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Seventy-seventh year

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Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Lord Ahmad/Dame Barbara Woodward	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
<i>Members:</i>	Albania	Mr. Hoxha
	Brazil	Mr. Costa Filho
	China	Mr. Dai Bing
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Gabon	Mr. Biang
	Ghana	Mr. Agyeman
	India	Mr. Tirumurti
	Ireland	Mr. Flynn
	Kenya	Mr. Kimani
	Mexico	Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez
	Norway	Ms. Juul
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	United Arab Emirates	Mr. Abushahab
	United States of America	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield

Agenda

Maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine

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

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine

The President: I give the floor to the Russian Federation.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): In connection with the adoption of the agenda of today's meeting, which sounds like us maintaining peace and security in Ukraine, we would like to make the following statement.

As we have informed you, Madam President, in the context of our work, we are not against adding this item to the agenda of the Security Council. However, seeing that its authors have attached all kinds of topics to it, including women, children and education, we conclude that it covers all kinds of aspects of the situation in Ukraine, and is therefore in essence universal in character. In this regard, we think that it would be a good idea to delete two other items pertaining to Ukraine from the agenda of the Security Council, namely, the letters from Russia and Ukraine dating from 2014 (S/2014/264 and S/2014/136, respectively), which reflects common sense as well as the current situation.

Bearing in mind the foregoing, we call on the current presidency of the Council to take the necessary procedural steps to formalize adding the new agenda item and deleting the two older ones. We expect that this should be done well at an early date so that future presidents of the Council will not have problems in the coming months on agreeing on the Council's programme of work.

The President: Would any other Council member like to speak on this point?

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): As we have made clear to members of the Security Council, including the Russian Federation, the meeting under today's agenda item was proposed without prejudice to the agenda items in relation to the 2014 letters, specifically, the 2014 letter from the Ukrainian Permanent Representative (S/2014/136) and the 2014 letter from the Russian Permanent Representative (S/2014/264).

While the scope of the situation in Ukraine has grown far beyond the circumstances in 2014, it is important to recognize its history, and it is possible that Member States will wish to focus on Crimea during future meetings. Accordingly, against this backdrop, the earlier agenda items must remain in place.

I now ask that we continue with the meeting.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I think perhaps we were not understood correctly. We are not against having meetings continue on the items the United States representative mentioned in relation to maintaining international peace and security in Ukraine. We simply expressed our comments and hope that they will be taken into account.

The President: Are there any further comments on this item?

There being none, we shall proceed.

It is my understanding that both the Ukrainian and Russian letters from 2014 (S/2014/136 and S/2014/264, respectively) are on the list of items of which the Council is currently seized. I understand that the process for removing items is normally governed by the Security Council's latest note by the President (S/2017/507) on its working methods and usually takes three years. If there are no other views on this matter, given the split views that we have heard, I propose that we discuss the issue separately and seek to agree a way forward in the coming days.

In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Germany, Poland, Romania and 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: Ms. Sima Bahous, Executive Director of UN-Women; Mr. Manuel Fontaine, Director of the UNICEF Office of Emergency Programmes; and Ms. Kateryna Cherepakha, President of La Strada-Ukraine. Ms. Cherepakha is joining today's meeting by video-teleconference.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Bahous.

Ms. Bahous: I thank Ambassadors Thomas-Greenfield and Hoxha, for calling for this meeting,

and I thank Ambassador Woodward for convening this briefing during the United Kingdom presidency of the Security Council.

At the outset, I want to express my solidarity with all Ukrainians women, girls, men and boys — those who have left for safety and those who have stayed. My heart goes out to all the families that have lost a loved one. This war must stop, and it must stop now.

I returned last night to New York from Moldova, where the consequences of the senseless war in Ukraine were stark. Moldova has rightfully been described as a small country with a big heart. Despite the fact that the country continues to reel from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and while its people remain determined to achieve their national development priorities, they have opened their borders and homes to those fleeing the shelling and guns in Ukraine, the majority of whom are women, children and the elderly. An estimated 95,000 Ukrainians are being hosted in country to date, with thousands upon thousands more in transit since the war started.

At the different temporary shelters that I visited in Moldova, exhausted, anxious, fearful and tearful mothers shared their worries about the future of their country, daughters, sons and families. A young girl from Odesa, Tatyana, told me that her city is beautiful. She has a dream to become a doctor and saw her studies abruptly interrupted by the necessity to flee. In an act of determination and resilience, she and her colleagues are continuing their schooling online, also with the help of their teachers. Tatyana is determined not to let the war disrupt her dream. Vitaliy, a young boy of maybe seven, told me about his sleepless nights, as he worried about his father, who was left behind to patrol the streets in their hometown.

I witnessed buses full of women and children arrive at the Palanca border crossing, tired, weary and fearful. There, they were met with dignity and compassion by volunteers from civil society organizations, many of whom we, as UN-Women, support. I heard from women's civil society organizations how they adapted their work overnight, going from grappling with two emergencies — COVID-19 and the energy crisis — to a third. They were able to work with the Government to ensure that basic needs were met, and services provided. They are doing that without specific humanitarian-response training.

At their request, UN-Women is supporting them in that adjustment, and UN-Women is acting on its coordination mandate, working with the refugee response team and civil society partners to ensure that the gendered nature of the crisis is addressed with a gender-sensitive response. That includes providing services with a focus on protection and addressing the increased trauma and psychosocial support needs that are so starkly in evidence.

The trauma associated with young women having left their homes at night and families that have been separated and are living in constant fear of the future is destroying a generation. We must continue our support, but, most importantly, we must continue all efforts to advance peace.

I condemn in the strongest possible terms the recent attack against the Kramatorsk train station, which also killed civilians and United Nations civil society partners. The people killed at the train station are like the people whom I met at the border: women, children and the elderly looking for safety. Humanitarians are not a target. Civilians are not a target.

We are increasingly hearing of rape and sexual violence. Those allegations must be independently investigated to ensure justice and accountability. The combination of mass displacement, the large presence of conscripts and mercenaries and the brutality displayed against Ukrainian civilians has raised all red flags. The Security Council will hear more on that from the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict on Wednesday.

A war of this magnitude affects the world far beyond the borders of Ukraine. I also heard from the Government in Moldova and the border police about the need for increased support to monitor border crossings. The risk of human trafficking is increasing as the situation becomes more desperate. Young women and unaccompanied teenagers are at particular risk. I call on all countries to increase their efforts to combat trafficking and commend all the host countries for their collaboration on that and on prevention. I equally call on all countries to support Moldova and others with increased resources for police forces so that they can ensure support for victims of gender-based violence and trafficking. A gender-sensitive and survivor-centred response must be at the heart of all humanitarian action.

Through all the aforementioned horrors, women continue to serve and lead their communities and support

internally displaced persons in Ukraine. Women make up 80 per cent of all health-care and social workers in Ukraine, and many of them chose not to evacuate. We have seen the women members of Parliament continue to fulfil their duties in the Verkhovna Rada, while bombs were falling around Kyiv. We have also seen the Deputy Prime Minister engaged in the humanitarian response. I have also seen Ukrainian women refugees in Moldova working in the shelters and taking on roles to support one another.

Women's organizations within Ukraine have not stopped working, adjusting their work to meet the immediate needs of the populations they serve. They do so at great risk to their own lives. They were there before the war, they remain there during the war, and they will be there to pick up the pieces afterwards. I salute their courage and steadfastness. They need our continued support.

The Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund is already supporting several women's organizations on the front lines in Ukraine and Moldova to aid displaced women and girls, including shelter, medication, food and psychosocial support, including to women and girls living with disabilities or HIV/AIDS. The fund is also providing institutional support for these organizations to sustain them. With the Council's help, we can do much more.

Without fail, every Ukrainian man, woman and child I met had one dream: to be able to return home. However, as I heard yesterday, many do not have homes to go back to.

I call on the Council to continue to use all avenues for peace. From UN-Women's own rapid gender analysis, we know that women are asking to be part of the solution. I heard from women in shelters that they, too, are taking on leadership roles and supporting refugee responses in the host countries. Many of them are in touch with other women, their friends and families, who are supporting internally displaced persons in Ukraine.

We know from experience that women's participation makes response and recovery more effective and sustainable, and women's organizations are uniquely qualified to help not just women but other marginalized and vulnerable groups. It is vital that they be consulted and engaged in all decisions related to the crisis response and to peace. They need to be seen

not only as victims but also as agents and leaders of change, which they are.

The Security Council has adopted 10 resolutions calling for women to be meaningfully involved in any decisions or negotiations about peace and security, and we know that women's involvement is both a right and an opportunity for better outcomes. That is especially important in a war that has so starkly illustrated gender-based differences. Let us not lose sight of that. I have seen first-hand the impact that women's leadership can have.

Yet women are largely absent from any current negotiation efforts. We ask the Security Council, all Member States and our development and humanitarian partners to ensure the meaningful participation of women and girls, including from marginalized groups, in all decision-making processes, be they with respect to peace, diplomacy or humanitarian undertakings. Failing that, we will not have peace, development or human security.

To conclude, we strongly echo the Secretary-General's repeated calls for peace, an immediate cessation of hostilities and the withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukrainian territory.

Tatyana, the young girl from the shelter in Moldova, must be supported and enabled to pursue her medical degree and to be a part of the future of her country. The war must stop. It must stop now.

The President: I thank Ms. Bahous for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Fontaine.

Mr. Fontaine: First, I would like to express my appreciation to Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield and to Ambassador Ferit Hoxha for having convened today's meeting. I would also like to thank Ambassador Woodward and the United Kingdom for hosting this briefing during that country's Security Council presidency.

I have just returned from a mission to Ukraine, and I must say that in my 31 years as a humanitarian, I have rarely seen so much damage caused in so little time. Friday's attack on Kramatorsk train station was particularly horrifying. The station has been a critical route for thousands of families fleeing Donetsk oblast, an area that has seen some of the war's worst violence and destruction. When the station was attacked, it was filled with families desperate to escape the mounting

violence. I note the tragic irony that our teams were actually off-loading life-saving humanitarian supplies only a kilometre away when so many lives were taken by that needless act of violence.

The attack on Kramatorsk station is unconscionable, and yet it is just one of many instances in this war where we have seen a blatant disregard for civilian lives and international humanitarian law. Inside Ukraine, children, families and communities are under attack. Of the 3.2 million children estimated to have remained in their homes, nearly half may be at risk of not having enough food. Attacks on water-system infrastructure and power outages have left an estimated 1.4 million people without access to water in Ukraine. Another 4.6 million people have only limited access.

The situation is even worse in cities such as Mariupol and Kherson, where children and their families have now gone weeks without running water or sanitation services, a regular supply of food or medical care. They are sheltering in their homes and on the ground waiting for the bombs and violence to stop. As of yesterday, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights verified that 142 children had been killed and 229 injured. We know that those numbers are likely much higher. Many of them were caused by crossfire or the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

I met one of those children in an intensive care unit in the hospital ward of Zaporizhzhya. Vlad, a 4-year-old, was shot twice in the stomach as he was escaping with his family from a contested area. Although still unconscious, Vlad is expected to live, unlike so many others. All the systems that help children survive are also under attack. The hostilities have damaged or destroyed hundreds of residential houses. Attacks on hospitals, health-care facilities and medical equipment and the killing and injuring of health-care professionals are making it even harder for people to access emergency care, basic health care and medicine.

Hundreds of schools and educational facilities have been attacked or used for military purposes. Others are serving as shelters for civilians. Nationwide school closures are impacting the learning and the future of 5.7 million school-age children and 1.5 million students in higher education. In the Donbas region, a whole generation of children have already seen their lives and education upended during the past eight years of conflict.

We applaud the efforts of the authorities to ensure the continuity of education. However, that can be only a temporary solution. Lessons from the pandemic show the importance of children learning in school with their peers and teachers.

I met families in Zaporizhzhya that told me that they had wanted to stay in their homes but were forced to flee when the shelling and violence became too much. Thousands of others are now trying to leave before the fighting closes in around them. They face further dangers along the way besides crossfire and explosive remnants. In just six weeks, nearly two thirds of all Ukrainian children have been displaced. They have been forced to leave everything behind: their homes, their school and often their family members. I have heard stories of the desperate steps that parents are taking to get their children to safety and children being saddened that they are unable to get back to school.

