



Security Council briefing on Maintenance of Peace and Security of Ukraine, 15 March 2024

Malta Statement delivered by Ms Francesca Gatt

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Thank you, President. I also thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo for her comprehensive briefing.

As we have stated before, Malta deplores Russia's violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We recall that the General Assembly condemned the organisation by the Russian Federation of illegal so-called referendums and the attempted illegal annexation of the Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk and Zaporizhzhia regions of Ukraine in 2022. Similarly, as from 2014, the General Assembly called on States not to recognise any alteration of the status of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.

Russia's planned presidential elections in these regions this weekend, and the reported mail voting processes taking place in some areas since 25 February, further manifest this violation of international law. We reiterate our call on Russia to respect the principles of the UN Charter, and to reverse these illegal plans.



Holding such elections grossly violates the Constitution and legislation of Ukraine. They have no validity under international law, and do not form the basis for any alteration of the status of Ukraine's territories. We will not recognise either the holding of these so-called "elections" or their results.

There have been also reports of Russian officials carrying ballot boxes from house to house in Zaporizhzhia, implementing intimidation tactics, as well as pressuring Ukrainians who have not done so to take up Russian citizenship.

We condemn these acts, including illegal referendums, illegal population census, forcible change of the demographic structure of the population, and the eradication of national identity.

President

We deplore the loss of life and suffering, especially in the temporarily occupied territories. The inhabitants of these regions have been subjected to violations of their human rights and basic freedoms.



International monitoring mechanisms, such as the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine and the United Nations Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, have confirmed Russia's breaches of international humanitarian law and international human rights law inside Ukraine.

These violations encompass attacks targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure, systematic summary executions, instances of torture and ill-treatment, inhumane detention conditions, cases of rape, sexual and gender-based violence, as well as the forced transfer and deportation of children. All are unacceptable. We recall our demand to the Russian Federation to comply with its obligations as an occupying power under international humanitarian law.



President

Finally, Malta expresses its determination to continue working together within the International Crimea Platform to address the challenges stemming from Russia's temporary occupation of Crimea. We recognise the need to continue implementing the policy of non-recognition of the illegal annexations by Russia.

We cannot accept a world where these principles and rules are violated with impunity. We cannot accept a world in which might is right. We cannot accept a world where nuclear threats are the norm. We support Ukraine in the exercise of its inherent right of self-defence, and to regain full control of all occupied territories within its internationally recognised borders.

The only path to a comprehensive, just, and lasting peace is for Russia to immediately, completely, and unconditionally withdraw all its troops and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine and respect its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

I thank you.