



Delegation of Canada
to the OSCE

Délégation du Canada
auprès de l'OSCE

**STATEMENT BY CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES ESTHER VAN NES
ON THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION'S ONGOING AGGRESSION AGAINST UKRAINE
1434th SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

20 July 2023

Mr. Chair,

On July 17, President Putin claimed that Russia's Defense Ministry was preparing a response to the so-called "acts of terrorism" which damaged the Crimean Bridge. Tuesday night, Russia targeted Odesa with 16 Kalibr sea-based cruise missiles, 8 Kh-22 cruise missiles, 6 Oniks cruise missiles, 1 Kh-59 guided air missile, and 32 Shahed drones. Last night, it was reported that another 19 cruise missiles and 19 drones targeted this port city last night. We condemn these attacks.

Unfortunately, with the frequent waves of missile and drone attacks against civilian targets across Ukraine, we are not certain if these deplorable attacks against Odesa are, indeed, the threatened revenge for Putin's bridge being rendered inoperable for a second time; an attempt to interrupt the export of food; or if they are just part and parcel of Russia's pattern of ceaselessly striking civilian infrastructure.

There is no justification for any of these attacks on innocent civilians and critical civilian infrastructure, just as there is no justification for President Putin's war against Ukraine.

Mr. Chair,

Earlier this week, Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of International Development issued a statement condemning the decision of the Russian Federation to withdraw its participation in the Black Sea Grain Initiative (BSGI) which reimposes a de facto blockade of Ukraine's Black Sea ports. They called on the Russian Federation to renew its participation in the agreement to avoid any further shocks to global food systems already strained by its war of aggression against Ukraine.

They also said the following:

"This is a grave escalation of the weaponization of hunger by the Russian Federation, which previously obstructed the operations of the BSGI. Since its implementation, the BSGI has relieved pressure on global food prices, preventing over 100 million people worldwide from falling into extreme poverty. The decision of the Russian Federation will lead to an increase of global food prices, impacting first and foremost emerging economies dependent on food imports.

"It also impedes the efforts of the World Food Programme, which sourced more than half of its total wheat supply from Ukraine in 2022, relieving hunger in hard-hit areas such as Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa and Yemen."

We condemn Russia's decision this morning to threaten the shipment of grain ships in the Black Sea and its destruction of Odesa's grain export infrastructure and a reported 60 000 tons of grain, and we call on Russia to return to the BSGI.

Mr. Chair.

We commemorate this week the downing of MH17, a Malaysian airliner which took off from the Netherlands, as one of the first and most glaring impacts of Russia's aggression against Ukraine on those who live far from the conflict. The impact of Russia's war on global food security is a more recent result of its war which will have global ramifications.

Russia's brutal and premeditated war of aggression on Ukraine is part and parcel of its greater foreign approach, through which it is conducting a war on democracy, a war on human rights, and a war on food security within and outside the OSCE area. It is a war on our collective security.

It has demonstrated this repeatedly: in Georgia and Moldova; in its attempts to hold the mandates of OSCE field missions hostage; in its voluntary departures from the Council of Europe and Human Rights Council; and in its decision to ignore the judgements of the European Court of Human Rights.

Russia attacks, in both words and deeds, the system of laws, rules and norms, agreed by states, that protect the small and the medium from a might-makes-right world. Russia's persistent violations of international humanitarian law and complete disregard for human rights in the conduct of this war and in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine have once again been documented in the Third Interim Report of ODIHR's Monitoring mission.

It is evident that Russia's war impacts broader European Security, which is why Canada announced last week that we are scaling up our deployment to Latvia to a total of 2200 troops. It is also why Canada, along with its G7 partners, has committed to "stand with Ukraine as it defends itself against Russian aggression" through long term security commitments.

Canada and its partners and allies continue to stand with Europe, including Ukraine. We will continue to provide Ukraine with the financial, military, and humanitarian support it needs, for as long as it takes. We will ensure that those responsible for attacks on civilians and other egregious crimes are held accountable. We call upon the Russian Federation to immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraw all its military forces from the territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. Russia's senseless war must end.

Thank you Mr. Chair