A social worker told me a story about parents who were forced to send their children with a truck driver just to get them away from the line of fire. Such unaccompanied children, of course, are at much higher risk of violence, abuse, exploitation and trafficking. Women face a particular risk. We are extremely concerned by increasing reports of sexual violence and other forms of gender-based violence. Fortunately, there has been an outpouring of support from neighbouring countries to welcome refugees. The solidarity expressed for Ukrainian refugees has been a very, very welcome development, one that surely should be replicated globally for all seeking protection and asylum, no matter where they come from.

UNICEF and our partners are doing everything we can. Inside Ukraine we continue to face extremely difficult operating conditions. We have seen some progress in recent weeks with our teams and supplies able to reach Sumy, Kharkiv and Kramatorsk, among others. But that is not enough. Ongoing hostilities prevent us from reaching those most in need in many areas of the country. We saw that last week in Kramatorsk, when our teams were actually forced to stop offloading supplies and had to evacuate to safety following the nearby explosions.

We are also helping local authorities to identify and register unaccompanied and separated children. We are providing families with much-needed humanitarian cash assistance and increasing awareness to minimize the risk of explosive ordnance. In Zaporizhzhya, I

visited a reception centre set up by local authorities, run mostly by women professionals, for displaced persons to access health and psychosocial services, have a warm meal and rest temporarily. Those services are critical, but they are not the solution. Many of those who were able to flee early have been able to find sanctuary in other countries. It is not clear how those who are being displaced now will actually fare. They have been exposed to violence for longer and have fewer resources at their disposal. Resources are already overstretched, and local residents live in a state of uncertainty as the sound of air raids and warnings from local officials are heard regularly, reminding them that the front lines may soon reach them, too.

I am particularly concerned about the widespread presence of explosive remnants of war, which expose children to the risk of death and horrendous injury. Eastern Ukraine was already one of the world's most mine-contaminated stretches of land, even prior to the recent escalation. That reality is rapidly extending to other parts of the country.

We are also carefully monitoring the health, rights and dignity of women and girls, as the risk of exploitation and abuse grows. We continue to reiterate the need to ensure that children who have been separated from their families and live in institutional care are protected and that every effort is made to obtain caregiver consent and the approval of authorities before such children are evacuated or relocated.

In closing, I would like to express how proud I am of our United Nations teams, both inside Ukraine and in neighbouring countries. The work that they do is indispensable. I would also like to salute the remarkable resilience of Ukrainian doctors, nurses, teachers and social workers, especially women, who have been at the forefront of the response. I was personally deeply impressed by the care that they provide to children and families. I visited an underground maternity ward in Lviv that is staffed 24/7 by a team of tireless women, assisting births amid air raid alerts.

Local women's organizations are mobilizing grass-roots networks to care for the most vulnerable, even in the darkest of circumstances. Their courage and commitment are a light in the dark. Most of all, I would like to entreat all those with the power to end the war to actually use that power. The lives and future of millions of children hang in the balance.

The math is simple. Every day that the war continues, children will continue to suffer. As humanitarians, Council members can count on us to continue our work, but there is only so much we can do. It is time to end the war. Ukraine's children cannot afford to wait.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Cherepakha.

Ms. Cherepakha: Today I have the honour and responsibility to speak and testify, as a representative of one of the civil-society organizations that stand for the protection of the independence and freedom of Ukraine from invasion by Russia. These organizations consolidate their efforts at the national, regional and community levels with the State, individuals, men and women, adults and children. They provide assistance that help save the lives of civilians, often the most vulnerable. They collect evidence and the testimonies of the survivors of war crimes committed by Russia in Ukraine. They do so to document them and help to bring justice.

I speak as a women's rights activist, a specialist, a mother and, since 24 February, a displaced person. With the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia, the whole population of the country is under threat. Women and children, as always happens in wartime, are the most vulnerable. In my presentation, I would like to focus on four aspects related to the impact of Russia's aggression on women and children.

Women and children make up the majority of internally displaced persons and refugees who left the country in an attempt to survive. Often, they become vulnerable to the risk of gender-based violence, exploitation and trafficking. Very often, during evacuation, even with clearly marked signs announcing that they are civilians and unarmed, carrying children, they are brutally killed by Russian troops.

Russian strikes hit a railway station in Kramatorsk, where civilians, mostly women, children and the elderly, were waiting for a train to evacuate them. In a city where our colleagues, women's rights activists, put so much effort into promoting the spirit of resolution 1325 (2000), Russian strikes hit maternity wards, children's hospitals and kindergartens and the theatre building in Mariupol, where women and children sheltered, despite the clearly marked signs warning that children were inside, visible from the sky. It is a city that has

always connected us with sisters and colleagues from the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts.

We have received calls from women in Mariupol informing us about the forced deportation of civilians, including unaccompanied children, by Russian troops to Donetsk and, further afield, Russia. It is being called an evacuation. Women have been deported under the threat of being raped and killed. Women in local administration and self-government bodies are also exposed to threats of being kidnapped, tortured and killed.

The head of the village of Motyzhyn, in Kyiv oblast, Olha Sukhenko, was found dead, together with her husband and son, after being taken by Russian troops who occupied the village. They were severely tortured and killed because she stayed with her community and performed her duties, organizing support, medicine and food for people. The deputy of the Zaporizhzhya oblast administration, Leyla Ibragimova, was kidnapped from her home. The director of a kindergarten in Kyiv oblast, Larysa Osypenko, was killed by the occupiers because of her profession. The Russian troops said, “You should not raise Nazis”. This tragic list of crimes committed by thousands of ordinary Russian soldiers, claiming that they did not know where they were, can be continued.

Women are important actors of peace and security in Ukraine, and their contribution during the war is truly incredible. Together with activists, volunteers and journalists, they have also become the target of the occupiers. Ukrainian volunteer Yulia Payevska, who for many years saved the lives of people in occupied Russian territories in eastern Ukraine, was captured by Russian troops while organizing assistance for civilians in Mariupol. A video shows that she was forced to ask that a solution be found to the situation. At this time, there is no information about her condition or current whereabouts.

Women prisoners of war are exposed to torture, including sexual violence. They are undressed in front of groups of males, harassed and shamed. Two female journalists were kidnapped in Zaporizhzhya oblast and another was killed near Kyiv while performing their professional duties.

Women and girls are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence and rape during wartime. A number of incidents and cases have already been reported. Unfortunately, that is just the tip of the iceberg. Many survivors remain under threat to their life. They remain

in occupied territories and are cut off from assistance, connection and everything else.

We receive calls to the national hotlines operated by La Strada-Ukraine. Today there have been nine reported cases of rape by Russian soldiers in the temporarily occupied towns and villages, involving approximately 12 women and girls — children. Reports are coming in from Kyiv, Kherson and Chernihiv oblasts from the survivors themselves and witnesses. The women and girls were raped by a group of occupiers multiple times in front of their family members and other people. The lives of the survivors, their children and family members were threatened. These are real cases, real people and real facts.

We see people who are extremely traumatized, in fear for their life and not ready to talk about what happened. Those who somehow manage to escape to a safer place are too traumatized to report what happened. They need support and therapy and time to recover first. We know that many of those cases will hardly, or even never, be disclosed, unfortunately, as many of those who suffered have already been killed by Russian invaders. We know and have seen these things, and we want Council members to hear our voices telling them that violence and rape are now being used as a weapon of war by Russian invaders in Ukraine.

At the same time, the war also shows the important role that women play as they stand up for Ukraine in the process of restoring peace and strengthening and developing the country and its democracy. We do not want the Council to look at us only as the victims of the Russian military aggression. Women in the peace and security sector — volunteers, activists, journalists and human rights defenders — are an integral part of progress and development in Ukraine. We have knowledge, skills, expertise and strength, but we need to be saved and protected now.

We call on all members of the Security Council, international institutions and Governments to stop the war and demonstrate their solidarity with concrete and practical actions to find and use the tools necessary to stop the Russian aggression and ensure that their decisions are not blocked or ignored. We call on members to ensure the security of the children, women and men of Ukraine.

The President: I thank Ms. Cherepakha for her briefing and for joining us today.

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

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): We are honoured by your presence here with us today, Mr. President, and are thankful to the United Kingdom for leading today's debate.

I thank our briefers from UN-Women and UNICEF for their remarks and for the work that their teams are doing on the ground. I, too, visited Romania and Moldova and saw their teams on the ground working with vulnerable people. And I would especially like to thank Ms. Cherepakha for being with us today and for sharing the voices of women and children in Ukraine. She is the first civil society breifer that we have had brief us on this issue in an official Council meeting.

When men such as President Putin start wars, women and children get displaced, women and children get hurt, women and children get raped and abused, and women and children die. Since the start of Russia's unprovoked war against Ukraine, Russia has bombed orphanages and maternity hospitals. We have seen mass graves with dead children stacked on top of each other. On Friday, a train station being used for civilian evacuations, mostly women and children, was struck by a Russian missile. Reporters from *The Washington Post* saw at least 20 dead, including children. Limbs and luggage were scattered everywhere. A maimed dog shivered next to one of the dead. According to the reporters, a large piece of missile on the scene had chilling words written on the side. In Russian it said, "for the children". That is what Russia's war looks like. What is happening to women and children in Ukraine is horrific beyond comprehension.

When I was in Moldova and Romania, I saw with my own eyes some of the human toll of Russia's brutal war. I met with a few of the 11.6 million people who are now displaced from their homes, representatives of the largest refugee crisis in Europe since the Second World War. The mass displacement includes over half of all of Ukraine's children — half of Ukraine's children have left behind their homes, their schools and often at least one of their parents.

Meanwhile, 90 per cent of refugees from Ukraine are women and children, and, as our briefers made clear today, being a woman or a child adds additional risk. Women in Ukraine are at an increased risk for gender-based violence, including rape, sexual assault and sexual exploitation. We know that anyone at risk

before a war is at a heightened risk of being targeted for physical and sexual violence during a war, and that includes women and children, religious and ethnic minorities, LGBTQI+ individuals and people living with disabilities.

The Deputy Mayor of Ivankiv told reporters that some girls are cutting their hair short in hopes of avoiding rape by Russian troops. Family separations leave girls in particular at increased risk for sexual exploitation and trafficking. We have heard sobering reports of traffickers targeting women as they seek protection abroad. All of that is why the United States initiative, Safe from the Start, calls on all humanitarian actors to prioritize resources and programmes to address gender-based violence from the onset. Given everything we know about gender-based violence in conflict and the accounts we are hearing, we cannot wait for a lengthy assessment. We should not hold up resources with the excuse of incomplete data. This is an active crisis that grows worse by the day. We need to start interventions immediately to prevent and respond to gender-based violence now.

For the United States, the humanitarian efforts that it is funding in and around Ukraine lift up networks for survivors of gender-based violence in the country and in neighbouring countries. We are supporting programmes for child protection as well as for advocacy. We will continue to support our partners in these efforts. For example, we are highly supportive of UNICEF's mobile child-protection teams, and we are working in conflict zones, such as Ukraine, to deliver life-saving supplies and provide emergency social-work services.

Those horrific acts also remind us that we must support efforts to prevent them from happening in the first place, which means ensuring that women's voices and rights are always respected and elevated. And it means ensuring that abusers against them and against children are held to account. There must be pathways to healing and access to justice for survivors.

Finally, I want to remind us all that women are far from passive victims in this war. As we just heard from the Executive Director of UN-Women, women are playing critical leadership roles in Ukraine to address the impact of the war. Some women are valiantly defending their homes, their communities, their country — including many women who have been serving in the Ukrainian military since 2014. Others are protecting their families and their children,

bringing them to safety. And still others are the ones supplying food and shelter, water and medicine to those in need. Women are the ones who will get Ukraine through this humanitarian catastrophe, and women must be consistently and meaningfully involved as active participants and leaders in securing long-term sustainable peace.

When I met with women in Moldova and Romania, they all had different stories, but they all had the same dream: to return to a peaceful Ukraine where they have a say in their own and their children's future. Let us ensure women are a robust part of that peace process, and let us hope that the day they have dreamed of comes soon.

Mr. Hoxha (Albania): We thank Lord Ahmad for presiding over this meeting, which testifies to its importance and timeliness.

