. Commission of such acts means that these States must lose their neutral status and will become parties to an armed conflict.

As justification, our former partners are putting forward the following argument. They say that the Hague Convention of 1907 is supposedly terribly outdated. It is very strange to hear that from States whose military agencies are regularly updating and rewriting heavy tomes dedicated to the law and customs of war. These tomes include lengthy sections about the rights and duties of neutral States and invoke, *inter alia*, the norms set forth in these supposedly outdated conventions. Let me underscore that those publications do not contain doctrine. These documents are practical guidelines for army and navy commanders and call for the harshest measures to be taken in response to the violation of neutrality, including the use of force. The 1907 Hague Convention is an international agreement that remains in force; it has not been abrogated. Its main objective is to prevent the spread of armed conflicts, to prevent a growing number of States from being pulled into such conflicts.

Today that convention is more relevant than ever. After all, the collective West has proclaimed that its objective is to inflict a strategic defeat on Russia on the battlefield. Their madcap statements are accompanied

by equally irresponsible actions. We are tempted to call this playing with fire, but it is actually worse than that: in their militaristic frenzy, having become completely untethered from reality, the West is deliberately provoking a direct confrontation between nuclear Powers.

Another argument is based on branding our country the aggressor, as the General Assembly did in adopting the resolution at its eleventh emergency special session (General Assembly resolution ES-11/1). The United States has started a record number of aggressive wars in modern history, and yet it pompously proclaims that it is possible to help a so-called victim of aggression without losing its neutral status. Any self-respecting international lawyer would find such arguments laughable, and that has nothing to do with the fact that the West's support for these consensual conventions imposed by the collective West, faded as the real reasons for the Ukrainian crisis became obvious.

Neither is it that the United States and its satellites are the architects and main beneficiaries of the situation. The main issue is that, in principle, the General Assembly is not empowered under the United Nations Charter to determine that an aggression has occurred. Such qualifications are in violation of the provisions of the Charter and are nugatory *ab initio*. That means that the label of “aggressor” is not a legal qualification. It is in fact a political value judgment. Without legal foundation, everything that has been built on the so-called qualified neutrality argument simply crumbles.

If we are talking about value judgments and assessments, the aggressor is the one that organized a bloody pro-fascist coup in a country neighbouring ours by all means and methods available and moulded the resulting State into an enemy of Russia and of everything Russian — our history, culture, language, and even the Orthodox faith; it is the one that trained fighters, including vile neo-Nazi battalions, and supplied them with weapons long before February 2022, knowing all too well that those weapons would be used to kill civilians in Donbas.

In addition, the way that NATO — which Ukraine is so eager to join — is trying to portray itself as a purely defensive alliance sounds like an unfortunate joke given the extensive record of unprovoked and unjustified acts of military aggression involving that militaristic bloc.

The arguments of the Western legal doctrine according to which collective self-defence is supposedly being invoked under Article 51 do not stand up to scrutiny either. In that regard, there are two main issues.

First, we cannot recall the Council being notified of such an invocation, even though, according to the Charter, that should be done immediately.

Moreover, a statement of self-defence against Russia would be tantamount to a statement acknowledging being at war with our country.

What is even more interesting are the references to alleged countermeasures under international law. As we all know, such measures must meet the criterion of proportionality. But what kind of damage did Russia do to the United States or the European Union that would justify the killing of our citizens with Western weapons, the sabotage of the Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines and the terrorist attacks committed against prominent Russian public figures? Before it is too late, we recommend that the authors of such speculative constructions give some thought to this key question: what should Russia's countermeasures be in that case?

Today our former partners in the Council will most likely talk again about their commitment to settling the crisis in Ukraine. There is, however, a fact that would not fit into the narrative that the West is spreading. As early as in spring of last year, the head of the negotiating team from Ukraine had initialled a draft peace agreement in Istanbul. The President of Russia demonstrated that document publicly during a recent meeting with African leaders. However, since the Kyiv regime, under pressure from its Western sponsors, reneged on the agreement that had been reached and introduced a legislative ban on peace talks with Russia, it became clear that Western States are not interested in achieving a sustainable and lasting peace in our region.

Where does that leave us today? Last March, Western countries did not allow Ukraine to agree with Russia on peaceful coexistence and to become a neutral, non-aligned State posing no threats. Instead, they are arming the country in every way possible, in an insane expectation that Ukraine will be able to defeat Russia. The Western equipment being supplied to Kyiv is being destroyed on the battlefield, while the Kyiv regime and its sponsors have almost run out of Ukrainian and other old Soviet equipment.

Incidentally, today, just before our meeting, the Prime Minister of Latvia said that "Ukraine has already been integrated into NATO in terms of armaments". It is hard to disagree with that, because Ukraine is now only able to fight using the weapons it gets from the West and NATO. It has hardly any other weaponry.

Moreover, Mr. Borrell Fontelles, the beacon of European diplomacy, announced today that the European Union is considering turning the European Peace Facility into a defence fund for Ukraine. We would advise Mr. Borrell Fontelles, as we have done before, not to limit himself to half-measures and interim solutions, but to change the name of the European Peace Facility to the "European War Facility" immediately.

Ukraine has no weapons of its own left. But still there are Ukrainians being sent into battle like lambs to the slaughter as part of the so-called counter-offensive by the Armed Forces of Ukraine, referred to by Ukrainians as the "Zaporizhzhya meat grinder". The Kyiv regime's mobilization reserve has not yet run out — although it will soon come to that — but — and this is extremely sad — Ukraine's cemeteries are running out of space. And all that unnecessary bloodshed — which only Western countries want — is being imposed on Ukraine for the sole purpose of reporting at least some success at the coveted NATO summit to be held in mid-July. Then Western Governments will be able to assert that the huge sums of money being spent on Ukraine are not being wasted, and then new weapons will be sent there to eventually be destroyed on the battlefield just like the ones that Armed Forces of Ukraine have now. There is no measure of weapons supplies that will alter the balance of power. Most independent military experts already admit openly that the defeat of the Kyiv regime is only a matter of time — and a matter of the number of casualties that the Armed Forces of Ukraine will sacrifice completely in vain during that time. And only Western propagandists promote meaningless and empty slogans saying that Ukraine can win. In reality, they do not care in the least about the interests of Ukrainians. They only want to weaken Russia as much as possible.

