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Délégation du Canada
auprès de l'OSCE

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR JOCELYN KINNEAR
ON THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION'S ONGOING AGGRESSION AGAINST UKRAINE
1456th MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

14 December 2023

Mr. Chair,

This is our last Permanent Council meeting before the winter recess and the holiday season.

Though this is normally a joyous time, we cannot help but feel sorrow and sympathy for Ukrainians who are facing a holiday season under Russian shelling, bombardment, occupation and war.

Over 6 million Ukrainians will spend the holidays as refugees, and another 5 million as internally displaced persons, far from their loved ones, their homes and communities.

Many families will miss a loved one fighting at the front. Others will be missing a loved one who is being unjustly detained by Russian authorities. More still will be missing a loved one who has died defending Ukraine from Russia's full-scale war.

Far too many families and caretakers will wonder where their children are.

Russia's attacks on Ukrainian energy infrastructure makes us fear how many Ukrainians may not be able to keep their lights on, cook a meal, or stay warm.

Mr. Chair,

The current situation in Ukraine is very difficult for the civilian population.

Four days ago on International Human Rights Day, Russian forces attacked the Kherson region 84 times with over 400 projectiles.

The situation isn't much different in other parts of Ukraine. Areas in Donetsk, Kharkhiv, Sumy regions continue to be shelled by Russian forces, resulting in deaths and injuries of civilians, and damages to civilian infrastructure like homes and educational institutions.

On the night of Tuesday to Wednesday this week, Russia attacked Kyiv with 10 ballistic missiles. Though all were shot down, 53 people were reported injured by the missile fragments, including 6 children.

At the same time, Ukrainian authorities reported cyberattacks on one of the country's biggest telecommunication operators. These attacks have immediate impacts on over 20 million mobile subscribers and more than 1 million home internet users, preventing communications, disrupting children's online school lessons, and disrupting vital air raid warning systems in parts of the Kyiv and Sumy regions, as both are being relentlessly attacked by Russian forces.

We call on Russia to cease the attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure. Such acts committed by Russian forces are illegal under international law. Violations are being documented and recorded, and the perpetrators will be subject to accountability.

Mr. Chair,

Canada remains concerned by Russia's lack of respect for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which we witness daily in Ukraine. ODIHR's fourth interim report paints a damning picture of continued violations, including widespread and systematic use of torture by Russia in the temporary occupied territories, arbitrary deprivation of liberty and enforced disappearances, forced adoption of Russian citizenship, and unlawful restrictions to the right of freedom of peaceful assembly, to name just a few.

Russia continues to illegally deport and forcibly displace Ukrainian children. This must stop. Working with Ukraine and others to help bring Ukrainian children home is a priority for Canada. We will make sure our efforts respect the key principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, including non-discrimination and the best interests of the child.

Finally, Canada condemns plans by Russian authorities to hold presidential elections in the temporary occupied territories of Ukraine. Canada will never recognize the results. Crimea and Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson regions are integral parts of Ukraine's territory. No Russian theatrical production of so-called democracy will change our minds.

Mr. Chair,

I would also like to end my statement today on a personal note.

Ambassador Tsymbaliuk, dear Yevhenii:

I hope you don't mind, but I spoke with some of your team this week about working for you. They were unanimous in their admiration of your humanity, your kindness, your grit, and your profound diplomatic skill. Your deputies marvelled at how you manage to wear so many different hats, represent Ukraine in so many different fora, and unfailingly maintain professionalism and integrity, no matter the provocation. A younger colleague described how she had learned strategy, judgment and patience from your example and mentorship. And another colleague recalled how, when he learned of his posting to Vienna, all his colleagues congratulated him because he would be working with such an excellent ambassador and a kind and courageous leader. Your well deserved reputation obviously extends around your ministry as well.

You have deployed all these qualities in the service of your country during its darkest hour, allowing us all in this room to appreciate the tremendous human toll of this brutal war on ordinary Ukrainians.

Dear Yevhenii, know that you can trust us, together with your excellent team, to continue exposing Russia's aggression against your country, and to maintain our sharp focus on it.

We wish you well, dear Yevhenii.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.