The Russian aggression has not stopped. It continues to cause undue pain and suffering to 44 million people who did not ask for it. The relentless brutality and destructive force of the actions of the Russian army against civilians and vital civil infrastructure in Ukraine is catastrophic. Unspeakable crimes have been committed, and each day the various pieces of the horror puzzle — grisly images of bodies charred or run over by tanks; mass graves, torture chambers, and interceptions confirming that Ukrainian prisoners of war had been shot dead after being interrogated by Russian soldiers; playgrounds riddled with bullet holes, and kids' shoes scattered among the rubble of a school in ruins — are falling into place.

Everyone is suffering in Ukraine, but the situation is particularly devastating for women and children. That is why we called for today's meeting, and what we heard from the briefers, whom I thank, is appalling. We were very pleased to listen to Ms. Cherepakha, and all accounts coincide. We just do not yet know all the horrible details.

Hundreds of thousands of women have been forced to flee their homes. Others are fighting bravely to protect their country or work under bombardment and indiscriminate shelling as doctors, nurses and other professionals, providing essential services to their communities. We express our gratitude to all countries for their big heart in helping Ukrainians fleeing the war.

Women and girls face heightened risks of gender-based violence, human trafficking, exploitation

and conflict-related sexual violence owing to displacement. Their needs must be a priority in the humanitarian response.

But the situation of children is even worse. As we heard from Mr. Fontaine, since the start of the war, two thirds of the total child population of Ukraine have been forced out of their homes. Those still inside the country, remain trapped in what has become a national nightmare. And if all this were not enough, some 121,000 Ukrainian children have reportedly been forcibly deported to Russia. Save the Children reports that since the start of the war, an average of 22 schools have come under attack every single day in Ukraine. Last October, the Security Council adopted resolution 2601 (2021), which urges all parties to cease attacks and threats of attacks against schools. It was us.

Destroying on purpose the educational infrastructure and making it dysfunctional for years to come is simply criminal. Schools should be safe places, free from any kind of violence, and learning during conflict and crisis must be maintained, as it helps to maintain a sense of normalcy and fosters resilience.

We know that mass displacement and refugee flows always create conditions that could lead to human trafficking and an acute child-protection crisis. We commend UNICEF for the good work in providing recreational activities and psychological support in Ukraine. Blue Dot centres offer crucial counsel and protection services. Some 150 children will never see the end of war in Ukraine. They have been killed. Hundreds more who have been injured will bear the marks of this war on their bodies forever.

Children's lives are always shaped by the behaviour of adults, who themselves struggle in times of war. They have the duty to provide care and protection and ensure their upbringing. But how can a frightened mother, holding her child, avoid passing on her worst nightmare and fear that, all of a sudden, the child may end up alone? How can one explain war to children who, in a matter of hours, had to leave their family environment, friends, pets and toys behind and who, traumatized, are unable to sleep or eat? In their normal life, children draw parents, houses and trees. The Russian war has made Ukrainian children draw bombs, tanks and weapons.

The civilian massacres carried out by Russian forces have rightfully stirred world outcry. Russia should have learned that a war cannot be won through

massacres. During the wars in the Balkans in the late 1990s, the crimes against innocent civilians in Vukovar, Croatia, Srebrenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Račak, Kosovo, did not help any of the perpetrators to win the war. This war will be no exception.

We hear public indignation about one recurring question: why can the United Nations not do more to stop Russia? That question is right, and the anger is justified, because Russia, with its veto, has taken the Security Council hostage, preventing it from delivering security in Ukraine.

However, thankfully, there is more of the United Nations that Russia cannot veto. We have met here 15 times in 10 weeks to expose Russia's despicable deeds and to show its isolation. Also, in a matter of a few weeks, Russia has, in three crucial consecutive votes, been put against the wall in the General Assembly, which, in a remarkable and historic move, suspended Russia from the Human Rights Council.

While deploring the Security Council's inability for reasons clear to all, we should be proud of the United Nations for standing firm against the aggression and for looking Russia right in the eye and saying that it was wrong, and it will pay. Under international law, a military commander is responsible for war crimes committed by his troops. Lieutenant Colonel Azatbek Omurbekov, the Russian commander involved in the occupation of Bucha, will have to answer for the accusations of rape, pillage and the murder of hundreds of Ukrainian civilians and for such repugnant disregard for human life. If the Kremlin thinks that it will benefit from the tefal effect, it is wrong. Its crimes stick to its face. A total of 5,600 investigations have been opened so far by Ukraine's Prosecutor General. Accountability must be ensured.

Before anyone had the time to catch their breath following the horrors discovered in Bucha and elsewhere around Kyiv, a missile hit a train station, where several thousand people were waiting to leave. A missile with the vicious sign "For our children" was sent to indiscriminately kill, including five children. We were again told that it was not Russia.

Have we not had enough of that ridiculous pattern when Russia commits a crime and attributes it to someone else? Who was behind an attempt to overthrow the legitimate Government in Montenegro? Who was behind the aeroplane tragedy of Flight MH-17, hit by a missile? Who carried out indiscriminate

bombardments in Aleppo? Who poisoned the Skripals? Who almost killed Navalny? Who is turning the world upside down through a war of choice? All those crimes lead to Russia.

We now know that the Russian army does not attack civilians, except for residential areas, schools, hospitals, theatres, kindergartens and train stations. We also know that, for Russia, Ukrainian men, women, girls and children do not qualify as civilians. They are just a bargaining tool to achieve one man's cynical goal, in his humiliation and isolation, to force the hand of Ukraine into unacceptable concessions.

Life expectancy in Ukraine is now at the Kremlin's will. It may decide whether one stays in one of those shattered cities and starves. It may decide to kill one with its missiles, which strike everything indiscriminately. It may also offer the forced hospitality of a Russian camp.

As we speak about children, let me end with this note. Reportedly, President Putin is a father. That is one of those words that does not need defining. If I were in the unlikely situation of talking to President Putin, the only question that I would ask him is whether he would have accepted that his daughters be in the same situation as 11-year-old Yuri, who, terrified and forced to leave his home, told reporters: "Every time there was a shelling, my heart stopped."

I urge that President Putin stop making hearts stop, stop the shelling and the bombardments and order his soldiers, still alive, to go home, to his home, to Russia.

As Pink Floyd blasted last week, "Hey, Hey, Rise Up". It is time for the Russians to come to their senses and stand against this savagery.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Ms. Bahous, Mr. Fontaine and Ms. Cherepakha for their briefings. They confirm the deep concern that we have expressed since the beginning of the Russian aggression.

We are still shocked by the abominable attack on the Kramatorsk railway station on Friday, which could constitute a crime against humanity, as Minister Le Drian stressed. Indiscriminate attacks must stop.

France is gravely concerned about the increasing number of allegations of sexual violence. Council resolutions on sexual violence in conflict are binding on all. We therefore support United Nations work on the ground to establish the facts and responsibilities.

Such abject violence cannot go unpunished. Moreover, France calls for increased support for survivors of sexual violence. In that regard, we condemn the destruction of health facilities and its impact on access to sexual and reproductive health. Attacks on hospitals may also represent war crimes.

As we have heard, the war is also disrupting the lives of Ukrainian children. The killing and maiming of children will remain permanent stains on the perpetrators, as will the attacks on schools. We call on the Secretary-General to make use of the tools put in place by the Council to protect children from grave violations against them.

Furthermore, civilian populations are particularly at risk in the context of forced displacement. We support the efforts of the United Nations to prevent the threat of trafficking. Given such aggression, with intolerable consequences for the women and children of Ukraine, France remains fully mobilized.

We call for an immediate cessation of hostilities, a complete withdrawal of Russian troops from all Ukrainian territory, as demanded by the International Court of Justice, and full humanitarian access. Nearly 500 tons of humanitarian supplies were sent by France. In addition, we announced an exceptional contribution of €100 million to the humanitarian response. We also set up a reception and support system in France for Ukrainian women and children. Nearly 10,000 Ukrainian children who arrived in France have already been able to attend school.

The fight against impunity must be vigorously pursued. We already announced our support for the investigation and documentation work being carried out by the International Criminal Court, while respecting its independence. An exceptional contribution of €500,000 was also made to the dedicated fund. France will continue to support all efforts to independently investigate international humanitarian law and human rights violations.

Finally, we support the full implementation of the women and peace and security agenda in all its dimensions. We commend the bravery of the Ukrainian women on the front lines of the humanitarian, political and military response in defence of their country. We wish to recall that there can be no lasting solution to the conflict without the full participation of women.

We will continue to support Ukrainian women and children for as long as necessary and will not relent in our efforts to bring about peace.

Mr. Agyeman (Ghana): I thank you, Sir, and welcome your leadership of this Council meeting on the important and timely discussion on the impact of the war on women and children in Ukraine. I would like to thank Ms. Sima Bahous, Executive Director of UN-Women, and Mr. Manuel Fontaine, UNICEF's Director of Emergencies, for their respective briefings on the situation. We are also grateful to Ms. Kateryna Cherepakha, President of the civil-society group La Strada-Ukraine, for the views she shared with the Council.

The continued situation of instability and insecurity in Ukraine continues to be a matter of deep concern for Ghana. My delegation is particularly alarmed by the situation of women and children, as well as of the elderly, arising from the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine. Ghana strongly deplores the reported acts of what are emerging to be widespread gross violations of international humanitarian law in Ukraine. We condemn the attack of 8 April on the train station in Kramatorsk, which resulted in significant civilian casualties, and commiserate with the bereaved families and the people of Ukraine. We continue to be pained by the horrifying images of war in Ukraine and by the daily images of fright and despair in the eyes of a people who, just a few weeks ago, lived normal and stable lives.

In situations of war, women and children suffer a disproportionate humanitarian impact, and the war in Ukraine has been no different. Ghana is particularly concerned by the situation of the children of Ukraine, who are being scarred by the horrifying images of war. Children should never go through such experiences and accordingly must be protected by all parties in line with applicable international law.

We note UNICEF's report that approximately 4.3 million refugees have fled Ukraine into neighbouring countries, with women and children making up 90 per cent of the refugee population. We regret that 142 children have been reported killed, alongside 229 others injured. Without an immediate and unconditional cessation of hostilities, those numbers will increase. We therefore call upon the warring parties, especially the aggressor State, to redouble all efforts for peace in the interest of the women and children of Ukraine,

including women in need of assistance, who constitute more than 54 per cent of the people in need from the ongoing crisis.

Rising food insecurity and the lack of access to essential social services in cities such as Mariupol, Chernihiv, Sumy and Kharkiv have invariably increased the burden of local women responsible for the care of children, persons with disabilities and elderly family members. The war has severely impacted social cohesion, community security and the resilience of local communities, especially for women and girls. The destruction caused by the war, particularly due to the use of explosive weapons with wide-area impact in civilian-populated areas and targeted at medical facilities, has created a profound health crisis with women, girls and children bearing the greatest brunt of such deprivations.

Women and young girls face an increased risk of disruptions to life-saving sexual and reproductive health services and access to specialized medication and treatments. Ghana unequivocally condemns the reports of trafficking, sexual and gender-based violence, including rape, and exploitation. Such atrocities impact negatively on the physical and psychological health of the victims as well as on their general well-being, both in the short term and over a longer-term period. We therefore encourage humanitarian agencies to ensure that identified victims are provided with the necessary medical and psychosocial care to overcome the trauma of abuse.

We underscore the need for accountability for all alleged violations of international humanitarian and criminal law and reiterate our call for an immediate, independent and impartial investigation to establish the facts of those offences and build the evidence to hold the perpetrators of such atrocities to account.

The gender-related challenges of the war require the prioritization of the needs of women and children and the implementation of gender-responsive humanitarian assistance. In that regard, women leaders at all levels of society should be included in coordination mechanisms and decision-making processes. In the spirit of resolution 1325 (2000), we urge the parties to consider including women in their negotiating teams as a way of ensuring their meaningful participation in diplomatic and political processes. It is important that women be counted not only as victims of the war but

also as key participants in the finding of a lasting and durable solution.

In conclusion, we reiterate our call on the Russian Federation to heed the repeated calls of the international community to withdraw all its invading troops from the internationally recognized borders of Ukraine and pursue the path of dialogue and diplomacy. The cessation of all hostilities and the maintenance of effective and safe humanitarian corridors remain fundamental to addressing the worsening humanitarian conditions, especially the unbearable impact of the conflict on Ukrainian women, girls and children.

Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to welcome you, Sir, to the Council. We are grateful for the briefings by the Executive Director of UN-Women, Ms. Sima Bahous; UNICEF's Director of Emergencies, Mr. Manuel Fontaine; and Ms. Kateryna Cherepakha, whose civil-society perspective reaffirms not only the vulnerability but also the strength of Ukrainian women.

All the information available to us paints, frankly, a bleak picture. The reality is that with each passing day and as the conflict continues, tragedies are increasing and humanitarian needs multiplying. Mexico condemns the recent attack on the Kramatorsk train station, in which dozens of civilians who were waiting to be evacuated, including women and children, regrettably lost their lives. Attacks against the civilian population and civilian infrastructure are violations of international humanitarian law and may constitute war crimes. That train station is only a kilometre away from a UNICEF humanitarian aid delivery operation, as we have been informed. It is the same station through which the supplies required to deliver such assistance had been arriving.

Women and children in Ukraine are being hit the hardest. They represent 90 per cent of the refugee population and are at high risk of trafficking and exploitation. UNICEF estimates indicate that nearly 2 million children have already crossed borders, and many of them have done so alone — unaccompanied. Those who have stayed with their families or are in the process of being evacuated are at risk of falling victim to the use of weapons with indiscriminate effects.

Furthermore, we cannot forget about the severe short- and long-term impacts on mental health. The traumas of war suffered by both minors and adults can be serious and irreversible, particularly for the families

of those deceased, survivors of attacks, displaced persons and refugees.

Damage to housing, educational and health infrastructure further darkens the picture. Ukrainian women have been the first to respond to the urgent needs of their communities. The first-hand accounts of doctors, nurses, psychologists and volunteers who care for the most vulnerable segments of the population, such as the elderly and disabled, exemplify solidarity and, at the same time, attest to the most sensitive human dimensions of the conflict that women are addressing.

We need for the United Nations system, in particular, UN-Women and the Office of Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten, to continue to collect evidence, disaggregated data and gender-sensitive analyses on the multiple dimensions of the conflict, including especially sexual violence. All information that can be verified must be verified. In our capacity as a Chair of the Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security, we will convene a follow-up meeting to maintain the priority on this issue that it deserves.

In addition to the disproportionate impact and the toll borne by millions of women, it is imperative to increase their participation in the political process. Women must urgently be included in all possible avenues of dialogue and negotiations. As in the rest of the world, Ukrainian women are fundamental agents of change and must fully, equally and meaningfully participate in decision-making processes and peace negotiations.

In conclusion, I reiterate our call for an immediate cessation of hostilities, unrestricted and unconditional access to humanitarian aid and the search for a diplomatic solution to the conflict without preconditions.

Mr. Tirumurti (India): I take this opportunity to welcome the President to this meeting. I would also like to thank Ms. Sima Bahous, Executive Director of UN-Women, Mr. Manuel Fontaine of UNICEF and Ms. Kateryna Cherepakha of La Strada-Ukraine for their briefings and insights on the impact of the situation on women and children, particularly with respect to education.

Women and children invariably suffer the most in any armed conflict or military confrontation. According to reports coming out of Ukraine, women and children have been disproportionately affected and

form the bulk of the refugees and internally displaced persons. More than 4.4 million people have moved to neighbouring countries, and another 7.1 million are displaced within Ukraine.

We commend Ukraine's neighbouring countries that have welcomed refugees from Ukraine, especially for treating women and children with compassion and dignity. As a country that has welcomed refugees over centuries, India knows the importance and value of treating them equally and with dignity and catering to their needs and requirements. In this context, we need to keep the gender perspective in mind and act with sensitivity. We call for a victim-centred approach to preventing and responding to sexual violence in armed conflicts.

The impact of the situation on education of children has also been severe. It has further aggravated the pandemic-related challenges that children are already facing. There are reports that more than 900 educational facilities and schools have been either damaged or destroyed in Ukraine. Let us neither forget that the situation has also affected foreign students, including Indian students. India facilitated the safe return of 22,500 Indian nationals, most of them students studying in various universities in Ukraine. We are exploring options to minimize the impact on our students' education. We appreciate the accommodations made by the Ukrainian Government for this academic year with regard to medical students.

Even as we deal with the influx of refugees, we continue to remain deeply concerned about the worsening situation in Ukraine and reiterate our call for the immediate end to hostilities. When innocent human lives are at stake, diplomacy must prevail as the only viable option. Since the inception of the Ukrainian conflict, India has stood for peace, dialogue and diplomacy. We believe that no solution can be arrived at by shedding blood or at the cost of innocent lives, especially those of women and children. It is in our collective interest to work constructively both inside and outside the United Nations towards seeking an early resolution to the conflict.

Allow me to reiterate the importance of United Nations guiding principles of humanitarian assistance once again. Humanitarian action must always be guided by the principles of humanitarian assistance, namely, humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. These measures should not be politicized. We continue

to emphasize to Member States that the global order is anchored on international law, the Charter of the United Nations and respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of States.

Mr. Flynn (Ireland): I thank our briefers, in particular our civil society briefer, Ms. Kateryna Cherepakha. The sobering words that we heard this morning leave us in no doubt as to the human misery and suffering inflicted on the people of Ukraine by the Russian Federation's senseless and illegal war.

We have all seen the images. We have all seen the grim realities of the war: a pregnant woman carried on a stretcher from the ruins of a maternity hospital, a young child on a train looking longingly at the father who cannot board, bodies lying abandoned in improvised mass graves, and people lying dead following the indiscriminate attack against a train station in Kramatorsk by the Russian Federation on Friday. The latter attack against innocent lives, mostly those of women and children, is yet another attempt to close escape routes for those fleeing this unjustified war and cause human suffering. Ireland strongly condemns that and all other attacks against civilians.

Those are just glimpses of the suffering caused by the Russian Federation's war. They tell only part of the harrowing experiences of women and children in Ukraine. There is a story of widespread displacement and trauma, where they have faced extremely serious risks of abuse, trafficking and exploitation. Reports of sexual violence perpetrated by Russian soldiers, including rape, proliferate, with bone-chilling allegations that children are among those violated.

Conflict-related sexual violence can constitute a war crime, and those responsible must be held to account. Accountability must not only be for those who physically perpetrate such acts, but also for those military commanders who fail to take all necessary and reasonable steps to stop them or fail to ensure that they are investigated and prosecuted.

Ukraine's displacement crisis deepens every day. Of those who have fled the country, 90 per cent are women and children. The large population of older women, women with disabilities and those of marginalized groups, including the Roma and LGBTIQ+ communities, are particularly vulnerable in the conflict. Millions of women face impossible decisions around evacuation. As their lives and families are threatened, do women journalists stay to report? Do

women health-care workers and those in care-giving roles stay or go? Do women in the Ukrainian army who choose to bring their children to safety return to defend their country? So many are making the desperate yet heroic choice to remain.

A child-protection crisis is emerging, as the number of unaccompanied and separated children rises. We have a responsibility to respond. The terror of war and the trauma of family separation will have lifelong effects on millions of Ukrainian children. We need to mitigate these impacts, including through psychosocial services and mental health support, health care and education in emergency settings.

This month marks a year since every member of the Council co-sponsored and agreed resolution 2573 (2021) on the protection of civilian objects. That includes the Russian Federation. That day, we sent a united message that strongly condemned attacks against civilians and civilian objects. Twelve months later, where is that unity on display in Ukraine?

Thousands of civilian objects, including hundreds of schools and kindergartens, have been destroyed, largely due to the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. Attacks on schools are a grave violation. To rob children of their education has profound impacts, not only on their individual development, but on society as a whole. The reverberations of this war reach far beyond Ukraine's borders. They will also reach beyond this generation. This war will mark Ukraine for many years to come. We all have a responsibility to support Ukrainians long after this war has ended.

At this table, we have repeatedly called for it to end and for the Russian Federation to withdraw its forces and engage in true dialogue and diplomacy towards peace. In any peace talks, we must have the direct substantive inclusion of diverse women so they can influence the course and outcome of negotiations. Without them, we can have no hope for sustainable peace.

Let us not forget that Ukraine has been a society where women were fully and equally participating in public life. Targeting women through violence or forcing them to flee to save their children's lives is a double abomination in a society that was realizing the fruits of women's participation. This war will undo years of progress towards gender equality. As my Mexican colleague referenced, Ireland is also focused on those issues as a Chair of the Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security.

I conclude by stressing that gender equality is not an aspiration reserved for a peaceful company of countries and somehow too difficult or inconvenient for countries in conflict. The evidence shows that women's participation in peace processes leads to better and longer lasting agreements. The guns are still firing, which is having a dire impact on women. The urgency to ensure women's active participation in ending this conflict has never been greater. Yet it is because of their deep-rooted participation that we are hopeful for the future that the women of Ukraine can help to shape.

Ms. Juul (Norway): I thank UN-Women, UNICEF and Kateryna Cherepakha, from whom, again, the Security Council has heard alarming assessments of the consequences of Russia's war.

We are deeply troubled by the atrocities committed against civilians in places that have been held by Russian forces, including credible reports of extrajudicial killings of civilians. We condemn the missile attack on the railway station in Kramatorsk. These atrocities shock the conscience of humankind. The protection of civilians and respect for human rights are not a matter of choice. They are legal obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Yet the reality is that the women and girls of Ukraine now face a drastically heightened risk of gender-based violence, sexual exploitation, abuse and trafficking.

Just last week, Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo briefed the Council on the disturbing reports of conflict-related sexual violence perpetrated by Russian forces, including brutal acts committed in front of children (see S/PV. 9011). The sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and girls have also been severely diminished due to displacement and the targeting and destruction of health facilities. For many, including refugees, it means the net total loss of access to essential, sometimes life-saving, assistance. Our humanitarian response must therefore also be gender- and age-sensitive to avoid and address protection gaps.

In the midst of intense warfare and calls for Russia to end the violence and negotiate in good faith, there is a tendency to forget that women are also on the front lines in every way. Ukrainian women are among the combatants fighting to defend their country. They ensure the delivery of basic and life-saving services, and they most definitely suffer the full consequences of war. It is therefore imperative that their rights be respected and that their full, equal and meaningful

participation be ensured in any political process, talks and negotiation relating to the future of Ukraine and its people.

Children's lives and well-being are constantly threatened by the ravages of war. They are traumatized by violence, displacement and the destruction of the places in which they live, learn and play. Their future is at stake. Norway is alarmed by reports that more than 60 per cent of Ukraine's children are now displaced as a result of Russia's illegal invasion. We call for the immediate cessation of attacks on and threats of attack against schools, students and teachers, in line with resolution 2601 (2021) and the Safe Schools Declaration. We recall the obligation of parties to conflict to facilitate the continuation of education.

Norway supports the assessment by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights that the ongoing violence by Russian forces raises serious and disturbing questions about possible war crimes or even crimes against humanity, grave breaches of international humanitarian law and serious violations of international human rights law. That underlines the importance of the ongoing investigations into the situation in Ukraine by the International Criminal Court and by the Human Rights Council, and their work to investigate all violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law.

There is no doubt that the physical and psychological wounds of this war will be felt for generations. Once again, we call on Russia to cease its attack on the Ukrainian civilian population and stop this senseless war.

Mr. Costa Filho (Brazil): I would like to commend the work of Ms. Bahous and Mr. Fontaine in Ukraine and thank them for their briefings. I also thank Ms. Cherepakha for her briefing.

As the conflict in Ukraine persists and we enter into the seventh week of hostilities, Brazil remains deeply concerned about the daily reports of gross violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law. The images of violence against civilians and the destruction of civilian infrastructure are deeply disturbing.

The politics behind this or any other conflict should not affect the obligations of all parties to fully respect international humanitarian law. I believe there are no divergences between Member States about the fact that

the protection of children in armed conflict should be a priority at all times, even when parties cannot find common ground on the peaceful settlement of their disputes. We continue to call on all parties and relevant actors to work towards well-planned and agreed upon arrangements on the ground that provide respite for the civilian population, allow for civilians to leave conflict zones in safety and for humanitarian assistance to reach those in need, including and especially children.