Of course, our opponents still have in their arsenal high-profile staged terrorist attacks, which they try to pin on Russia, such as the events in Bucha or the destruction of the Kakhovka dam. God forbid they should dare to provoke an accident at the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant, which the Ukrainians continue to shell. That would kill and affect a lot of people across Europe. Today we circulated a letter as an official

document of the Security Council and the General Assembly, reiterating — amid the insane insinuations by representatives of the Kyiv regime — that we have no intention of blowing up the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant that we control, and that we urge the Secretary-General and the international community to influence Kyiv to refrain from provocations against the nuclear power plant.

That is roughly what the current situation looks like. And now, after the chance for peace was squandered last March at the fault of the United States and the European Union, the conditions for achieving peace in Ukraine will of course be different. I want to conclude with a quote from a highly respected and experienced European leader. Last week he literally said the following”

“Ukraine is no longer a sovereign State. It has neither money nor weapons. It can keep on fighting only thanks to the assistance being provided [by the West]”.

In that politician’s view, the only way to save Ukraine is

“for the Americans to start negotiations with the Russians, establish a security architecture and find a place for Ukraine in that new security architecture”.

There is not much to comment on in that regard. The good thing is that the bitter truth is finally beginning to reach Western leaders. Continuing to supply Western weapons to Ukraine will not lead to the outcome the West desires — which is to defeat Russia on the battlefield and inflict a strategic defeat on Russia. We would like our Western colleagues to realize that as soon as possible.

Mr. Hauri (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, for her briefing. We have also taken note of the other briefings. I will focus on three main points today.

First, Switzerland firmly condemns Russia’s military aggression against Ukraine. We reject all attempts to justify and distort responsibility for that act and its consequences. Through that act, Russia is seriously violating international law, in particular the prohibition of the use of force enshrined in Article 2 of the Charter of the United Nations. Ukraine has the right to ensure its security and defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Secondly, several Security Council resolutions prohibit weapons transfers originating from certain countries. Such transfers and the use of those weapons for targeted attacks on civilian infrastructure constitute multiple violations of international law. We call on all States to respect their obligations, including the relevant resolutions of the Council. We regret the heavy toll this war has taken on the civilian population. Switzerland calls for strict compliance with international humanitarian law. In the conduct of hostilities, the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution must be respected. We condemn any attack carried out in violation of those principles and reaffirm that those responsible for such acts must be brought to justice, and that victims must receive the necessary support for their physical, mental, social and economic rehabilitation.

Thirdly, General Assembly resolution ES-11/6 gives us a broadly supported basis for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine, in accordance with the principles of the Charter. We welcome the diplomatic efforts that are being pursued in line with those principles.

This war is causing immense suffering for the civilian population in Ukraine and increasing instability throughout the world, with unforeseeable consequences, including in Russia. We reiterate our concern about the intention to deploy nuclear weapons in Belarus. We once again call on Russia to de-escalate the situation, cease all its combat operations and withdraw its troops from the Ukrainian territory without delay so that a diplomatic solution to be pursued.

Mrs. Hackman (Ghana): At the outset, I would like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, for her informative briefing. We have also taken note of the other briefings.

It has now been 491 days since the Russian Federation launched its brutal and unrelenting war against Ukraine, bringing about untold suffering to innocent civilians, who now live under constant threat of harm to their lives. Apart from the immediate humanitarian crisis, the war has become an axis of renewed geopolitical tensions, with far-reaching implications for international peace and security in the region of Europe. Away from the battle zone, the war continues to negatively affect the global economy, with a persisting rise in food and energy prices and the tightening of international financial and monetary conditions.

As confirmed in the briefing to the Council last week (see S/PV.9357), the war now accounts for the displacement of some 10 million people and more than 24,000 civilian casualties. As the Council is often reminded, those numbers are likely to be higher, as they represent only those reported through official United Nations sources. There is no scarcity of evidence of the massive destruction that has been caused in many parts of the country. Homes, schools, medical facilities and transport, energy and other critical infrastructure are being destroyed at an alarming rate and in clear violation of the prohibitions against such actions under international humanitarian law. Presently, rescue efforts are continuing at the site of a missile strike on a restaurant in the city of Kramatorsk, where several people, including children, are reported to have been injured or killed.

As we know, violent conflicts, such as the one in Ukraine, create the conditions for the accumulation of weapons and their diversion from Government control to unintended recipients and conflict situations in other parts of the world. It is in that regard that, in previous discussions on the subject, my delegation has urged strict compliance with the Arms Trade Treaty and other international obligations designed to prevent the diversion or illicit transfer of conventional weapons.

It is important that, in maintaining international peace and security, Member States providing defence assistance to Ukraine should implement arms control measures at all stages of weapons transfer, including risk assessments, maintaining records, monitoring and tracking, as well as post-conflict arrangements for disarmament. Those measures are necessary to ensure that military support provided in the course of the war serve the singular purpose of strengthening Ukraine's capacity to assert its right to self-defence, in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

From the very onset of the war, Ghana has struggled to appreciate the various assertions provided by the Russian Federation as justification for its conduct in Ukraine. We also cannot reconcile any suggestions that efforts in support of Ukraine's legitimate use of force in the defence of its sovereignty and territorial integrity constitute an obstruction to peace efforts. The rules of international law and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations require States to interact on the basis of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and cooperation. All Member States, and more particularly the members of the Security Council, have an obligation to respect

and uphold the fundamental principles of sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity, which govern inter-State relations and provide the foundation for a stable international order. It is on that basis that Ghana continues to call for the cessation of hostilities and urges the Russian Federation to end the war through the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of its troops from the internationally recognized borders of Ukraine. We also reiterate the absolute necessity for all parties to refrain from targeting civilians and causing further harm to Ukraine's civilian infrastructure.

A large number of States Members of the United Nations, including the members of the Council, have taken a stand for peace in Ukraine and repeatedly called for a peaceful settlement, in line with international law and the core values on which our Organization is founded. Much responsibility now lies with the parties to extend themselves beyond their differences and return to the negotiating table in search of a comprehensive and lasting solution.

