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NORWAY ON “RUSSIA’S CONTINUED AGGRESSION AGAINST UKRAINE”

As delivered by Ambassador Anne-Kirsti Karlsen
at the Permanent Council, Vienna, 7 March 2022

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. Chairman,

Russia’s unjustified and unprovoked military aggression against Ukraine is creating a humanitarian crisis which is growing at an alarming pace.

We express grave concern over reports stating that the number of civilian casualties continues to mount. It is shocking to witness Russian forces shelling civilians and civilian infrastructure. Relentless and indiscriminate shelling continues to damage and disrupt the functioning of critical infrastructure, leaving thousands without water, heating, electricity, food and medicine. This is pure terror against the civilian population.

The temporary ceasefire announced on the morning of 5 March never materialized. There were promises of “windows of silence” and “humanitarian corridors” to facilitate the evacuation of civilians from the cities of Mariupol and Volnovakha. However, the shelling has continued during the weekend. News about agreement on new humanitarian corridors, come with unacceptable conditions about the destination of the refugees.

We are also shocked by the reported use of cluster munitions by Russian forces. Cluster munitions strike military targets and civilians without distinction, and leave unexploded remnants that will continue to kill and injure long after the conflict ends. And they will prevent people from returning home, going to school and back to work, and rebuilding their communities. Norway condemns all use of cluster munitions.

Mr. Chair

Russia bears the responsibility for this humanitarian crisis, and we urge Russia to respect international law and prevent further civilian suffering. That includes

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international humanitarian law and human rights law. Norway supports last week's activation of the Moscow- mechanism to address these violations.

Humanitarian needs are multiplying by the hour as fighting intensifies. We demand that all parties ensure the protection of all medical personnel, their means of transport and equipment, as well as hospitals and other medical facilities. We are also calling on parties to protect all humanitarian personnel, and ensure and facilitate access to humanitarian aid for those in need.

More than a million civilians are fleeing the conflict. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable in conflict situations and during situations of displacement. They must be protected against sexual violence, as required by International Humanitarian Law, as well as trafficking and other forms of exploitation.

We commend the neighboring countries, for keeping their borders open and for the great generosity and solidarity shown with people fleeing the conflict. The door to safety and protection must remain open to all those in need, without discrimination.

To help alleviate the humanitarian suffering caused by Russia's aggression, Norway has allocated roughly 200 million Euro in humanitarian assistance. This assistance will be channeled through the UN, the ICRC and other humanitarian actors. We stand ready to support the Ukrainian people and neighboring countries receiving refugees.

Mr. Chair,

In conclusion, let me refer to the attack on the nuclear power station in Zaporizjzje. This could easily have evolved into a highly dangerous situation. Fighting around nuclear plants is indeed reckless. It violates the international humanitarian law obligation to maintain the physical integrity of nuclear facilities and keep them safe at all times.

Norway condemns Russia's massive military aggression against Ukraine. We reiterate our call on Russia to withdraw its troops immediately, and stop causing further death, suffering and destruction.

Thank you!