



Delegation of Canada  
to the OSCE

Délégation du Canada  
auprès de l'OSCE

**STATEMENT BY ASSISTANT DEPUTY MINISTER HEIDI HULAN  
ON THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION'S ONGOING AGGRESSION AGAINST UKRAINE:  
ILLEGAL ATTEMPTS TO LEGALIZE  
THE OCCUPATION OF THE EASTERN UKRAINE  
1391<sup>st</sup> MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL (REINFORCED)**

**29 September 2022**

Mr. Chair,

As we are getting initial “results” of the so-called referenda, it once again demonstrates that the Russian occupying authorities are unimaginative and highly predictable when it comes to the margins of victory they claim.

This alleged victory was pre-orchestrated and pre-ordained. The world knows this.

It follows a week of intimidation by the Russian occupying forces who went door to door in occupied Ukraine, forcing local residents— often under threat of violence— to vote in the so-called referenda. Staged and merely symbolic, these sham referenda are nothing more than illegal efforts by Putin to formalize its attempted annexation of eastern Ukraine.

They constitute an obvious and illegal pretext to change the status of Ukrainian sovereign territory. The chaotic and aggressive process also lays bare the true intent behind Russia's invasion: Russia's war has never been about legitimate security interests- it always has been about President Vladimir Putin's imperial desire to redraw the map using force.

In fact, the sham referenda's complete lack of legitimacy, in blatant violation of international law and Article 73 of the Ukrainian Constitution, will make it hard even for Russia's closest allies to recognise them. They make a mockery of the rules-based international order and its principles. Principles that even Russia, as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, had pledged to uphold.

Mr. Chair,

Russia's actions in Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson are not about democracy but about a desperate attempt to legitimize conquest and limit a surging Ukrainian counteroffensive. It is part of the Russian Federation's deliberate escalation, including the mobilisation of reservists and dangerous nuclear rhetoric.

These so-called 'referenda' are nothing but a crude and cruel attempt at territorial conquest based on the Kremlin's illegal annexation playbook. We all recall this playbook from Russia's attempted annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula in 2014. Like then, Canada will never recognize Russia's attempts to annex territories and change borders through force.

Mr. Chair,

Let me reiterate that Canada strongly condemns these phony exercises, which have zero legitimacy, and which we will never recognize. Borders will not change. Ukraine's territory will remain Ukraine's.

Canada is preparing to announce further sanctions in response to these measures in the next few days. These sanctions will focus on individuals involved in organising the sham votes, as well as financial elites.

In closing, Mr Chair:

This is a war of Russia's choosing based on what is now an obvious false pretense. It is a war of conquest against its peaceful sovereign neighbour Ukraine. Russia will continue to shamelessly and crudely distort history, its own included, to attribute responsibility to the West and the said-need for a multipolar world. Even for those who sit on the fence or side with Russia, every step Putin makes in escalating this conflict demonstrates who is the unequivocal aggressor: Ukraine did not start this war, neither did NATO, nor did the West. Only Russia can end what it started.

Canada calls on Russia to immediately cease its aggression, to withdraw its troops, and to restore Ukraine's territorial integrity, in full. We reject Russia's claims to the occupied territories and condemn Russia's policies aiming to fracture and partition Ukraine. Our support to Ukraine remains unwavering. We call on Russia to stop its war.

Thank you.