In a post-modern and globalized world where challenges that confront nations transcend physical and political boundaries, a purely inward-looking approach to security, which appears to be the case, may offer some temporary resolution but is unsustainable for the wider maintenance of our collective global security. We therefore encourage the intensification of diplomatic efforts in support of a constructive dialogue that could lead to a durable settlement between the two sides and in the interest of all others.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): I thank Under-Secretary-General Nakamitsu and Mr. Radchenko for their briefings. I would like to make three points.

First, the Government of the United Kingdom has been clear about the military support that it has provided for the defence of Ukraine. The bravery and endless determination of Ukrainians are their own, but we are proud to support them in their fight to be free. We are not just providing weapons. Approximately 17,000 Ukrainian soldiers have received training in the United Kingdom since the start of Russia's invasion. We will also support Ukraine when peace has been won to rebuild their country, as we did at the Ukraine Recovery Conference last week, where the international community made more than \$60 billion worth of commitments. Ukraine continues to need our support. For Ukraine, this is a war of survival; for Russia, this is a war of choice.

Secondly, let us remind ourselves how Russia has decided to fight its war of choice — the shelling of civilian homes; human wave attacks, ordered forward at gunpoint; atrocities left in the wake of its retreating forces; hundreds of civilians arbitrarily detained, more than 90 per cent of them reporting torture or ill-treatment by Russian captors. On Tuesday, Russian missiles struck a pizza restaurant in Kramatorsk, taking 10 more innocent lives. Among those killed in the attack were two twin sisters, Yuliya and Anna Aksenchenko. They were just 14 years old.

This week, the Secretary-General published his report on children and armed conflict (S/2023/363). Russia is part of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, and it knows that the reporting system in that regard is among the most rigorous used by the United Nations. The report is shocking. A permanent member of the Council is listed alongside terrorist groups, such as Al-Shabaab and the Islamic State, for committing grave violations affecting children in situations of armed conflict. Russian forces have been responsible for the killing, abduction and rape of children as young as 4 years old. Ninety times, Russian forces used children as human shields. Every Russian should feel shame about what their army has done in Ukraine. But the Russian army does not fight alone. Putin has poured tanks, rockets, anti-aircraft missiles and every kind of weaponry into the hands of unaccountable mercenary forces, recruited from the ranks of gangsters and convicts. A year ago, Russia denied the Wagner Group's existence. Now Yevgeny Prigozhin's rebellion has publicly destroyed Putin's case for the war in Ukraine. The Wagner Group's march to Moscow showed us just how quickly Russians can leave Ukraine when they choose to.

Thirdly, without a doubt, diplomatic efforts will be essential for peace, and we note the various ongoing efforts towards peace, including African leaders' recent visit to Kyiv and Moscow this month. The United Kingdom fully supports President Zelenskyy's 10-point peace plan. The only path to sustainable peace is for Putin to withdraw his troops and end the bloodshed now. We will continue to stand with the people of Ukraine as they win a just and sustained peace that respects Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, in line with the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. De Almeida Filho (Brazil): I thank Under-Secretary-General Nakamitsu for her briefing. I also thank the other briefers for their interventions.

Brazil shares the concern about the disruptive potential of arms transfers to conflict zones. Our principled position on the subject remains the same.

First, we recognize the inherent right of Ukraine and all Member States to self-defence. That principle does not exempt us from the obligation enshrined in Article 33 of the Charter of the United Nations to seek a peaceful solution to disputes through direct negotiations, conciliation, mediation and any other means that do not involve the recourse to arms.

Moreover, we have consistently asserted that the availability of arms and ammunition may become a long-term destabilizing factor and multiply threats to the security of civilian populations. In that regard, we must recognize the concrete risks of the diversion of military equipment to non-State actors, including criminal and terrorist groups.

Furthermore, we believe that the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) provides the means to curtail illegal transfers and to prevent diversion. It is essential to preserve accurate records and ensure the transparency of transactions. We encourage other Member States to take into consideration the provisions of the ATT when proceeding with their arms transfers.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for her briefing

Russia bears sole responsibility for this situation. It is Russia that, in violation of every norm of international law and in its a crude attempt to rewrite history, decided to attack a sovereign neighbouring country. No one other than Russia seeks to sustain the war against Ukraine. Russia could end it at any time by withdrawing its troops, which the International Court of Justice demanded over a year ago. Contrary to Russia's assertions, Ukraine has never represented a threat to either Russia's territorial integrity or Ukraine's Russian-speaking populations. Our position has been consistent: Russia's aggression must not, and will not, be rewarded, as it flouts the principles of the United Nations, trivializes the use of force and heralds a world in which States' sovereignty would depend solely on power dynamics.

Ukraine did not want war, and did nothing to provoke it. The war threatens the security of the entire European continent. That is why France, together with its partners, chose to resolutely support the Ukrainian people in exercising their legitimate right to defend their

sovereignty and territorial integrity, two core principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. We will continue to do so bilaterally and through the European Union as long as Russian soldiers are illegally on Ukrainian soil.

By concentrating our efforts on anti-aircraft capabilities, we are helping the Ukrainian people to defend themselves against Russian strikes against civilian infrastructure. Only two days ago, Russia targeted and struck a restaurant in Kramatorsk with a missile that left at least 11 people dead and 61 injured. Such systematic strikes against civilian infrastructure constitute war crimes. In recent weeks, we have stepped up our deliveries of weapons and ammunition, armoured vehicles, logistical support and training activities. By supporting the Ukrainian counter-offensive, we hope to put Ukraine in a strong position to create the conditions for credible negotiations leading to a just and lasting peace.

In order to hide its responsibility, Russia is seeking to divert attention by deferring to the analyses of the so-called experts whom we heard today. At the same time, in order to support its aggression, it is buying Iranian combat drones and launching them against civilian infrastructure; it is also secretly buying missiles and munitions from North Korea, all of which it is doing in violation of the relevant Security Council resolutions. Some of those weapons are being used in the field by militias financed by the Russian State. Russia is beginning to assess today what its choice has cost itself. It is reeling from the instability that it has caused.

The aggression has had catastrophic repercussions for Ukraine and for the whole world. But it is also a dead end for Russia, which must realize that our support for Ukraine will not waver and that there is only one possible outcome: achieving a peace in line with the Charter that respects Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Mr. Biang (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her informative briefing. We listened attentively to Mr. Blumenthal, Mr. Bowes and Mr. Radchenko.

