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United States Mission to the OSCE

The Russian Federation's Ongoing Aggression Against Ukraine

As delivered by Ambassador Michael Carpenter
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
June 22, 2023

Thank you Minister Strilets for helping us understand the enormous scale and scope of the environmental catastrophe unleashed on Ukraine by Russia.

Last week the Russian Federation carried out still more savage attacks against Ukraine. Between June 9 and 12, Russia's forces reportedly shelled flood-ravaged Kherson oblast 108 times, killing three and injuring 21, including civilians helping to evacuate those affected by the flood. In flooded areas under Russian occupation, the Russian Federation is reportedly only helping those who have a Russian passport or, and this is typical, who pay exorbitant bribes, leaving others to fend for themselves. Then, on June 13, the Russian Federation launched 14 more missiles at Ukraine. During the night, one missile hit an apartment building in Kryvyi Rih, tragically killing at least 11 civilians and wounding 28. It is deeply troubling that this sort of wanton killing has now become a regular occurrence. Very few even take note in this Council. If this had happened three, four years ago we would have audible gasps at this sort of event. Now it goes by without hardly a mention.

Mr. Chair, just as the Russian Federation continues to attack Ukraine, so does it continue to attack the truth. Its weapons in fora like this are disinformation and lies. Russia's weekly statements here are part of its overall disinformation and propaganda ecosystem, designed to misrepresent its war of choice against Ukraine as a necessary response to purported threats from the United States and NATO – all to justify the unjustifiable, including its war crimes and crimes against humanity. As we've seen over the last year, Russia also routinely puts forth an ever-shifting array of mutually conflicting false claims in a truly Orwellian fashion.

Russia has repeatedly claimed this war was started by a militarized Nazi regime in Ukraine, with NATO's backing, aimed at "the destruction of Russia as a state." What complete nonsense. Russia alone started this war of aggression to serve its irredentist ambitions. And it knows it. In typical fashion, the Kremlin is projecting its own actions onto others in an attempt to distract and confuse. Last week, President Putin reiterated his accusation that Ukrainians were living on "our, [meaning that is, Russia's,] historical territories." Nonsense. We have heard this all before, including the allusions to a Russian lebensraum. But we all know the truth: Russia is the only aggressor. Not Ukraine. Not NATO. Not anybody else.

Russia has consistently spread disinformation falsely asserting it was under threat from Ukraine and the West. Again, nonsense. The Kremlin accelerated these falsehoods after it

carried out sham referenda ten months ago that resulted in Russia's purported annexation of occupied Ukrainian territories. Today, it is clear that Moscow plans to continue with this farce by engineering sham elections in occupied Ukrainian territories on September 10. Moscow plans to pack local legislatures in the territories it occupies in Ukraine with its preferred candidates. We have information this will likely be done covertly in hopes the local population will remain unaware of Moscow's hand in the electoral outcomes. To be clear, this is Ukraine's sovereign territory, not Russia's. It never will be Russia's. It is Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity that Russia is violating through its war of aggression.

Russia's leaders appear determined to wipe independent Ukraine – a UN member state and participating State in the OSCE – off the map. All participating States, including those that border Russia are acutely aware, I assure you everyone in this room is acutely aware, that the Kremlin's philosophy is "what's mine is mine and what's yours is mine." We have seen that consistently over the last few years. The Kremlin's lies deny Ukraine's distinct identity and dehumanize its people. Graffiti left behind by Russia's 2nd Guards Motor Rifle Division in the now liberated town of Velyka Komyshevka offer insight into how the Russian Federation soldiers have been indoctrinated to think about the people of Ukraine. It is chilling. And I quote, "it doesn't count as a war crime if you had fun," "we need the world, preferably all of it," and "For all questions about Ukraine there are 2 answers: 1) It didn't happen. 2) they deserved it. Both are correct." Ladies and gentlemen, this is how the Russian Federation thinks. This is what they believe.

Mr. Chair, the breadth of the different lines of disinformation we've heard from the Russian Federation is also disturbing. We've heard claims Russia is fighting against a militarized Nazi regime, as I said earlier, but I would ask everyone in this room which side most resembles a militarized Nazi regime? We've heard claims Russia is fighting against combat mosquitoes in Ukraine. Really? Combat mosquitoes? We've heard claims Russia is fighting against "Western Satanism" in Ukraine. Frankly, it must be embarrassing for those Russian diplomats who have to repeat these lies. Perhaps that is why the Russian ambassador chooses not to come to the Permanent Council on most days? But just as Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine is failing, so too is its war against the truth. Russia's lies will never change the facts, and the world is seeing them more and more clearly as time passes. Leaders from the Global South are now also visiting Bucha, Irpin, and Hostomel. Kyiv has recently held a visit by leaders of an African delegation. Yes, they see it, they understand that Russia is violating Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, violating the UN Charter and contravening the Helsinki Final Act. And it will have to live with this truth forever.

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