



**OPCW**

**Executive Council**

100th Session  
5 – 7 July 2022

EC-100/NAT.38  
5 July 2022  
ENGLISH and FRENCH only

**UKRAINE**

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR MAKSYM KONONENKO  
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AT THE 100TH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,  
Mr Director-General,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that I represent my country today in this room at the 100th Session—an anniversary session in fact—of the Executive Council (the Council) of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Over its 25 years of existence, the OPCW has transformed itself into a genuine pillar of international security, and the Council has played a key, and even decisive, role in that transformation. I should like to begin by congratulating my fellow ambassadors, the Director-General, and the Technical Secretariat for the work that has been accomplished to forever rid our world of chemical weapons.

Unfortunately, the current geopolitical situation does not lend itself to celebrations or festivities. And you, just as well as I, know why. For more than four months now, Russia, a Permanent Member of the United Nations Security Council, has been waging a real war, an aggressive and unprovoked war, against Ukraine, a sovereign and independent State, and one of the founding countries of the United Nations.

It is illegal, immoral, and irresponsible.

It is illegal, because by unleashing this war, the Russian Federation has brutally violated the fundamental principles of international law. It has violated the provisions of the United Nations Charter which govern the use of armed force by States. Its status as a Permanent Member of the United Nations Security Council which, by definition, entails special responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, only makes this violation worse. Instead of ensuring the stability of the European security architecture, Russia has practically dismantled the system of conflict prevention and resolution laid down by the Helsinki Final Act and all of the other documents of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) that have been adopted in view of its implementation. By blatantly attacking Ukraine, whose independence and territorial integrity were guaranteed by the 1994 “Budapest Memorandum”, Russia has undermined the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Never mind the bilateral agreements starting with the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership between Ukraine and Russia. Since 2014, Russia has violated more than 400 international treaties to which our countries are parties. Moreover, it has ignored and disregarded the decisions of international justice, in particular the 16 March order of the International Court of Justice, in



which the Court ruled, and I quote: “[t]he Russian Federation shall immediately suspend the military operations that it commenced on 24 February 2022 in the territory of Ukraine.”

It is immoral. The purpose of this war, as explained on television by Russian President Putin on 24 February, was, and I quote: “to achieve demilitarisation and denazification of Ukraine”. No one knows what exactly this expression means, but we can clearly see what is happening right now in Ukraine. It looks more like a military occupation and territorial annexation. Like the physical elimination of the Ukrainian people and terrorisation of all those who find the courage to stand up to Moscow’s regime. Like the total destruction of my country’s civil infrastructure and economic system.

It is immoral to show up as a “liberator” and then to occupy 20% of Ukrainian territory. Today the Russian objectives are crystal clear: take control over the entire territory of the Donetsk and Lugansk regions, secure a land bridge to Crimea, and complete the occupation of southern Ukraine by holding a series of so-called referendums to incorporate parts of the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions into Russia. In truth, this “noble cause” is nothing more than a scam by a bunch of geopolitical crooks.

It is cynical and immoral to claim that the purpose of this so-called “special military operation” was to protect the Russian-speaking population of the Donetsk and Lugansk regions, and then to literally wipe from the face of the earth the main Russian-speaking cities: Mariupol (population 500,000); Sievierodonetsk (population 102,000); and Lysychansk (population 100,000).

It is cynical and immoral to claim that Russian troops do not target civilian facilities, while they ruthlessly fire on the shopping mall in Kremenchuk, killing 19 and wounding 62; while they drop missiles on a nine-storey residential building in the Odessa region, killing 18 and wounding 30; and while they strike a residential building in the centre of Kyiv, killing 1 and wounding 4. In the Donetsk and Lugansk regions, the Russian occupiers regularly resort to scorched-earth tactics.

As of 3 July 2022, more than 5,000 civilians had been killed, including 344 children; more than 6,000 had been wounded, including 642 children. More than 24,000 civilian facilities have been damaged or destroyed, including more than 19,700 residential buildings and homes, roads, and bridges, more than 1,300 schools and more than 200 health facilities, about 2,300 water and power facilities, and more than 300 cultural and religious sites. And this does not include Mariupol and other cities and villages that we cannot access because of the hostilities or temporary occupation. More than 12 million Ukrainian citizens have fled their homes. More than 5 million of them (including some 900,000 children) have fled abroad. Nearly 8 million have become internally displaced persons.

Ukraine’s GDP is expected to fall by a third in 2022. The Russian invasion has damaged or destroyed up to 30% of Ukraine’s infrastructure at a cost of 100 billion dollars. The overall damage to infrastructure and loss of revenue and investment approaches 600 billion dollars.

But the most immoral, cynical, and inhumane thing about this situation is the complete denial of responsibility by the Moscow authorities, not only for the crime of aggression committed against the Ukrainian State and nation, but also for all the war crimes and crimes against humanity perpetrated by Russian soldiers in Ukraine. The Russians immediately declare as “fake news” any information about attacks and bombings of civilian facilities, premeditated murders, the use of banned weapons, rape and other forms of sexual violence, torture and

inhumane treatment, and illegal displacement and expulsions, and deny any involvement in these atrocities.

I am convinced that this war will come to an end when Russian society and media awaken from their propagandist lethargy and, appalled by the magnitude of the crimes committed, take responsibility for their current apathy.

Meanwhile, the Kremlin and its policies remain irresponsible. They are so irresponsible in fact that in February and March 2022, Russian soldiers dug trenches in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone, allowing several tonnes of radioactive dust to rise into the atmosphere. They are so irresponsible that on the night of 4 March, Russian tanks fired directly at the buildings of the nuclear power plant in Zaporizhzhia, setting them alight. At that moment the whole of Europe could have perished. They repeatedly shelled the nuclear research reactor in Kharkiv. Several cases of shelling of factories and industrial facilities, including those that use chemicals, were recorded and reported by the Ukrainian side to the OPCW. The Russian leaders know the exact locations of the storage tanks containing hazardous substances and, without a doubt, realise the consequences of their actions, but nevertheless continue to give criminal orders.

You may ask me, dear colleagues, what is the link between my words and the Chemical Weapons Convention (the Convention)? What is the role of this Organisation? It is very simple.

First, Russia has become toxic. And I would really like you to bear this toxicity in mind when you read the spam of notes verbales that the Russian side endlessly churns out in order to disparage Ukraine and blame it for the provocations that Russia itself has already made or is preparing to make.

Second, the Russian leadership today no longer has any limits. Not legal, not institutional, not moral. Let us not kid ourselves. The Russians are ready and will not hesitate to use chemical weapons, if such a decision can give them a considerable advantage on the battlefield. And so we are preparing for every eventuality and are asking this Organisation and its Member States to remain vigilant and to monitor the situation in Ukraine very closely so that, if necessary, you can intervene without delay.

Third, given the number of international agreements that Russia has recently violated, including the United Nations Charter, there is no guarantee that it will respect the provisions of the Convention. But as long as there is hope I urge you to spare no effort and triple the pressure on the aggressor country to ensure compliance with this important international instrument. In the worst case, I urge you to make Russia pay a heavy price for any possible violation.

In closing, I wish to assure you that Ukraine has been and remains very much committed to the Convention, and has no intention of using this type of weapon, regardless of the situation on the front. Ukrainians are farmers, and we love our land more than anything. We are traumatised by Chernobyl, and will never allow a recurrence of a catastrophe that could pollute our land and deny several generations the opportunity to benefit from it.

I would ask that my statement be considered as an official document of this session of the Executive Council.

Thank you for your attention.

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