After 16 months of war, Ukraine remains immersed in an unprecedented spiral of violence. The war has led to terrible human suffering and a humanitarian situation with devastating consequences. Against that backdrop, the food and energy crises are the making of the prospect of achieving lasting peace even more remote.

According to the most recent report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 24,862 civilians have been killed and 1,000 health facilities have been attacked; and, according to UNESCO, 260 sites have been damaged. Both sides' announcements of offensives and counter-offensives give reason to fear a more serious toll in terms of loss of life and mass-scale population displacement.

The recurrent attacks carried out by the warring parties against the Zaporizhzhya power plant raise the risk of a nuclear catastrophe, while, at the same time, the consequences of the destruction of the Kakhovka dam, as a source of ecological, human and economic insecurity, continue to loom. My country condemns the use of all forms of weapons with indiscriminate effects targeting civilian populations and infrastructure, including remote-controlled weapons that unnecessarily inflict suffering on populations and serve to further terrorize them.

My country reiterates its support for the Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency and calls on the parties to respect the five principles guaranteeing nuclear safety and security. We are opposed to any politicization or trivialization of the nuclear issue. Nuclear power plants are civilian infrastructure protected by international humanitarian law. Diplomacy must prevail over the mindset of force and the proliferation of weapons, which will fuel escalation of the conflict.

My country calls on the warring parties to facilitate safe and unhindered access for humanitarian aid to all areas in need.

In conclusion, we reiterate our call for de-escalation and good-faith negotiations to end the war in Ukraine.

Mrs. Frazier (Malta): I thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing, and the other briefers for their contributions.

Today's meeting was requested by the Russian Federation to condemn the increasing supply of weapons to Ukraine. This is the sixth time that the Council is convened on this issue in an attempt to deviate the focus from the appalling acts and violations of international humanitarian law that Russian forces are perpetrating in Ukraine. As observed by other Council members, these meetings serve one purpose only: for Russia to cynically try to justify its unprovoked aggression against Ukraine.

Despite those distractions, we must not lose sight of the reality on the ground. The reality is that, on 24 February 2022, the Russian Federation — a permanent member of the Council, which is entrusted with safeguarding international peace and security — decided to invade its neighbour. It was Russia's decision to illegally exert the use of force and the devastation that has come with it. The end of the war depends upon Russia and what it decides to do next. The same goes for the prospects for peace. In the meantime, Ukraine has a legitimate right to defend itself from the aggressor, as enshrined in Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations.

Malta's position remains unchanged. Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders must be fully safeguarded.

The grave humanitarian crisis generated by the full-scale invasion of Ukraine should remain in focus. Nearly one third of Ukraine's entire population has been displaced, with 5.9 million people internally displaced and more than 8 million people — mostly women — forced to flee. That has increased their risk of sexual and gender-based violence, while facing perilous health conditions.

Equally, we are alarmed by the high number of grave human rights violations, which include killings and maiming, abductions, rape and other forms of sexual violence against children, as well as attacks on schools and hospitals, perpetrated by Russian armed forces. We are also alarmed by the systematic mistreatment of Ukrainian prisoners of war and civilian hostages by Russia in the temporarily and illegally occupied territories of Ukraine and in Russia. We demand the immediate release of all individuals unlawfully deprived of their liberty.

We call on all parties to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law. The result of Russia's aggression against Ukraine is not only impacting nearly 18 million people in Ukraine, but it is also having ripple effects all over the world.

In conclusion, Malta stresses once again the overwhelming necessity for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine as a matter of utmost priority. The Security Council has the duty to distinguish between the victim and the aggressor and recognize Ukraine's right to self-defence. Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity must be fully upheld.

We urge the Russian Federation to halt hostilities, withdraw its military forces and proxies from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders and embrace constructive dialogue and diplomacy as the means to establish lasting peace, security and stability.

Mr. Kumanga (Mozambique): Mozambique wishes to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Nakamitsu, and all the other briefers for their insightful briefings today.

The war in Ukraine, with its deteriorating humanitarian consequences, has been increasing in intensity. That is happening despite the efforts of the international community at large to bring an end to the conflict, which has claimed thousands of human lives and destroyed economic and social infrastructure. The conflict is of our common concern. It poses a serious threat to international peace and security.

It is our considered view that the continuation of the armed conflict and violent confrontation in Ukraine is not the answer — it is not in the interests of the parties, or those of the world community. In that connection, we call on the parties to the conflict to take responsibility for protecting civilians and to ensure compliance with applicable international law and international humanitarian law.

Mozambique wishes to reiterate its call for an immediate cessation of hostilities and a return to direct negotiations between the parties as a matter of urgency and with full respect for the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant Security Council decisions.

Mr. Ishikane (Japan): I thank Under-Secretary-General Nakamitsu and the other briefers for their briefings.

Russia requested this meeting to discuss the issue of increasing supplies of weapons to Ukraine and their implications on diplomatic efforts to resolve the Ukraine crisis. It seems to focus on supporters of Ukraine in the current tragic situation, but we must not lose sight of the root cause.

Japan has to repeat its basic position: it is Russia that initiated the unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine. We therefore underscore Ukraine's right to self-defence against aggression. Arms are provided to Ukraine so that it may defend itself. The international community is lending its support to Ukraine in order to stop Russia's aggression and to maintain international peace and security. By contrast, no nation should support Russia's aggression.

Japan has expressed its position on the transfer of unmanned aerial vehicles from Iran to Russia. Moreover, we are concerned by reports of arms transactions between Russia and North Korea. Any transaction of arms with North Korea is a violation of the relevant Security Council resolutions and should be condemned. Japan is closely monitoring related developments.

Any efforts aimed at a diplomatic solution to end the war should be based on justice. We all know the indisputable fact, as stated by the overwhelming majority of the General Assembly, that Russia's aggression is a clear violation of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations. Japan is not convinced by the argument that the efforts to support self-defence deter diplomatic efforts to end the aggression.

Let me pose a question to all members: if a neighbouring country launched a war of aggression against their homeland and occupied their territory, then argued against diplomatic efforts to end the aggression, what would be the response? For most sovereign States, such an argument is unacceptable.