Children should never be uprooted. Their physical integrity and well-being should be a fundamental priority for all Member States, especially in times of conflict. Schools and medical facilities should never be used for military purposes, nor should they become the targets of direct attacks or indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks. It is of utmost importance to implement resolution 2601 (2021), on the protection of education, co-sponsored by 98 Member States, including Brazil. The Safe Schools Declaration also provides important guidelines on that matter.

Moreover, it is key that women and children be placed at the heart of peace negotiations to ensure their protection from hostilities as well as the cessation of attacks against civilian infrastructure. In particular, resolution 2573 (2021) provides fundamental guidance for the protection of objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population and should be duly observed.

The reports of sexual violence are appalling; they must be independently investigated and the perpetrators brought to justice. Available evidence on the psychological impact of sexual violence in conflict, a crime that affects not only women and girls but also men and boys, suggests that it is often lifelong and even intergenerational.

Brazil reiterates its call on all parties to cooperate with the Commission of Inquiry of the Human Rights Council so that it can fulfil its mandate and provide us with the necessary clarifications, including by identifying, where possible, those responsible for violations of international human rights and humanitarian law.

In that regard, we welcome the participation of UN-Women in the Commission of Inquiry with experts skilled and experienced to investigate sexual violence, abuse and exploitation in the context of war. We also thank UN-Women for its efforts to obtain gender-

sensitive data, which is essential to adequately address the situation of women and girls in Ukraine.

UNICEF findings show that the ongoing conflict has caused one of the fastest large-scale displacements of children since the Second World War, a tragedy that could have long-lasting consequences for generations to come.

We worry that as more women and children are forced into the condition of refugees or internally displaced persons, they become more vulnerable to crimes, including sexual violence and exploitation. All efforts should be made to provide refugee children and adolescents with essential services, including education and mental-health services.

In conclusion, Brazil draws attention to the importance of the work that has been carried out on the ground to reach those most affected by the conflict and in need of urgent humanitarian assistance, especially women and children. We reiterate our call on all parties to comply with their obligation to ensure free and unimpeded humanitarian access that must comply with the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.

Mr. Dai Bing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I listened carefully to the presentations by all briefers. Women and children are the most vulnerable to violence and should be given priority protection in armed conflicts. We call on the parties involved in the situation in Ukraine to strictly abide by international humanitarian law, effectively protect the personal safety of women and children, respect and guarantee the civilian nature and safety of facilities such as schools and hospitals, and provide special care to women and children in evacuation, rescue and medical assistance.

China deplores the killing and injuring of dozens of civilians, including women and children, in the attack on the Kramatorsk train station. The relevant circumstances surrounding and the specific causes of the incident must be investigated, and any claim should be based on facts.

Since the conflict broke out, a large number of Ukrainian women and children have taken refuge in neighbouring countries. China thanks those neighbouring countries and other countries for opening their borders to them and providing them with safe haven and humanitarian assistance. All refugees — regardless of colour, race or religion — should receive the

necessary and equal protection under international refugee law.

The humanitarian needs of Ukraine and neighbouring countries remain considerable. International agencies such as the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UN-Women and UNICEF should continue to mobilize and coordinate international support for humanitarian assistance to all those in need. The special needs of women and children should be considered; targeted medical treatments, psychological counselling and social services should be provided to them; and the right of children right to education should be ensured.

We are deeply concerned about reports that women and children seeking asylum have been subject to abduction, human trafficking and violence. We call on international agencies such as UN-Women, UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to strengthen monitoring and support the countries concerned in taking resolute measures to prevent women and children from being harmed a second time.

Only by stopping the war as soon as possible can we definitively solve the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine and protect women and children from violence. Dialogue and negotiation are the only way to peace. We urge the parties involved to continue negotiations, strive to overcome their difficulties and differences, create the conditions for a ceasefire and make positive efforts so that women and children can see the dawn of peace at an early date. All other parties in the international community should do more to facilitate dialogue and negotiations and create the environment and conditions necessary for progress in the negotiations.

I must point out that simply imposing sanctions and sending weapons will not bring peace. The escalating extensive and indiscriminate sanctions have triggered a food and energy crisis and soaring prices for daily necessities, which are being paid for dearly by the entire world's population, including the tens of millions of women and children in Afghanistan, Yemen, the Horn of Africa and the Sahel, who have become its greatest victims.

China once again calls on all parties to exercise restraint, adopt a responsible attitude and make constructive efforts to properly resolve the crisis in Ukraine and restore peace at an early date.

Mr. Abushahab (United Arab Emirates): I would like to begin by welcoming and thanking you, Sir, for presiding over this meeting. I would also like to thank Ms. Bahous, Mr. Fontaine and Ms. Cherepakha for the briefings and insights they shared.

When the Security Council adopted resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, more than 21 years ago, it recognized the disproportionate impact of conflict on women and girls. Women are not only exposed to grave violations of international humanitarian law but are also particularly vulnerable to gender-specific risks.

However, the women and peace and security agenda also recognized that women and girls are active agents of peace who can drive efforts and provide solutions. Their participation in conflict prevention, peacebuilding, reconciliation and reconstruction must be guaranteed, not only because of the impact the conflict has on them but also because it has proved to result in more sustainable and longer-lasting peace.

Since the beginning of the conflict in Ukraine, the overwhelming majority of the 4.3 million people who have fled to neighbouring countries are women and children. There have been deeply disturbing reports of conflict-related sexual violence and of persons who have fallen prey to criminal organized gangs running human- and sex-trafficking rings.

According to the World Health Organization, 89 health-care facilities across the country have been impacted by attacks, undermining the right of women and girls to access health care. That contributes to a lack of critical maternity care for pregnant women, both within Ukraine and for those fleeing abroad, as the United Nations Population Fund has warned.

Finally, the conflict is disrupting children's access to education. Every child has a right to education, and the lack thereof can further block their opportunities and ability to contribute to Ukraine's future. That risks a generational effect.

Accordingly, the United Arab Emirates would like to highlight three areas to support women and children impacted by the conflict in Ukraine.

First, we see the ongoing negotiations between the parties as a positive development, and we call on them to guarantee women's full, equal and meaningful participation in all peace efforts. It is imperative that women's leadership and participation take place not

only at the end of the conflict, but also in the design and implementation processes for its peaceful resolution. Women have now been leading local reconciliation and dialogue efforts for many years in eastern Ukraine. Such efforts should not be forgotten. Rather, they should be recognized, built upon and mobilized to drive efforts towards peace.

Secondly, sex-disaggregated data collection on the impact of the conflict remains a valuable tool, including in strengthening accountability for conflict-related sexual violence. That can ensure that restorative justice can be achieved.

Thirdly, a gender-responsive approach must be implemented in all humanitarian efforts during and after the conflict. That should include the voices of women, who can inform the provision and delivery of humanitarian assistance, services and programming efforts with their needs at the centre. We also call on all parties to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law, in particular the protection of civilians, and to allow timely and unimpeded humanitarian access.

I also want to highlight the disproportionate consequences that this war has for women and children around the world. From food insecurity to high commodity prices, women and girls worldwide are seeing their daily lives and their futures upended. Now more than ever, we need concerted efforts to prevent that from happening. The stakes are too high.

In conclusion, we reiterate our strong call for an immediate cessation of hostilities throughout Ukraine to allow for constructive dialogue between the parties and to end the suffering caused by this conflict.

Mr. Biang (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for your leadership in the conduct of our work. I thank Ms. Sima Bahous and Mr. Manuel Fontaine for their briefings. I also thank Ms. Kateryna Cherepakha.

The devastating escalation of violence in Ukraine threatens the safety of women and children, who now represent the largest proportion of civilians fleeing the war zones en masse or hiding in makeshift shelters, often in inhumane conditions. The number of displaced persons is increasing as the fighting intensifies. It has now reached some 10 million, including countless children who crossed the borders of Ukraine unaccompanied.

There are continuing reports of violence and rape against women and girls. The testimony of Mr. Fontaine, of UNICEF, regarding the human trafficking networks is alarming. Sexual violence against women and trafficking in persons are unacceptable. It is essential that independent and impartial investigations be carried out to establish the facts and ensure accountability.

As the war drags on, attacks on civilian infrastructure, including health facilities and schools, are significantly affecting people's access to clean water and primary and specialist health care. The decline in routine immunization coverage raises fears of the resurgence of some childhood diseases. Similarly, massive population movements, the shortage of supplies and the worsening sanitary conditions, as well as a lack of space, represent conditions conducive to the outbreak of epidemics.

This war must come to an end. Urgent action is needed to address the critical needs of the civilian population, especially women and children. We note with interest UNICEF's strengthening of its mobile teams and its increasing supplies of essential goods and services to alleviate the suffering and increase the protection of children in conflict areas.

There is an urgent need to strengthen assistance to women and children, including psychological and emotional care and psychosocial support. Specific protection mechanisms for women and children must also be put in place to prevent the risk of human trafficking.

I would like to reiterate my country's appreciation for the work of humanitarian workers on the front lines in areas of fighting, sometimes risking their lives to rescue and protect civilians. We call on the parties to facilitate their access to all locations where humanitarian assistance has become vital.

My country calls for a ceasefire and the opening of humanitarian corridors in all places in order to ensure the safe delivery of humanitarian aid. Until humanitarian workers have access to those in need of urgent assistance, people will continue to die, not only from bullets but also hunger and disease.

I would like to reiterate my country's appreciation to Ukraine's neighbours, which continue to mobilize for the urgent reception of refugees. We encourage them to extend the same welcome to all those in need without

distinction. We urge respect for their dignity and call for the fair treatment of all those in need.

I would also like to reiterate the call to the parties to engage in good faith in dialogue for a cessation of hostilities. We call on the warring parties to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law. The war must stop. It is unacceptable and dehumanizing. It must cease immediately.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to today's briefers for the information.

We had no doubt that today there would once again be many fabrications on the part of our Western colleagues regarding what is now happening in Ukraine in the light of the special military operation that we are conducting. Their scheme of action has long been clear to us, namely, to distort and denigrate the aims of the special military operation, silence facts that are inconvenient to them and promote the fabrications and propaganda of Ukraine and of professional Western consultants working for the Kyiv regime. All their efforts perfectly fit the context of the information war being waged against Russia, which is as intense as the fighting on the ground.

Our Albanian colleagues set a new benchmark of disinformation today. The Permanent Representative of Albania today read out virtually an entire list of crimes attributed to us without bothering to mention that not one of them has ever produced any convincing evidence. The presumption of innocence has clearly long been completely defied.

Recently, the joint Western and Ukrainian fake factory has reached a new level and started fabricating and performing in the best traditions of the infamous British-Syrian White Helmets. Everyone is still hearing about the provocation in the town of Bucha in the Kyiv region, unprecedented in terms of its cruelty and clumsiness. That is still being propagated as a crime allegedly committed by the Russian army despite irrefutable evidence proving the staged nature of the incident, which is only increasing. I will not dwell on the details. We already briefed the Security Council on the key issues last Tuesday (see S/PV.9011) after the United Kingdom presidency did its utmost to prevent a separate meeting on the provocation, in violation of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

I will simply say that, after a thorough analysis of the actions of the Ukrainian Nazis, it is hard to shake the sense of déjà vu. In 1944, the ideological forefathers of the Kyiv radicals, acting in the best traditions of the main Hitlerite propagandist, Joseph Goebbels, staged a provocation with civilians that were allegedly brutally murdered by the Red Army in the town of Nemmersdorf in East Prussia. That was preceded by a letter circulated among the major German newspapers, which described in detail how best to present the so-called atrocities of the Soviet soldiers.

Nowadays, newspapers are read less and less, and such guidelines are appearing instead on social media, without any substantial attempts to even conceal them. Content creators are recruited as extras in crowd scenes and given instructions on which aspects to focus on. In other words, Goebbels would have been pleased with the ambition of his Ukrainian heirs. However, they were betrayed by the quality of their performance. The staged events in Nemmersdorf, aimed at creating myths of mass murders and rapes allegedly committed by the Red Army, were subsequently convincingly debunked by various experts, and the town became synonymous with crude propaganda stunts, just like the one carried out in Bucha.

