



Security Council briefing on the Maintenance of Peace and Security of Ukraine, 8 September 2023

Malta Statement delivered by Her Excellency Ambassador Vanessa Frazier
Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations, New York

Thank you, President, and I thank ASG Jenča for his sobering briefing.

Two weeks ago, while commemorating Ukraine's independence we deplored again Russia's relentless and ruthless aggression against Ukraine: a war of choice by Russia that is illegal and in defiance of everything this Organisation stands for.

We yet again had to condemn Russia's actions which blatantly threaten and undermine its neighbour's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We reiterate clearly that Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine is illegal, unjustified, and unprovoked. This is a war initiated by a Permanent Member of this Council that is entrusted with the maintenance of international peace and security. This Permanent Member of the UNSC continues to cause death, destruction, and immense human suffering.

Just two days ago, we have witnessed yet another instance of brutal Russian tactics aimed at terrorising Ukraine's civilian population. This time, a missile attack on a market in Kostyanynivka in the Donetsk region killed 17 people and injured dozens more.



President

Today, as we once again place the spotlight on these issues, we also reaffirm Ukraine's right to determine its own future. We deplore Russia's holding of sham elections in the occupied territories of Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson. We stand with Ukraine and its people in defending freedom and independence.

These elections are illegitimate and illegal, and will not be recognised by the international community. They undermine the UN Charter and constitute a threat to the international system. We recall that last October the overwhelming majority of UN Member States in the General Assembly condemned the 'illegal annexation' of the four partially occupied regions and 'reaffirmed the sovereignty, independence, unity, and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders'.

These elections further confirm that Russia has no intention to engage in meaningful discussions towards a solution to the war, nor is it willing to return the territories it has illegally invaded. We stress yet again that any elections held by Russia in the temporary occupied territories are illegitimate.



Russia's full-scale war of aggression has brought incommensurable suffering and destruction to civilians. We remain fully committed to ensure that it is held accountable for its acts, including its practice of forcible deportation of Ukrainian children, which amounts to war crime, as concluded by the UN Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine.

Women and girls continue to face extremely high risks of gender-based violence. There are credible, consistent, and widespread reports of grave human rights violations including torture and conflict-related sexual violence. Malta condemns these barbaric and illegal acts and urges Russia to immediately cease these actions. Regardless of the context, international humanitarian law and international human rights law must be upheld.

President

Russia's actions have far-reaching consequences that go beyond the war in Ukraine. Its politicisation of humanitarian aid, including through its unilateral withdrawal from the Black Sea Grain Initiative, has had a tremendous negative impact on the most vulnerable communities around the world. It has also created uncertainty on global markets, increasing prices, and exacerbated the dire situation of food importing countries.



The initiative also ensured access to grain to the World Food Program. Such weaponisation of food is simply unconscionable. It is crucial to restore the Black Sea Grain Initiative as soon as possible.

Russia did not stop at withdrawing from the initiative. Soon after, it proceeded to carry out attacks against Ukraine's grain storage facilities and port infrastructures, including in the Danube. Targeting civilian infrastructures is a violation of international humanitarian law, and we strongly condemn it.

In closing, Mr President, we emphasise that the international community has repeatedly expressed its desire to reach a just and lasting peace in Ukraine, in line with the UN Charter. Any initiative in this regard must be based on full respect for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

We urge Russia, once again, to end its aggression and to immediately and completely withdraw all its forces and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine.

I thank you.