Instead of linking support to Ukraine and various diplomatic efforts, Russia must withdraw all of its troops and military equipment from Ukraine and respect Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

Mr. Hoxha (Albania): I thank Under-Secretary-General Nakamitsu for her briefing, and Mr. Radchenko for his insights.

We express our disappointment at the time wasted by having two persons with exactly identical positions, pretendedly to lead the Security Council, mislead it with militant views. Sugar-coating an act of aggression with native English speakers will never make it more digestible. It will not succeed in enforcing a narrative that was false from the very start, remains insincere and has now been totally discredited, even by those who are partners in crime. Last Friday, Yevgeny Viktorovich Prigozhin — who needs no introduction — described the invasion of Ukraine as “a racket carried out by a corrupt elite”.

It has been said many times and we cannot but reiterate it — when a sovereignty country, an independent nation, is attacked without a shred of justification; when people are killed in their homes, hospitals, schools and kindergartens, including at a restaurant in town, only to satisfy an insatiable imperial

appetite; and when a United Nations member is being destroyed, causing mayhem to the country, the region, the continent and the world, condemnation is not good enough. Recalling the principles of the Charter of the United Nations is good, but not good enough. Calling for the war to stop while droves of missiles and illegally acquired drones destroy civilian infrastructure is good, but not good enough. There is need for more. There was — and still is — an urgent need to help Ukrainians work courageously, defending their freedom and their right to be themselves; to defend their land, homes and families; to make sure that the United Nations Charter is not reduced to mere paper, but has a meaning and a purpose.

That is exactly what many countries have been doing and will continue to do. I challenge our colleagues of the Russian Federation to point to a single article in the United Nations Charter, to a single line in any United Nations resolution or any piece of international law that would justify their aggression. They will not do so, for the simple reason that it does not exist. Instead, I can direct them to Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, which provides a very clear legal basis for individual State to offer whatever assistance necessary to a country exercising its inherent right to self-defence in securing its sovereignty and territorial integrity. And that is a big difference because there is one aggressor and one victim, which makes “both-side-ism” for ending the war meaningless and absurd. It is crucial to recognize that one side initiated the conflict and therefore it bears the responsibility of putting an end to it. That side can be easily identified. It has consistently been condemned by 143 members of the General Assembly.

There is yet another big difference. The arms transfers to Ukraine have been conducted in accordance with the national legislation of the countries concerned, the Arms Trade Treaty, the obligations arising from those acts and an assessment of the risk of diversion. Under-Secretary-General Nakamitsu just confirmed that these transfers are open data. An ad hoc commission established by the Ukrainian Parliament is responsible for monitoring the entire process so that weapons are used for defence purposes and do not fall into the wrong hands.

Meanwhile, Russia, a permanent member of the Security Council, is using weapons illegally acquired from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Iran, openly and blatantly violating what it has been entrusted to uphold — the Security Council resolutions that they themselves have adopted.

A knife is a knife; it all depends on what it used for. There are weapons to defend life, and there are weapons to kill innocent civilians, including children having dinner at the pizzeria in Kramatorsk. Russia will therefore not succeed in shifting the responsibility of the war to others — to Ukraine, as it pretends or to other countries, as it propagates. Let us not forget that everything we are talking about, including the supply of arms to Ukraine, is not the cause. It is just the consequence of the Russian aggression.

We have continuously raised concerns about the consequences of this war for Ukraine, Europe and Russia itself. Last week I said that the war is changing many things (see S/PV.9357), including Russia — and unfortunately not for the better. The dramatic events of last weekend only reinforced our concerns. Among other things, they revealed that the war of choice of Russia is not a one-way path. Actions always have consequences. And whatever the reasons, the dynamics and their finality, internal developments in Russia sent tremors beyond its borders — because what was intended to be the Swiss knife of the Russian military was morphed into a Frankenstein-like monster that turned against its very creator. Those hours of total chaos in Russia revealed many things. The world press and media are full of various analyses, but there is something worth pointing out, something that we knew and was denied — the Wagner Group, the stamp of cruelty in Ukraine and in many parts of Africa, is simply a Russian tool, 100 per cent financed by the Government, per the words of the President Putin himself. The emperor has no clothes. Therefore, the games of who could be deadlier and bloodier in Ukraine was a false competition. It was an inner struggle for money and power at the expense of poor soldiers and innocent civilians.

Let me conclude with a final remark. The recent developments in Russia offer another insight worth mentioning. Faced with the prospect of bloodshed in power rivalry, everybody rushed to make a deal, including by pivoting 180 degrees and renouncing their own words. The main reason for such deals was to not spill Russian blood. It is very puzzling that this reasoning does not apply to those they call their brothers, the Ukrainians. That is why the political, humanitarian and military support for Ukraine must and will continue — because despite what we hear from Russia and their supporting briefers, Ukraine is right and Russia is wrong. The first shoe has been dropped. Freedom will win because it always does, and aggression will lose.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing today. Her continued leadership to counter weapons diversion has been indispensable.

As we have repeatedly stated in the Council, it is categorically false for Russia to allege that the international support for Ukraine's legitimate self-defence support provided by over 50 countries somehow constitutes a threat to international peace and security. That is a transparent and clumsy attempt by Russia to rewrite the very plain facts of this conflict. Let us be clear — it is Russia's full-scale war of aggression and its invasion of a sovereign neighbour, in violation of the Charter of the United Nations, that poses the threat to international peace and security, and it is from Russia's full-scale war of aggression that Ukraine is defending itself.

Russia's familiar effort to try to divert our attention through false, ever-changing allegations and disinformation is painfully obvious. Just consider one example — the issue of Russia's support for the Wagner Group. For years now the Council has heard the Russian representative repeatedly deny any connection between the Russian State and the Wagner Group. On Tuesday, the Russian representative insisted to the press outside of the Chamber that the Wagner Group is just a private military company and "detached from the Government". But this week, President Putin finally nakedly admitted that the Russian Government fully finances the Wagner Group, providing almost \$2 billion from State coffers in the past year alone. Putin said:

"I want to point out and I want everyone to know about it — the maintenance of the entire Wagner Group was fully provided for by the State. From the Ministry of Defence, from the State budget, we fully financed this group."