However, the Bucha provocation last week was overshadowed by another organized by Ukrainian Nazis in Kramatorsk, which for the time being is still under their control. That constitutes a classic false-flag operation. I shall dwell on it in more detail, especially as many speakers mentioned it today. On 8 April, from the vicinity of the town of Dobropillia, which is located 45 kilometres south-west of Kramatorsk, Ukrainian armed forces launched a strike with a Tochka-U tactical missile at the Kramatorsk railway station. More than 50 people were killed, including five children. Ninety-eight wounded people were taken to hospitals in Kramatorsk, including 16 children, 46 women and 36 men.

Why are we so sure that the Ukrainian army is responsible for the attack and not the Russian military, as was immediately portrayed by the Western media and as some of our colleagues claimed today? There are several reasons, three of which I shall mention now. First, the Russian army does not possess Tochka-U tactical missile systems. They are obsolete and were replaced a long time ago by Iskander missiles and are actively used only by the Ukrainian army.

Secondly, the pictures taken by eyewitnesses shortly after the strike and before the arrival of Ukrainian propagandists made it possible to accurately determine not only the type of missile, but also the direction from which it was launched. That area is still under the control of Ukrainian troops for the time being.

Thirdly and finally, the serial number on the Tochka-U missile can easily be identified from those same images. It belongs to the SH-915 series. Missiles from the same series were used to repeatedly shell the cities in Donbas. There are fragments of those missiles bearing the same serial numbers. The same type of missile was used on 14 March by the nineteenth missile brigade of the Ukrainian armed forces in an attack on the centre of Donetsk. Twenty-one Donetsk residents were killed on the spot, and another 36 were wounded. The horrific footage of that strike is still being passed off by the Western media as the shelling of Kyiv.

The provocation in Kramatorsk was also unsuccessful for the Kyiv regime. However, the Ukrainian propagandists are clearly trying to learn from their mistakes and work better. They are trying very hard. In recent days, we have transmitted information to the United Nations with regard to certain provocations being prepared.

There is the staged discovery of mass graves in the town of Ragovka, near Kyiv. Western journalists arrived in the city of Kremennaya with the objective of reporting on the provocation prepared by the Ukrainian army of a supposed shelling by the Russian army of ambulances transporting patients.

In the town of Belogorovka, a chlorine reserve on the territory of the water canal has been mined. The plan is to blow it up when national militia units of the Luhansk People's Republic approach the town.

In the city of Irpin, in the Kyiv region, a provocation is being prepared using the same scheme as in Bucha and Nemmersdorf. Members of the Ukrainian security forces intend to transport the bodies of civilians killed by artillery shelling from the hospital morgue on Plevaya Street to the basement of a building on the eastern outskirts of the city.

Then, in the Pushcha-Vodytsya forest area, the Ukrainian security forces will organize a staged incident with the shooting and destruction of a supposed Russian intelligence group that came from Irpin to kill witnesses of alleged Russian war crimes. At the same

time, the bodies of Russian soldiers taken prisoner and then tortured and killed by Ukrainian nationalists will be placed in the forest as so-called indisputable evidence. We expect to see video footage of that staged event circulated by Western media.

Just today, the Russian Ministry of Defence confirmed that Western media have been invited to report on a staged event in the town of Seredyna-Buda, in Sumska oblast, previously under the control of Russian forces. In the town of Nizhne Sirovatka, near Sumy, bodies are being transported to a building basement. The staging of the so-called atrocities by the Russian army is being conducted by British film directors. I wish to recall that Russian forces left that town three weeks ago. Those reports are coming from residents of these towns and are clearly not indifferent to the aims of our military operation.

Moreover, I cannot neglect to mention reports from residents of Odesa of large numbers of Ukrainian soldiers dressed in Russian military uniforms in the city. It seems that a bloody large-scale provocation — more precisely, a false-flag operation — is also being prepared in the city.

I would ask my colleagues to remember that we warned about such events.

The provocations that have already been planned and carried out, combined with the nationalists' now-familiar practice of using the civilian population as human shields, are all the more appalling owing to the inhumane attitude towards the fate of the people of Ukraine and are a testament to the Ukrainian Nazis' complete disregard for the norms of morality and international humanitarian law. As we have repeatedly stated, Russia does not wage war against Ukrainian civilian populations.

Since today's meeting also concerns the topic of women and peace and security, I feel duty-bound to offer some remarks in that regard. As it applies to Ukraine, of course, the situation has also been coloured with ideology and provocations. We see a clear desire to portray Russian soldiers as sadists and rapists, just as there were attempts to portray the victorious Soviet soldiers in Second World War as sadists and rapists in their time. We see that neither the goals nor the Russophobic nature of the propaganda methods inherited by Ukraine has changed.

However, the reality is quite different. Despite the attempts made to distort the truth, even Western audiences occasionally learn about the brutal torture of peaceful civilians, including women, by sadistic members of Ukrainian nationalist battalions. For example, what we saw in the building of elementary school 18 in Mariupol, which had long been held by the Nazi Azov Battalion, shocked even seasoned soldiers — on the floor in the corner of the basement lay the body of a woman with her hands cut off, her face mutilated, and a swastika burned onto her stomach. It is noteworthy that some in Ukraine and in the West continue to pass off those horrifying and previously published photographic pieces of evidence as proof of crimes committed by the Russian military.

Ukrainian society has consistently been under the influence of nationalists for at least the past eight years. That is why Ukrainian women, unfortunately, are being presented in a rather strange — and I would even say savage — light. That is best illustrated by the patriotic video that has been actively disseminated on social media in recent days. In it a western Ukrainian actress, chanting patriotic slogans and cursing Russia, cuts the throat of a tortured Russian soldier with a sickle. The only thing that the video brings to mind is the terrorist members of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), which also disseminated videos in which they slit the throats of their victims.

It is sad that Ukraine has plumbed the depths of such unbridled cruelty to the point of blindly rivalling ISIL radicalism and extremism. That only further convinces us of the imperative of, and lack of alternative to, conducting Russia's special military operation. The operation is necessary for the future of Ukraine as well as the security of not only Russia but also all of Ukraine's neighbours.

I highly doubt, for example, that peaceful Poles are able to feel safe when the organizers of the Volhynia massacre, which took the lives of tens of thousands of their compatriots in 1943, are now revered as national heroes in Ukraine. I am talking about peaceful Poles, not about the Polish authorities who have been blinded by Russophobia and whose policies have long since lost touch with common sense.

I would like to conclude on a more optimistic note. There is, of course, another Ukraine that is being given another chance for peace and genuine good-neighbourliness thanks to our special military

operation. That Ukraine already has its own symbols, including women. For example, few people were indifferent to the widely circulated video clip on social media of Ukrainian soldiers entering a village. An elderly grandmother mistook them for Russian soldiers and brought out a red Soviet victory flag. She greeted them with kind words about how long she has waited to be liberated.

To their credit, the soldiers did not hurt her; quite to the contrary, they gave her a bag of food. However, in exchange, they took away the flag and began to trample it. After having realized her mistake, the grandmother defiantly returned the food and demanded the return of the banner, for which her parents fought. After that, the clip cuts off.

We want to believe that nothing happened to the grandmother, as her heroism and courage have already inspired many people. I also want to believe that she will be liberated very soon and will be able to safely take the red flag out of the house on Victory Day, which is sacred to all of us, to honour the memory of her parents and those who liberated Ukraine from the Nazis without fear that someone will trample it.

Mr. Kimani (Kenya): I thank the Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN-Women, Sima Bahous; the Director of the UNICEF Office of Emergency Programmes, Manuel Fontaine; and Ms. Kateryna Cherepakha for their briefings. I also welcome the participation of the Permanent Representatives of Ukraine and the countries affected in the region.

We would not be here having this discussion but for the armed breach of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine by the Russian Federation. We must once again observe and condemn the continuing disregard for international law and the Charter of the United Nations and the anarchic, dangerous world that has resulted. Kenya further condemns the recent bombing of the train station in Kramatorsk, where more than 50 people were killed as they attempted to flee the war.

This war is causing massive civilian suffering. We do not have an accurate count of the lives lost to violence, but they must be in the thousands. We have no statistic for the incidents of rape and other forms of sexual violence against girls and women, but it is certain that the number is high and rising. We know that the overwhelming majority of refugees who

have fled Ukraine are girls and women, and we also know that each one of them in their own special way has had their life shattered by the war. We know that such forced human movement and family separations increase the potential for sexual abuse, exploitation and human trafficking.

We must commend all the individuals, institutions and Governments that are helping in every possible way. We especially thank those United Nations entities, including UN-Women, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Population Fund and other agencies, for their reports highlighting the key areas of concern for Ukrainian women and girls. More than that, we thank them for the actions that they are taking to help women and girls fleeing and trying to survive the war. We also applaud today the brave women of Ukraine who are fighting for peace and their country. We recognize with admiration the women who are leading in Government and civil society in pushing us all towards a peaceful resolution of the war.

In the past year, our delegation has been a member of the Security Council. We have spoken regularly about women and peace and security. Most often it has been to applaud the role of women as peacebuilders and urge their participation in decision-making at all levels. Today I urge that we let the full weight of the suffering of women in Ukraine settle into our minds. Perhaps then we will have the will as the Security Council and the international community to achieve a ceasefire and the boldness of vision to undertake a diplomatic dialogue that can provide lasting security in Europe and globally.

The victims of whom I am speaking are fleeing bombs and bullets overwhelmingly fired by young men on the orders of their older male superiors. Those men are themselves dying in large numbers, leaving their mothers, sisters and daughters to mourn them.

On both sides of the violence of this war are women — the ones suffering the effects of the war in Ukraine and the mothers of the soldiers in the Russian Federation who must wait in agony, wondering if their sons will return home or if they have been involved in attacks on civilians. No one knows a greater agony than the grieving mother of a fallen soldier or the grieving mother of a soldier who has returned home from a campaign that has featured atrocities.

Mothers on either side of the war are suffering from the dangers and atrocities being carried out on their children and by their children. It is therefore exceedingly inappropriate that in the public reporting of the negotiations for a ceasefire, we see few women and mothers at the table. We urge all relevant actors in the ongoing negotiations and those that follow to ensure the inclusion of women as participants and decision-makers. The same should be the case for all institutions and operations that are responding to this war.

We call for humanitarian corridors to be established and protected. We urge humanitarian actors to make certain that their operations have the ability to aid women and girls, particularly those who are survivors of rape and other forms of gender-based violence. If the war continues much longer, it will harm the food and energy security of many millions around the world. It will destroy livelihoods, increase poverty and cause economic crisis.

For a global community barely starting its recovery from the coronavirus disease pandemic, the war in Ukraine is a damaging blow. The result will be early deaths, political instability and the escalation of other conflicts. The humanitarian and developmental response to that suffering must leave no country or region behind. In this regard, Kenya continues to urge the Secretary-General to rally the United Nations, the major economies and international financial institutions to design instruments that offer the most vulnerable countries, particularly in the global South, needed support.

I conclude by once again reaffirming Kenya's lasting support for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Ukraine.

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

May I begin, first of all, by joining others in thanking our briefers for their insightful, expert and deeply thoughtful contributions. My thanks go to Ms. Sima Bahous of UN-Women, Mr. Manuel Fontaine of UNICEF and, of course, Ms. Kateryna Cherepakha, who gave us direct insight into the situation on the ground in Ukraine. In doing so, it reminds me that the Geneva Conventions contain numerous provisions that afford special protection to women and girls as civilians in conflict zones. Yet what we see today with our own eyes, and as today's detailed briefings

testify, is harrowing evidence of how women and girls are suffering.

Mr. Putin's invading forces are absolutely oblivious to even the most basic tenets of the Geneva Conventions — the absolutely essential distinction between civilians and combatants. Today, sadly, we have once again heard Russia trying to deflect from the facts and the reality on the ground and muddy the waters by what can be described only as quite extraordinary statements, even lies. Yet what is true — what is a fact — is that Russian attacks on civilians and residential areas have been truly barbaric.

What we have seen shine through this — as a real beacon — is the Ukrainian people themselves. Ukrainian women have demonstrated incredible fortitude and the real resilience of the Ukrainian people. Indeed, that was reflected in the engagement our own Prime Minister had in Ukraine recently. Like the experiences the representatives of UNICEF, UN-Women and the United States recounted, when I visited Poland — and I am pleased that the representative of Poland has joined us today — I had the opportunity to see the strength and support of the Polish people and the incredible welcome being given to refugees fleeing the conflict, but also the resilience of Ukrainian women — predominantly women, as we have heard in many statements today — who are crossing the border. They are being forced to cross the border because they want to protect their children who accompany them.

