



## Arria-formula Meeting on 'Children and Armed Conflict: Ukrainian Crisis. Evacuation Children from Conflict Zone', 5 April 2023

Malta Statement delivered by Ms Justine Micallef, First Secretary  
Permanent Mission of Malta to the United Nations, New York

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### Chair

Malta views today's meeting as a blatant misuse of the Arria format. Russia's choice of speakers is an affront to the members of the Security Council and the international community, and another clear sign of its complete contempt for the United Nations.

Just two weeks ago, the Security Council voted against the participation of Ms Daria Morozova, who was presented as a so-called representative of the 'Donetsk People's Republic', at one of its meetings. Despite this clear rejection, today Russia retaliated by imposing two so-called representatives of the DPR.

We recall UN General Assembly Resolution ES-11/4 and strongly reaffirm our commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity, and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders. The attempted annexations by Russia are illegal and have no validity under international law. Our presence today is purely to counter Russia's disinformation and should in no way be interpreted as recognising any such altered status. An arrest warrant has been issued by the ICC against a third briefer.



These are the people who, in Russia's view, and I quote from the concept note, are able to offer '*objective information on the situation of children in conflict zones in the Donbas*'.

## Colleagues

Russia's aggression against Ukraine is having devastating and long-lasting consequences on Ukrainian children and their families, many of whom have been forced to flee their homes and seek safety elsewhere.

UNICEF estimates that roughly half of those displaced are children. Many are unaccompanied or have been separated from their families, leaving them even more vulnerable to violence, exploitation, and abuse.

Children have been uprooted, their schools and medical facilities closed, destroyed, damaged, or used for military purposes. Their physical integrity and well-being are constantly threatened by the ravages of conflict. The long-lasting impacts on their physical and mental health will also be severe.

Convening an Arria-formula meeting and misusing it to spread disinformation about this chilling humanitarian tragedy is cynical and deplorable.



The facts are clear. Over the past year, Ukrainian children have been subject to forced transfers and deportation to Russia, or areas under Russian control. In its latest report, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine concluded that these transfers and deportations violate international humanitarian law and amount to war crimes.

As the Commission recommended, Russia must provide reliable and comprehensive information about the number and the whereabouts of all children that have been transferred within or deported for whatever reason.

Effective communication between children and their families must be facilitated without delay. Furthermore, children must be promptly and proactively returned to Ukraine in accordance with their best interests and with international obligations, using technical assistance from international organisations. Moreover, Russia must prevent any further transfers within, and deportation of, children from Ukraine.

In this context, we also take note of the ICC's decision to issue an arrest warrant against Ms Maria Lvova-Belova, the Commissioner for Children's Rights in the Office of the President of the Russian Federation. It was issued for the alleged criminal responsibility for the war crime of unlawful deportation and transfer of Ukrainian children from occupied areas of Ukraine to Russia.



Last year, Malta was one of the State Parties that referred the situation in Ukraine to the ICC. On this occasion, I underline Malta's full support for the work of the Court. We welcome and encourage further efforts to ensure full accountability for war crimes and other serious crimes in connection with Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. We are firm in our belief that such crimes must not go unpunished, and that perpetrators must be held accountable.

Colleagues

To conclude, Malta reaffirms its commitment towards the Children and Armed Conflict agenda, which remains a priority during our Council term and an integral part of our foreign policy. Our focus is to strengthen the Council's resolve to end and prevent violations against children affected by armed conflict, which we take seriously.

Malta also reiterates its call on the Russian Federation to immediately cease its hostilities, to withdraw all its forces from Ukraine, and to respect the UN Charter and uphold its obligations, not least under the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

I thank you.