Russia has demonstrated time and time again its willingness to abuse its position on the Security Council to purposefully promote falsehoods and disinformation. We regret that Russia continues to deliberately misguide the international community, including through this meeting today. Just remember that in the lead up to its further invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, Russia's leadership denied it had any plans to send troops into Ukraine, even while it amassed forces on Ukraine's borders. It is Russia's ongoing brutality against Ukraine's people and its campaign to destroy Ukraine's infrastructure that has rallied the international community to Ukraine's aid, both

in support of its sovereignty and territorial integrity and in respect for international law. It is Russia's irresponsible nuclear rhetoric and its planned stationing of tactical nuclear weapons on the territory of Belarus, which is complicit in Russia's aggression against Ukraine, that risk further aggravating an already dangerous situation. The overwhelming majority of States Members of the United Nations have repeatedly made those positions clear. The United States and more than 50 Member States have answered Ukraine's call to support its self-defence against Russia's aggression and we will continue to do so for as long as it takes.

These weapons are not prolonging the conflict. The Kremlin bears that responsibility alone. These arms are preventing further brutalization of Ukraine's citizens amid the Kremlin's onslaught. This point must not be forgotten.

Russia's unrelenting and ruthless attacks on Ukraine and its people, and the all too familiar stream of false allegations to which Russia subjects us, are just further demonstrations that President Putin has no interest in meaningful diplomacy. Only two weeks ago, leaders from several African nations, members of a peace mission bound for Kyiv and Moscow, were forced to shelter in bunkers during their visit to Kyiv as Putin reigned missiles on that city. What clearer indication could we be given of the Kremlin's utter disrespect or disinterest in peace or a diplomatic resolution to Putin's war of choice?

No one wants this war to end more than Ukraine and its people. But as overwhelmingly articulated by members of the General Assembly, the conditions for a just and lasting peace must be rooted in international law. This includes Russia demonstrating a meaningful interest in ending this war and upholding the principles of the United Nations Charter through action, and not just empty words.

It is Russia, in violation of resolution 2231 (2015), that has procured hundreds of drones from Iran and then deployed them in attacks, killing civilians in Ukraine. If Russia had any genuine desire for de-escalation, it would simply withdraw its troops from Ukrainian territory and end its invasion. Instead, we see increased hostilities and brutality, waves of missiles wreaking havoc across Ukraine, and dangerous nuclear rhetoric.

We are committed to ensuring Ukraine has the ability to exercise its right to self-defence against Russia's illegal and brutal war, while working with Ukraine to maintain the highest safeguards that ensure the weapons its partners provide are not diverted into unintended hands. We will

continue to stress accountability, as we have from the beginning of this conflict, and continue to ensure robust processes to counter attempts at illicit diversion.

Throughout this conflict, Ukraine has been a transparent and willing partner in those efforts. By helping Ukraine and neighbouring States account for and safeguard arms and ammunition during transfer, in storage and when deployed, strengthening border management and security in Ukraine and in neighbouring States, and building the capacity of relevant Government agencies to deter, detect and interdict illicit trafficking of certain weapons, we are taking concrete steps to address threats posed by the potential diversion of weapons.

As we have said on many occasions since the beginning of this crisis, if Russia is serious about bringing an end to this conflict, it can simply withdraw its troops from Ukraine and end its war illegal war of aggression. We once again call on Russia to do so, and to do so now.

Mr. Pérez Loose (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu, for her briefing. I also listened carefully to the briefings of the other briefers. I acknowledge the presence in the Security Council Chamber of the Permanent Representative of Ukraine.

This is not the first occasion on which the Council has addressed the issue of the challenges posed by the supply of arms in the context of Russia's military aggression against Ukraine. I will therefore reiterate what I have already consistently said in the Council in the course of this first half of 2023.

First, I must insist on Ecuador's position of rejecting armed violence, militarization and weaponization. This position goes together with our recognition of the right of peoples to legitimate self-defence, in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations, including Article 51.

Secondly, the provision of defence equipment and systems, including anti-aircraft systems, contributes to reducing the destruction of infrastructure and the number of civilian casualties, when used appropriately.

Any supply of arms or ammunition must be subject to guarantees of respect for the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution at the time of their use and must not be made without observing and increasing the standards of marking, registration and traceability, with priority being given to the protection of civilians

and the objective of global stability over any other logic, be it industrial, or in terms of production or distribution. Likewise, the supply of weapons must uphold the purposes of security and protection and not be carried out for the mere purpose of testing new offensive equipment in the theatre of confrontation.

We urge States that have denounced the invasion and participate in the supply of arms for the defence of Ukraine's territorial integrity to further strengthen their controls to prevent spare parts, parts and components, including electronics, from their own industries ending up fuelling the war efforts of the occupying army, particularly in the production of artillery, missiles and other weaponry. We further reject any transfer of materials that contravenes Security Council provisions, such as resolution 2231 (2015). All these measures can help prevent the diversion, spread and escalation of the conflict and are key to post-conflict recovery.

In this very Chamber, I have time and again reiterated our ongoing concern at the challenges to peace, security and stability posed by the large-scale inflow of arms and ammunition in any situation of armed conflict. I have also stressed the seriousness of placing arms in the hands of mercenaries and groups operating outside international law. A few days ago, we observed how the so-called private army, the Wagner Group, was putting even Russia's own stability at risk. We once again call on Russia to definitively stop the already prolonged invasion of Ukraine, which continues to cause too much destruction and claim too many lives, and to comply with the ruling of the International Court of Justice.

Finally, we advocate the peaceful settlement of disputes and reiterate the duty of States Members of the United Nations to settle their international disputes by peaceful means, pursuant to the United Nations Charter, which is the first thing transgressed by a country that attacks, invades or attempts to annex territories of another country by force. We must move from the logic of domination of one State over another, past the diplomatic logic of the nineteenth-century colonial Powers or of the European dictatorships of the twentieth century, to the diplomatic logic of international law, as framed in General Assembly resolution ES-11/6, on the principles of the United Nations Charter, underlying a just and lasting peace in Ukraine.