We have also met and seen female members of Parliament who, because they cannot sit as parliamentary members, have resorted to taking up firearms to defend themselves and their people. We have seen incredible courage from civic leaders refusing to leave their communities and heard countless and absolutely incredible, untold stories of heroism across Ukraine, as women have stood up to Russian forces. Many are armed with little more than patriotism, their own courage and resilience and a formidable sense of injustice.

Emerging reports have painted a deeply disturbing picture, including of alleged rape and sexual violence, within Ukraine's borders. The violence and exploitation do not end there. Beyond the country's borders, as we have heard again today, displaced Ukrainian women and girls face heightened risks of trafficking — a point made by the representative of UNICEF. They also face sexual exploitation by criminal gangs.

The mounting evidence of war crimes in Ukraine surely compels us, as the international community, to come together to do more and stand with Ukraine and those who have faced such unspeakable violence. The vote recently to suspend the Russian Federation from the Human Rights Council was proof of our collective will to do just that (General Assembly resolution ES-11/3). We must now work ceaselessly to investigate these crimes and to hold Mr. Putin, Russia and the forces of Russia to account. That is why the United Kingdom has worked closely with partners to refer this illegal invasion to the International Criminal Court and establish a commission of inquiry through the Human Rights Council and a mission of experts through the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Ukraine's women, as many women around the world continue to do today, helped build that open, democratic, free Ukraine — a society that, for some reason, Mr. Putin fears. The participation of Ukrainian women at all levels, as we heard today from our colleagues from Ireland and Kenya, among others, will be central if we are to build sustainable and lasting peace. Any peace settlement must also reflect the disproportionate impact of this conflict — this war — on the girls and women of Ukraine.

In conclusion, today's Security Council discussion and meeting is a rallying call to us all, the international community, to recognize the impact of this illegal war on the very basis of international law and the very foundation on which this institution, the United Nations, is based, as well as the actual Charter of the United Nations itself. It is an illegal war on the women and children of Ukraine. Ultimately, we must come together and act together to hold Russia to account for these crimes.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

Before giving the floor to the representatives of countries that are not members of the Security Council, I give the floor to the representative of Albania who has asked to make a further statement.

Mr. Hoxha (Albania): I listened carefully to our Russian colleague. I would just like to highlight three short points.

First, we do not come here to create propaganda. We all know where the propaganda comes from nowadays, and it is certainly not from this Chamber.

Secondly, what we say in this Chamber is fact-checked and corroborated. Facts and truths are not up for discussion, even when we do not like them.

Thirdly, if we are here to talk about these painful issues, it is because of Russia's actions, including this aggression. Continuing to claim that there is no war of aggression in Ukraine is equal to continuing to claim that the world is flat. We know that there are people who believe it, but that does not make it true.

Finally, the only true threshold here is the appalling degree of unspeakable crimes we are discovering in Ukraine, which has not been seen in Europe for decades.

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

Mr. Kyslytsya (Ukraine): I recognize the Executive Director of UN-Women, Sima Bahous; the Director of the UNICEF Office of Emergency Programmes, Mr. Manuel Fontaine; and Ms. Kateryna Cherepakha, of La Strada-Ukraine. I also recognize the representative of Putin's regime in the permanent seat of the Soviet Union, although a more appropriate seat for the Russian Government's representatives would seem to be at a trial for the war crimes committed in Ukraine, since today's lies from Putin's representative predictably contained everything but the kitchen sink.

As one says these days here in New York, we know Russians are lying because their lips are moving. There is nothing to write home about, as the Russian comrade has not even shown himself out of the Chamber after that embarrassment of an intervention. The lights are on but nobody is home at the Russian Mission.

George Orwell believed that totalitarianism and the corruption of language were closely connected. Now I have to put my earphones on to listen carefully to the Russian interpretation of the next couple of sentences.

It is an important development that the Security Council is now addressing the issue of the Russian war against Ukraine under a new agenda item, entitled "Maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine". I would like to thank those Security Council members that supported its introduction.

I find the interpretation that I have heard quite satisfactory. What I find not satisfactory at all is how the Russian diplomat, in his statement on the adoption of the agenda item, used the Russian language to impose a different concept of reality. The agenda item,

as adopted, reads as follows: "Maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine". It is neither "on Ukraine", as purposefully manipulated by the Russian diplomat, nor any other linguistic fantasy of the Russian Mission. In fact, it is not the first time that the Russian Mission has hoped to take advantage of the fact that the majority of delegations do not speak Russian. That was the case in the most recent meeting of the Security Council on Ukraine (see S/PV.9011), when Ambassador Nebenzia tried, and failed, to quote an interview conducted in Russian.

The language used for the title is exceptional for conflict-specific issues, which mostly refer to situations in specific countries or questions concerning them. It is an acknowledgement of the fact that the peace and security of Ukraine have been violated from abroad and that the Security Council will remain seized of the matter until they are restored.

Along with the letter dated 28 February 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2014/136) concerning the threats to the territorial integrity of Ukraine due to Russia's attempted annexation of Ukraine, the new agenda item will serve as a framework for the Security Council's actions in response to the Russian aggression against Ukraine.

We may defeat Russia militarily in Ukraine sooner than we may de-occupy Crimea. That is why I hope — and I am sure — that the Russian proposal to remove the letter of 2014, which is basically about Crimea, will not be supported by the necessary number of Security Council members.

On 24 March, an overwhelming majority of the States Members of the United Nations adopted General Assembly resolution ES-11/2, entitled "Humanitarian consequences of the aggression against Ukraine". They demanded in particular in that resolution that civilians, including humanitarian personnel, journalists and persons in vulnerable situations, including women and children, be fully protected. Russia voted against that resolution, thereby openly showing that it considers civilians, including women and children, to be possible targets.

Since the beginning of its invasion, that Russian approach has proved to be true almost on a daily basis. Just last week, in the presence of the President of Ukraine, the Security Council addressed the massacre committed by Russian troops in the city of

Bucha and other towns and villages in the Kyiv region during the period of occupation in March (*ibid.*). Over the past week, a number of foreign officials, United Nations representatives and foreign journalists have visited the crime scenes. Shock and outrage were the main responses of those who saw those killed and tortured, who listened to those raped and robbed. The investigation has just started, but the futility of Russia's shameless attempt to deny responsibility is clear to everyone.

Unfortunately, Russia persists in adding newer and newer items to the list of its war crimes and crimes against humanity in Ukraine. On 8 April, Russian missiles hit the Kramatorsk railway station, where almost 4,000 civilians, mostly elderly persons, women and children, were waiting for evacuation trains from the war zone. More than 50 people, including five children, were killed. More than 100 were wounded, many of them severely.

I will not develop Russia's false theory that Russia does not possess Tochka-U missiles, including because Russia has deployed many Tochka-U's in the territory of Belarus.

It speaks volumes that Russian attempts to conceal the traces following the strike were similar to those that Russia resorted to after shooting down Malaysia Airlines Flight MH-17 in 2014. Initial triumphant Russian propaganda reports — this time about hitting a concentration of Ukrainian troops in the Kramatorsk railway station — were deleted immediately after information on the real outcomes of the strike appeared. Instead, the regular fake narrative of Ukrainians killing one another was again activated. It will neither persuade others nor help Russia to escape responsibility. The world's trust in Russia and its diplomats is as dead as a doornail. The investigation will establish all who are responsible, and they will be brought to justice.

The scope of atrocities that Ukrainian women and children are suffering now has not been seen in the region since the end of the Second World War. Like its Nazi predecessors, Russia has launched a policy of extermination of our entire people. Russian soldiers have been allowed by their superiors to kill everyone who identifies themselves as Ukrainian, regardless of who they are.

The very modest, preliminary and incomplete figures recorded by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights include 245 women

killed, as of 7 April. The sex of 831 adults killed is as yet unknown. According to our Government sources, at least 183 children were killed and 342 wounded.

That toll of casualties, outrageous in itself, does not include the victims in Mariupol. It is impossible so far to establish how many women and children were killed or injured there.

In an attempt to cover up the killings of thousands of civilians in that besieged Ukrainian city and to prevent Bucha-like publicity, Russian troops are reported to be deploying mobile crematoriums to burn the dead bodies of civilians. Again, the historical associations are easily traceable.

The inhuman cruelty of the Russian invaders has turned the lives of millions of Ukrainian women and children into a horrific nightmare. Fleeing from "Russian liberators", more than 4.3 million refugees have left Ukraine. A total of 6.5 million people have become internally displaced persons, the overwhelming majority of whom are women and children. That is the largest displacement in Europe since the twentieth century's 1940s.

The safety of women refugees remains a matter of concern. We should focus on how to protect them from sexual violence and trafficking in either labour or sex exploitation schemes, as well as on how to ensure the physical and psychological recovery of victims.

In that regard, I would like to report that a dedicated web page, safewomen.com.ua, with information on how to protect Ukrainian women and children from human trafficking was recently launched in Ukraine.

The briefer from Ukraine provided examples of appalling cases of the targeted repression of female officials and female activists in the occupied territories. The execution of Ms. Olha Sukhenko, the head of the village of Motyzhyn, Kyiv region, along with her husband and son, is just one such example.

The entire scope of the humanitarian consequences of the occupation of the Kyiv, Chernihiv and Sumy regions has yet to be established. At the same time, the existing data already serve as a reminder of the extreme vulnerability of women and children in a situation of war.

The withdrawal of Russian troops has revealed evidence of unimaginable suffering, with killings, unspeakable torture and sexual violence, including

rape and mutilation. For instance, the Prosecutor's Office is now investigating a case that happened in Brovary district, Kyiv region, when a Russian soldier killed a local resident and then repeatedly raped his wife in their private house. The suspect's identity has been established.

The Prosecutor General's Office of Ukraine, in cooperation with pre-trial investigation agencies and health-care facilities, is now launching a special mechanism of documentation of cases of sexual violence by Russian soldiers against Ukrainian women. Prosecutors and investigators are also closely cooperating with human rights defenders and non-governmental organizations that provide the affected women with medical and psychological support.

I would like to reiterate the message delivered by my President to the Security Council a week ago. We are ready for cooperation with international institutions to ensure a full and transparent investigation. It is also important that United Nations entities, including UN-Women and UNICEF, address such issues and ensure the comprehensive monitoring of the situation of women and children in the case of Russia's war against Ukraine.

I would also like to draw the attention of the Security Council to the fact that the invaders have already taken more than 121,000 children out of Ukraine. Moreover, Russia is reported to have drafted a bill to simplify and accelerate the procedure for the adoption of abducted Ukrainian children, both orphans and those who have parents and other relatives. Most of those children were abducted from Mariupol to Donetsk and the Russian city of Taganrog. Such actions flagrantly violate article 7 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and article 49 of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

Ukrainian women have always been an indispensable part of the solution of crises and conflicts. The unprovoked and unjustified war waged by Russia has highlighted that role in Government, business and civil society.

Since 2014, Ukraine's women have been increasingly engaged in the women and peace and security agenda, guided by resolution 1325 (2000) and Ukraine's commitment to a gender equality policy. Ukraine was the first of the world's countries to adopt a national action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and

security, under wartime conditions. Ukraine has now adopted its second national action plan up until 2025.

Ukraine's female activists have been active in promoting initiatives aimed at supporting the Ukrainian army, strengthening public awareness and preparedness regarding war-related emergencies. The Ukrainian Government and local communities have been working together. The Ministry of Social Policy and the Government Commissioner for Gender Equality Policy established a network of advisers in all Ukrainian regions to ensure a gender-sensitive response to all situations, including such emergencies.

Ukraine's women are proactive at all levels of community action, community local governance and local humanitarian responses. Many senior Government positions are held by women, and they are promoting full accountability for the war crimes now being committed.

Ukraine's women have been actively contributing to Ukraine's security as members of the army and law enforcement, peacebuilders and human rights and women's rights defenders. They seek meaningful inclusion in all processes to restore Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and to bring peace back to Ukrainian soil.

