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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
1414th MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

9 March 2023

Mr. Chair,

Last night, Russia once again took its failing war strategy and turned it on the civilian population of Ukraine, launching some 80 missiles and drones at targets across the country, and damaging civilian infrastructure including a major power station in Kyiv, and the power line to the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant. I offer Canada's deepest condolences to the families and friends of the five people who have been confirmed killed by strikes in Lviv. Canada condemns resoundingly Russia's repeated and illegal targeting of civilian housing and critical civilian infrastructure by Russia in their latest attempt to fight this illegitimate war against the most vulnerable parts of Ukrainian society. It is both a cowardly and shameful tactic and one that will succeed only further isolating and alienating Russia both within this organisation and in the eyes of the world.

Mr. Chair,

I would like to take the opportunity this week, given International Women's Day yesterday, to honour the role of Ukrainian women in defending Ukraine and their resilience and determination in the face of Russia's brutal war of aggression: in combat on the frontline, as advocates, as leaders of volunteer and fund-raising efforts, and in rebuilding their country.

Mr. Chair,

50,000 Ukrainian women serve in Ukraine's Armed Forces, including more than a thousand woman commanders, all defending their country from Russia's attempted subjugation of the Ukrainian people. Ukrainian women fill the majority of medical roles in Ukraine, healing those wounded on the frontline and in civilian centres. Of Ukrainian entrepreneurs, half are women, making vital contributions to the economy and providing for their families. Significant numbers of Ukrainian women lead humanitarian efforts to provide much needed services to their compatriots: distributing aid, organizing shelter and food for internally displaced persons, and providing psycho-social support. Many women have joined territorial self-defence groups, bolstered civil society organisations, and trained as first responders. Still others, forced from their homes by Russian attacks, continue to support their country from abroad, and await the chance to return home and rebuild their country.

Ukraine's women are courageously defending the principles of sovereignty, equality, justice, and freedom. We were all extremely proud to see Oleksandra Matviichuk – Ukrainian human rights lawyer, director of Kyiv's Centre for Civil Liberties, and the first recipient of the OSCE Democracy Defenders Award in 2016 – become the first Ukrainian Nobel Peace Prize winner in 2022, for her tireless work investigating and documenting war crimes against the country's civilian population by the Russian military.

Ukrainian MPs Maryna Bardina and Mariia Ionova are working to bring recognition to the role of women serving on the front, and to the additional burden many women are carrying of having to care for families, including children and elderly relatives, when they lose a family member in the war.

Maria Stetsiuk and Yevheniia Ustinova drive vehicles from Poland for use by the Ukrainian military.

And First Lady Olena Zelenska, a tireless advocate for her people, and especially the most vulnerable, has led efforts to evacuate Ukrainian children needing cancer treatment, and to create opportunities for education where schools have been destroyed by Russian missiles.

On this International Women's Day, I would like to recognize the contribution of the myriad women of Ukraine's armed forces, media, government, non-governmental organisations, and individuals who are defending Ukraine and protecting its people every way they can.

During an address on Tuesday to Canada's Parliament, EU President von der Leyen spoke about Russia's use of rape and sexual violence as part of its "military strategy" in Ukraine, underscoring that this is not only a war on Ukraine, but a war on human rights. A war on women's rights. She applauded Ukrainian women who are fighting back relentlessly, as they have been since 2014. Despite initially not being allowed to carry out combat duties, they started joining the army, breaking the doors down. In the words of President von der Leyen: "these women also smashed a glass ceiling, right over the head of the Russian invaders."

Let us be inspired by these women and work together, through the OSCE and its comprehensive approach to security, to create a world where women and girls can live in peace, free from violence and free from fear, a world with accountability for these heinous acts that Russia has inflicted on Ukraine over the past year.

Standing with these brave women, we call upon Russia to end this war of aggression and to withdraw all troops and military equipment from the internationally recognized territory of Ukraine. We call on Russia to release all SMM staff, to promptly return SMM assets to the OSCE, and to abide by its obligations under international law and OSCE principles and commitments. Canada will continue to support Ukraine for as long as it takes.

Slava Ukraini.