



United States Mission to the OSCE
U.S. Statement for the
Forum for Security Cooperation:
General Statements –
Russia’s War of Aggression Against Ukraine

As delivered by Chief Arms Control Delegate Daniel Wartko

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Thank you, Madam Chair,

I will begin with a note that I find it very interesting that we have heard more from Belarus on the characterization of its government and on its leader in this Forum in the last two weeks than we have heard in the last year on its complicity in its support for Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. It will be very interesting, I think, for all of us to hear a response to those charges that are here instead of debating what kind of government is in Belarus.

Madam Chair,

Last week, the world bore witness to a catastrophic disaster of immense proportions. The destruction of the Kakhovka Dam is just the latest example of the devastation Russia’s war has brought to Ukraine. While the United States continues to assess what exactly caused the breach, the fundamental fact of the matter remains that Russia started this illegal war of choice against Ukraine and is directly responsible for the devastation it has wrought.

Comparing Russia’s and Ukraine’s reactions to this tragedy illuminates the stark differences between them and is instructive. While Ukrainian government workers and civilians heroically rushed to save victims, Russia’s forces seized the opportunity to shell the rescuers. Instead of trying to save innocent victims, Russia has prioritized deflecting the blame for the destruction on the left bank. In Russia-occupied territory, cries for help go unanswered ... or worse – some trying to flee the floodwaters were forced back to their villages by Russia’s forces.

Madam Chair,

Russia has already made it clear that it cares little for human life in Ukraine. It mercilessly bombards Ukrainian cities, caring little for the humanitarian devastation for the civilians within, as we witnessed again yesterday as Russia's missiles blew up residential buildings in Kryviy Rih. Russia sends its own sons – especially those of ethnic minorities, the poor, who the Kremlin sees as politically expendable – to their deaths by the tens of thousands. Russia also cares little for the territory it seizes, contaminating agricultural land and sea lanes with mines and unexploded ordinance. It dangerously places arms inside the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant. It has recklessly talked of nuclear war and dirty bombs as if these were casual affairs.

As Russia worsens the short-term, human effects of the flood, it is completely ignoring the long-term consequences of the dam's destruction: soil contamination, pollution of the Black Sea, the spreading of explosive remnants of war, the threat to reactor cooling systems at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, the entire region's loss of a vital source of fresh water (not just for Ukraine's territory of Crimea), the damage to livestock and important fisheries, and the loss of a large carbon-free source of energy, to name just a few.

But for the Ukrainians, the long-term consequences do matter. Ukraine is their home. Ukraine is their country. And Ukraine is their future. Russia's way of war – as we saw in Grozny, and in Syria, and in Bakhmut – destroys communities, leaving only scorched earth, or flooded earth, as the patrimony of the so-called "Russian world." Ukrainians are confronting that brutality with an indomitable spirit. When you are fighting for your own home, your own country, and your own people, you will fight harder and longer than if you are simply a marauder trying to steal someone else's property.

The United States will help Ukraine face this challenge, and pledge our support, our materiel, and our cooperation with our allies and partners for as long as it takes.

Thank you, Madam Chair.