We recognize and encourage the intensification of diplomatic efforts that seek to re-establish dialogue so

as to move towards that much desired peace and avoid drawing the world into a wider war.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Under-Secretary-General and High Representative Izumi Nakamitsu and the other briefers for their briefings.

Since the outbreak of the Ukraine crisis, there have been incessant massive flows of weapons and equipment onto the battlefield, with steadily increased variety and quantity and greater lethality and destructive power. As a result, the spillover effects and proliferation risks are on the rise. At the same time, since the very beginning, this crisis has led to mounting civilian casualties and devastation of civilian facilities in conflict areas. Black swan and grey rhino incidents have occurred thick and fast. The situation on the ground has become increasingly brutal, dire, dangerous and unpredictable. We find that deeply concerning. In the current situation, what the world needs is a ceasefire — and not pumping weapons onto the battlefield. The world needs dialogue and negotiations, not escalated fighting. The world needs peace talks, not camp-to-camp confrontation.

In recent months and weeks, we have seen a growing number of countries putting forward peace proposals. The voice for peace talks has been growing stronger. We hope that the parties concerned will respond positively to the international community's rational call for them to remain calm, exercise restraint, refrain from escalating tensions and engage more closely to forge consensus with a view to securing and creating the conditions for a final settlement of the crisis.

On the issue of Ukraine, China's consistent position has been that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries should be safeguarded, the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations should be complied with and the legitimate security concerns of all the parties should be respected. All efforts, as long as they are conducive to the peaceful settlement of the crisis, deserve our support. China has consistently maintained its engagement with all the parties concerned in the Ukraine crisis, actively encouraging and facilitating peace talks. We stand ready to work with peace-loving and justice-upholding countries around the world in order to maintain our positive and constructive role in promoting a political settlement of the Ukraine issue.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United Arab Emirates.

I thank Under-Secretary-General Izumi Nakamitsu for her briefing, and I welcome Ukraine's participation in today's meeting.

As we have stated repeatedly in the Chamber, it is vital to safeguard weapons during their transfer, storage and deployment. And, in particular, we wish to echo the High Representative's call for vigilance against the risks of their diversion. We continue to urge all the parties to take concerted steps, with responsibility and transparency, to mitigate the risks associated with arms transfers in that context. And we call on the Security Council to ensure uniform compliance with all its relevant resolutions.

For 16 months, this war has devastated Ukraine. It has killed thousands, displaced millions and inflicted billions of dollars of damage to critical infrastructure. A generation of families is forever changed. Children are growing up with the trauma of living under constant bombardment. Fathers are on the front lines instead of at home. Mothers are seeing the responsibility to provide both sustenance and security fall disproportionately on their shoulders.

Ukraine's fertile fields, which only recently fed hundreds of millions around the world, have transformed into battlefields, criss-crossed by hundreds of kilometres of front lines, marked by trenches reminiscent of the First World War and a terrifying display of the capabilities of the most advanced military technologies of this century. While this may be a European war in terms of geography, it is most certainly a global concern.

Outside the theatre of war, Europe is again threatened by the dynamics that once divided it into two rival camps. Political, economic, social and cultural links — optimistic bonds of community that once brought the continent together at a time of great promise — are being progressively and almost irreparably unwound. Such a decoupling will have profound implications for the future of Europe, and around the world.

The war's impact on the global economy and on trade in commodities, energy and food has been discussed extensively in the Council and other forums.

Today we contend with the once unthinkable, but now tangible, prospect of a nuclear disaster.

Countries around the world are affected every day by this war and its consequences, with no diplomatic reprieve on the horizon. At the same time, the world

must contend with an impaired post-pandemic economic recovery and debt crisis. The multilateral system is weighed down with divisions and polarization at precisely the moment when it needs to rise up and meet the existential challenge of climate change and create a blueprint for the sustainable development agenda and economic growth. A constant call echoes from every corner of the globe in support of a peaceful resolution to this conflict.

Member States have kept the faith with the Charter of the United Nations, and therein lies our hope and a blueprint for what happens next. In large majorities, countries have repeatedly voted for an end to this war that preserves Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. It is time for a serious effort to that end. We cannot afford repeat cycles of approaching the precipice of disaster only to walk back at the very last moment. Too much is at stake.

To that end, the United Arab Emirates strongly urges a cessation of hostilities throughout Ukraine and the vigorous pursuit of a just and lasting peace. Only by abiding with the Charter will the end of this conflict enshrine an inclusive and stable security architecture for Europe. Only by abiding with the Charter will the end of this conflict preserve sovereignty as the foundational building block of our open and cooperative international order, for the benefit of all of us.

We are under no illusions of the difficulty of the diplomacy required to end this war. But the countries with the most ability to influence the future course of events are seated around this table. We are in no need of further reminders of the consequences of the alternative.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to make a few comments in response to some of the talking points made today on the alleged shelling of a pizzeria in Kramatorsk.

The following is a statement from Russia's Ministry of Defence.

"On 27 June in the city of Kramatorsk, in the Donetsk People's Republic, a high-precision strike was carried out on the temporary deployment point of the 56th Motorized Infantry Brigade of the Armed Forces of Ukraine [a point that, I might add,

included the hotel located there as well]. The attack neutralized two generals participating in a staff meeting and up to 50 officers of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, as well as up to 20 foreign mercenaries and military advisers.”

There is no need to comment on that.

Let me turn now to the comments made about the Wagner Group. Today a number of delegations attempted to refer to last week’s events in Russia. Of course, those are our internal affairs. Nevertheless, I will say that the leadership of the Russian Federation took exhaustive measures to address the situation as swiftly as possible, while avoiding any large-scale destabilization in the country, as well as a lot of bloodshed and threats to the civilian population. The illegal actions of the mutineers were strongly rejected by Russian society, demonstrating its responsibility for the fate of the country and its solidarity in support of the country’s President, as well as its immunity to external and internal challenges and the futility of the attempts by Russia’s enemies to take advantage of the situation to weaken our country. We would like to note that many friendly States responded to the events and expressed their support and concern for us. Some of the assessments made by Council members today were brimming with regret about the fact that those events did not turn out the way they wanted them to — that they did not result in a mutiny in Russia. And that could not have been the result, as we can now see, although they and their underlings in Kyiv were hoping for that very much and monitoring the events with bated breath. And of course, they were severely disappointed.