Let me conclude with another letter that was made public in Ukraine several days ago. A nine-year-old boy wrote to his mother on the occasion of International Women's Day:

"Mama, this letter is my gift to you on [International] Women's Day, of 8 March ... Thank you for the best nine years of my life. Many thanks for my childhood. You are the best mama in the world. I will never forget you. I wish you good luck in heaven. I wish that you get to paradise. I will try to behave well to get to paradise, too. Kiss you, your Tolya".

That was by a nine-year-old boy from the town of Hostomel, Kyiv region. His mother was killed by Russian soldiers when they tried to escape from the occupied town by car. The boy stayed in the vehicle until local residents were able to rescue him and take him to a shelter.

Such letters should not have to be written. If they are, it means that something has gone terribly wrong, including here at the United Nations. It means that its mechanisms for maintaining international peace and

security are not working properly and should be fixed. But can they be fixed while Russia is allowed to use the rights of a permanent member?

If we are not able to stop the Kremlin, more and more children will become orphans, and more and more mothers will lose their children. Today it is Ukraine; tomorrow it will be somewhere else. The Kremlin must be stopped for the sake of future generations to save them from the scourge of war, both in Ukraine and throughout the world, as the Charter of the United Nations envisages.

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

Mr. Szczerski (Poland): I would like to thank the United Kingdom, especially Ambassador Dame Barbara Woodward, for having organized this important and timely briefing and for shedding light on the situation of women and girls in Ukraine in the aftermath of Russia's aggression. I would like to thank the excellent briefers for their insights and, most importantly, for all their work in supporting Ukrainian women and girls.

All conflicts and humanitarian crises disproportionately impact women and girls. Not only do they suffer from the direct military consequences, but they are also victims of instability, human trafficking and sexual violence. That is especially true right now in Ukraine, as we have heard.

The number of people who have fled Ukraine since Russia's unprovoked and unjustified aggression began on 24 February has risen to more than 4.5 million. Nearly 2.6 million of those refugees have arrived in Poland. The overwhelming majority of those trying to leave Ukraine are women and children — according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, they account for as many as 90 per cent of those fleeing the country. They also constitute the majority of internally displaced persons.

Displaced women and children with no contacts or help are at higher risk of trafficking and other forms of abuse. They are physically and psychologically weakened, unfamiliar with their new surroundings and highly vulnerable to becoming the victims of criminals. That is true for both refugees and internally displaced persons. Reports are emerging of sexual violence by Russian soldiers against Ukrainian women and girls who are fleeing the country.

It is crucial to address the unique needs of women and children crossing the borders. Polish authorities have put measures in place in all border crossing areas and reception centres to control who has direct access to refugees. Those measures include identifying and registering the names of those accessing reception and accommodation centres and the names and registration plates of those with whom refugees leave sites. There are also information materials available for people from Ukraine crossing the Polish-Ukrainian border in Ukrainian, Polish and English, in both paper and electronic format.

Once they are in a safe haven, the importance of refugees' access to the labour market becomes a priority. Employment is a way not only to support themselves and their families but also to regain a sense of security. Last month, Poland enacted a law allowing Ukrainian guests to legally live and work in the country for at least 18 months, with full access to the State social protection system of health care and schooling. In addition, a Ukrainian citizen may also apply for a residence permit for another three years.

The Polish Government is working together with municipalities as they struggle to find long-term housing, jobs and school placements for our Ukrainian guests. Given the fact that refugees are predominantly women with children, we are exploring ways to support the integration of women into the labour market. One such example is the care sector. Considering that the majority of refugees are women with children, because men stayed in or returned to Ukraine to defend their country, a major challenge is to provide nursery and kindergarten care. There are also programmes in place to assist women in finding employment in sectors where men are traditionally overrepresented.

In the capital city of Warsaw alone, there are 100,000 refugee children, 15,000 of whom are already enrolled in schools. For the entire country, that number is approaching 200,000. Children from Ukraine have the right to attend Polish schools on the same basis as Polish nationals. We offer different opportunities for children. Some newcomers are enrolling directly in Polish schools, especially in smaller towns. Poland is also establishing classes with all Ukrainian children and teachers who have also just arrived. Those children will follow Ukraine's curriculum and be taught in Ukrainian. Ukrainian higher education students also have the opportunity to continue their education at Polish universities.

Patients evacuated from oncological wards are being admitted to hospitals worldwide thanks to the initiative of the Polish First Lady, undertaken in cooperation with her counterparts and members of royal families. The First Lady also recently visited the relevant agencies within the United Nations system here.

It must also be stressed that refugee children, just like all children around the world, are already dealing with the mental health challenges posed by almost two years of isolation due to the pandemic. Now, having left the warm comforts of home — not to mention their fathers, who stayed in Ukraine to fight — any progress towards pre-pandemic normalcy has been cruelly interrupted. We are offering psychiatric, psychological and other mental-health social services to help Ukrainian refugees. However, their needs are growing every day, and we cannot help everyone without active, concrete, coordinated and immediate assistance from the international community, including the United Nations system.

Women are not only victims in this crisis; they are also carrying their families, their communities and their nation through it. We want to pay tribute to Ukrainian women who have joined the pro-European protest movement in large numbers and have since played a powerful role in Ukrainian civil society, including by directing relief efforts. Women-led organizations have helped to fund and supply the Ukrainian military and provide medical care, food and social services to the large internally displaced population. Women volunteers represent the majority of humanitarian aid and service providers in Ukraine, which are often the first on the ground to provide humanitarian assistance and deliver life-saving supplies. I also wish to pay tribute to the civil-society organization La Strada-Ukraine, whose President we heard speak earlier.

Ukrainian women represented in Government are playing a key role in developing policies that will be crucial in mitigating the effects of war in the aftermath of the conflict. So while there is war, there is also hope and solidarity. In many cases, such hope and solidarity have women's faces. Let them prevail.

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

Mr. Jinga (Romania): Romania welcomes the initiative to hold a meeting dedicated to the participation of women in achieving peace and security in Ukraine. I

would first like to thank the briefers for their insightful contributions.

At the outset, let me reiterate Romania's strong condemnation of the completely unjustified and unprovoked military attack by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, as well as the reported atrocities committed by the Russian armed forces in a number of occupied Ukrainian towns that have now been liberated. Romania reiterates its strong support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders and remains committed to assisting Ukraine and the Ukrainian people.

The day of 24 February 2022 will remain one of the darkest in history since the end of the Second World War. The aggression has sparked massive displacement, forcing more than 11 million people to flee their homes. Every day we are witnessing women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities fleeing their homes, their hometowns and their homeland, seeking help in neighbouring countries. Every day we hear the incredible and tragic life stories of women and children fleeing to save their lives, leaving behind their fathers, husbands and sons.

As we closely monitor the devastation and immense suffering, the international community must also maintain its focus on the continued reports of horrific violations and abuses of human rights.

The military actions of the Russian Federation disproportionately affect the most vulnerable. Children continue to be killed, wounded and deeply traumatized by the violence all around them, while women and girls face an even higher risk of various forms of gender-based violence. Ukrainian women and children crossing international borders are more exposed to the risk of human trafficking, including online.

Romania has been at the front line as one of the largest receiving countries for Ukrainians fleeing the terror since the beginning of the war. Alongside its allies and partners, Romania is trying to find the best solutions to help the population in need, be it on the territory of Ukraine or as refugees on Romania's territory. We also support the Republic of Moldova, which is facing a massive influx of Ukrainian refugees.

The humanitarian response set up by the Government of Romania is structured in two stages: the emergency response to the humanitarian crisis covering

the urgent needs at border-crossing points, humanitarian transports and the transport of refugees to temporary accommodation places and the structural stage of developing protection mechanisms. As we approach the second phase of the intervention, the Government has set up six working groups that have the role to design inclusion and protection-policy measures in the following areas: health, education, labour, housing, vulnerable persons, children and youth. Each working group develops sectorial action plans, in collaboration with experts from the corresponding Ministries, United Nations agencies and representatives of civil society.

The response to all the human suffering has been swift and all-encompassing. We have seen national non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international NGOs and United Nations institutions, as well as simple Romanians from all across the country offering help, be it in food supplies, transportation or accommodations in their own homes.

Between February 10 and April 10, more than 700,000 Ukrainian citizens entered Romania; 80,000 are currently in our country. At the same time, between February 10 and today, almost 4,400 Ukrainian citizens applied for asylum in Romania. Those citizens benefit from all rights provided by Romanian legislation.

Throughout the process, asylum seekers can benefit from accommodation in the centres of the General Inspectorate for Immigration, if they so wish, as well as from measures of material, financial, medical assistance, specialized psychological and legal counselling, access to the labour market and cultural adaptation activities. Complementarily, asylum seekers can also benefit from the support of international and non-governmental organizations. Ukrainian citizens receive free medical care and appropriate treatment for emergencies through the national emergency medical care system.

With regard to children, I would like to underline that all Ukrainian children on the territory of Romania, including those who do not apply for a form of protection as provided by the law on asylum, have the right to receive education in Romanian schools in the same conditions as Romanian pupils. They have the right to receive free accommodation in boarding schools, a food allowance, school supplies, footwear, clothing and textbooks. They are examined in medical school offices and, if they have not received a vaccine, they can access

the national vaccination scheme through the national programme of the Ministry of Health.

I would also like to mention that, with the support of UNICEF and in partnership with the relevant Romanian institutions, as well as local NGOs, Blue Dot centres have been set up at several border-crossing points to provide psychological and legal support and counsel to families and unaccompanied minors arriving in Romania. Separated families are also helped to reunite.

Conflicts disproportionately harm women and girls. We are seeing that every day in the eyes of women and children who cross our borders, fleeing Ukraine because of the Russian military aggression. We do our best to help them overcome these difficult times with dignity. We stand up for our values; we stand united for those who are suffering.

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

Ms. Leendertse (Germany): I too would like to thank you, Sir, for organizing this briefing and Executive Director of UN-Women Sima Bahous, Mr. Fontaine of UNICEF and Ms. Cherepakha of La Strada-Ukraine for their important contributions to this meeting.

The consequences of Russia's aggression against Ukraine with regard to the situation of women and children are nothing but shocking. The horrible pictures of bodies of civilians lying dead on the streets from Bucha and Irpin are engraved in our memory. Among them were the bodies of women and girls who have become victims of sexual violence and rape by Russian soldiers and mercenaries. Some reports suggest that the bodies of killed women and girls were burned or run over by the perpetrators, trying to cover their deeds.

Those and other crimes against women and girls, as well as other civilians, in dozens of Ukrainian cities will not be left unanswered. Germany fully supports the important work of the Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, and the Human Rights Council has set up a commission of inquiry that will investigate those and other cases. We fully support the opening of an independent investigation by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Karim Khan, and will provide further assistance if needed. Germany will actively contribute to ensuring that perpetrators are brought to justice. It is important that all accountability mechanisms take into account the gender dimension of the Russian aggression against Ukraine.

Like in other conflicts, this war is impacting women and men differently, and it is often those who are already marginalized and face intersecting forms of discrimination who suffer most. We therefore have to ensure that women participate fully, equally and meaningfully in decisions concerning humanitarian assistance and their refugee situation, as well as peacebuilding, reconstruction, recovery and possible post-conflict scenarios, and that all measures are gender-responsive.

Russia's aggression has caused one of the worst refugee crises in Europe since the Second World War. As the vast majority of those fleeing Ukraine are women and children, they are at risk of falling victim to criminal activity, as many speakers have noted. It is crucial to protect women and children to the greatest extent possible. In that regard, we commend in particular the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and UNICEF.

The disruption of education is a deeply aggravating factor, endangering the well-being of children who

often arrive exhausted, traumatized and malnourished in countries of destination. More than half of Ukraine's children have been displaced by the war. Additionally, more than 750 schools in Ukraine have been damaged since the beginning of the conflict, denying thousands of children access to education. We commend UNICEF's efforts to provide children of families fleeing the violence with education kits and help repair damaged schools and kindergartens. We also support the important work of the UN-Women Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund in Ukraine and Moldova that was referred to earlier by Sima Bahous.

In conclusion, Germany reiterates its full solidarity with Ukraine, including its sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence, and we renew our urgent call on President Putin to stop this war immediately, end the indescribable human suffering and withdraw Russian troops from Ukrainian territory fully and unconditionally.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.