As for the poisonous insinuations made by the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, they were brimming with lies and classic British clichés, especially regarding the methods of warfare, as well as the so-called kidnapping of children and the alleged use of those children as human shields and the inclusion of those allegations in the Secretary-General’s annual report on children in armed conflict (S/2023/363), in addition to other allegations. We will respond to those in due course, and that will conveniently happen to be during the United Kingdom’s presidency of the Security Council in the month of July.

The representative of the United States has once again been lying unabashedly about a number of things, including the air strikes allegedly targeting Kyiv during the visit of delegations from Africa. That was refuted

not only by us, but also by the African delegations themselves who visited Kyiv, who described what happened as a staged provocation.

I would like to add that, in order to put an end to the war, Kyiv’s United States masters must give such an order to their vassals in Kyiv. If no orders are given, that can mean only one thing. The United States has no need or desire to put an end to the conflict. It is interested only in prolonging the conflict as it waits to inflict defeat on the Russian Federation, and preferably, as the representative of the United States said, a strategic one. Let me say that that day will never come.

Last but not least, I would again like to thank Mr. Blumenthal and Mr. Bowes for their very sobering and informative assessments. The truth they share is not welcomed by some in the Chamber. We would like to apologize for the actions of those colleagues who attempted to turn their briefings into profanation.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

Mr. Kyslytsya (Ukraine): I recognize the representative of Putin’s regime in the permanent seat of the Soviet Union.

Today he has again described to us what the “way out” should look like, according to Russia. In a nutshell, it is a situation in which Russia has enough weapons to attack Ukraine any time it so decides, while Ukraine has no weapons to defend itself. In reality, it would mean that bloody attacks such as Tuesday’s missile strike on Kramatorsk, in the Donetsk region, could happen on a permanent basis, without any hindrance. Twelve killed, including 3 children, and 60 wounded — that was the outcome of a Russian missile hitting a local restaurant in the city centre. By the way, what source of information is more authoritative and reliable on that strike than the Russian Ministry of War?

The Russian armed forces do not tire of proving the validity of the Secretary-General’s decision to list them and affiliated armed groups in his annual report on children and armed conflict (S/2023/363). That is exactly the list on which the Russian army belongs after all the horrible crimes it has committed and continues to commit daily against children in Ukraine. And it is not because Ukraine receives weapons that three young girls were killed by Russia in Kramatorsk, but because Russia still has weapons and remains willing to kill. I urge those who seem to be concerned about weapons transfers to conflict zones not to forget the difference between the aggressor

and the defender who fights to survive. At the same time, I cannot but note that the issue of illicit arms trafficking in and out of Russia appears to be more than pertinent and timely following this weekend's events in Russia.

On numerous occasions, including in the Chamber, Ukraine has drawn the attention of the United Nations community to the security threats stemming from the Russian practice of recruiting people with criminal backgrounds for proxy armed formations and equipping those formations with a whole range of conventional weapons, thereby helping them to evolve into de facto parallel armies. That was the case with the infamous Wagner Group, known for its crimes in the Middle East, Africa and Ukraine. While operating there, the Wagner Group used weapons that were not subject to any control mechanisms, including internal Russian ones.

For decades, Russia has multiplied crises throughout the world, while trying to hide its responsibility behind such proxy structures. Finally, Russian aggression has incrementally started returning to its home harbour. It turned out that Russia, which so generously labelled other nations as failed States, showed the failure and incapability of its own governance, starting from the highest level.

The whole world witnessed the paralysis of the authorities when armed mercenary units easily crossed the State border of the Russian Federation; when they took the city of Rostov-on-Don, of more than 1 million people, without a fight; when they advanced with little resistance towards the Russian capital, shooting down Russian aircraft and helicopters from modern anti-aircraft missile systems along the way. Saturday's events also highlighted that the safety and security of weapons arsenals on Russian territory are easily compromised by Wagner-like armed formations. There are several lessons that the international community should draw from those events.

While proving its inadequacy by continuing the war against Ukraine with no chance of success, Putin's regime also demonstrated that it is no longer capable of controlling its own country. Saturday's advance on Moscow was stopped only by the decision of the Wagner chief, following the engagement of Belarussian dictator Lukashenko.

Putin's regime has been built on lies and hypocrisy. For years, Putin lied that the Wagner Group had no affiliation with the Russian Government. At his press conference with the then German Chancellor Angela Merkel in January 2020 about the presence of the Wagner Group in Libya, Putin said,

“If there are Russian citizens there, they do not represent the interests of the Russian State and do not receive money from the Russian Government”.

At a press conference with French President Macron in February 2022 about the activities of the Wagner Group in Mali, Putin said,

“Regarding Wagner, as I have already said, the Russian Government has nothing to do with it”.

And this week, Putin confessed that the Wagner Group was fully funded by the State and had received Rub86.3 billion, which is equivalent to \$1 billion, from the State budget between May 2022 and May 2023. One third of Russian regions have annual budgets that are smaller than that amount. In addition, the Russian Government allocated Rub110 billion — that is approximately \$1.29 billion — for insurance payments for Wagner Group fighters. Those expenditures do not include the equipment and weapons that were generously given to the Wagner Group all these years.

Putin's confession revealed not only the habit of lying to everyone everywhere. The case of the Wagner Group, which has been a product of the Kremlin from the very beginning, also showed that Putin and his cronies are not reliable or predictable, even one step ahead. The regime continues to pose an existential threat not only to its neighbours and other regions of the world, but also to Russia itself.

Putin's regime will only keep degenerating, while generating new crises and threats, until it finally collapses. The international community should therefore address the Russia crisis as one of its priority tasks. I reiterate that the military defeat of Russia in Ukraine, accountability for the crimes committed and international control over the Russian military arsenal should be the necessary elements of the resolution of the Russia crisis.

Ukraine continues to do its best in order to survive and stop the evil. We are grateful to all responsible nations that support us, including by supplying the necessary weapons. Their use has been an element of Ukraine exercising its inherent right to self-defence under Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations for a noble goal — to restore respect to the United Nations Charter. In the meantime, we call on the Security Council to keep an eye on the Russian crisis and to take the necessary steps to address many imminent threats and challenges that that failing State poses to the world.

The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.