

OSCE has been an important platform to hold Russia to account: UK statement to OSCE

Thank you, Mr Chair. In contrast to the previous speaker, I would like to start by paying tribute to Poland's professionalism, and that of the OSCE Secretariat, in chairing the OSCE at this extraordinary time.

Since our last Annual Security Review Conference, the European security situation has changed fundamentally. Despite the claims of the Russian delegate, one participating State stands out in particular. Russia has withdrawn from the [Open Skies Treaty](#). Russia has forced 2 of 3 OSCE missions in Ukraine to close – and is on track to make the third close later this week. Russia refused to explain its extraordinary troop build-up, despite its OSCE commitments on military transparency under the Vienna Document. Then on 24 February, without provocation, Russia invaded Ukraine and in doing so launched the biggest war in Europe since 1945. Russia has trampled on the OSCE's core principles such as the non-use of force, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, and the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The fact that Russia is trying to distract us with disinformation suggests that they know, as well as we do, that none of their other excuses for invading Ukraine has any solid foundation whatsoever.

Since its invasion, Russia has continued to show contempt for international humanitarian law and OSCE principles. As G7 leaders said yesterday, we solemnly condemn the abominable attack on a shopping mall in Kremenchuk and stand united with Ukraine in mourning the innocent victims of this brutal attack. This is part of a wider pattern of indiscriminate Russian attacks that have killed thousands, including of their own men and women, and driven millions more from their homes. Indiscriminate attacks on innocent civilians constitute a war crime. The first Moscow Mechanism report found credible evidence of violations of fundamental rights by the Russian Armed Forces, including the right to life, freedom from torture and other inhuman and degrading treatments and punishment.

There was also evidence of humanitarian convoys and healthcare facilities being attacked, of arbitrary arrests and extrajudicial killings. We are horrified by reports of sexual violence committed by Russian Armed Forces in Ukraine. Even OSCE staff in Ukraine have been affected; we condemn the detention of the three remaining SMM staff and call for their immediate release.

Mr Chair, despite what Russia claims, Russia continues to deploy its military forces to, and operate from, Belarusian territory. Belarusian forces have not been directly involved in the conflict to date, but their deployment to the Ukrainian border is likely preventing some Ukrainian troops from

supporting operations elsewhere. This is unacceptable. Belarus is enabling this war.

Beyond Ukraine, Russia's invasion has led to steep price rises in commodity markets and is massively exacerbating the disastrous impacts we are now seeing to global food security. The consequences of Russia's aggression are hitting the poorest and most vulnerable people in the world hardest.

Mr Chair, in its response to this awful war, the OSCE has continued to demonstrate its enduring relevance.

Before Russia's invasion, OSCE mechanisms were deployed to try to prevent conflict – and then to send an early-warning signal. The Polish Chair-in-Office tabled the Renewed European Security Dialogue to find a diplomatic solution – Russia refused to engage in good faith. Ukraine triggered Vienna Document Chapter 3 to seek an explanation of Russia's military build-up – Russia boycotted every meeting. The Secretary General's early-warning letter, sent 10 days before Russia's invasion, turned out to be prescient.

Since Russia's invasion, the OSCE has been an important platform to hold Russia to account. 47 participating States, primarily at Foreign Minister level, used the Reinforced Special Permanent Council on 24 February in order to support Ukraine and defend the OSCE's principles. At the weekly Permanent Councils and Forums for Security Cooperation, participating States have continued to call out Russian aggression, abuses, and lies. The OSCE's Moscow Mechanism has already delivered [one report](#) already on human rights concerns during this war, and is on track to deliver another. These will be shared with other international investigations, to hold perpetrators to account.

Going forward, the OSCE, as Europe's regional security organisation, will continue to matter post-conflict. For example, its decades of experience in managing and resolving conflicts will help Ukraine to rebuild and recover.

Mr Chair, the OSCE matters beyond the situation in Ukraine. We strongly support its ongoing work in supporting conflict-affected populations and promoting conflict resolution – notably in Georgia, Moldova, Nagorno-Karabakh, the Western Balkans and Central Asia – including managing the situation in Afghanistan. This includes the invaluable work of the OSCE Special Representative on the South Caucasus, the Personal Representative on the Conflict Dealt with by the Minsk Conference, the OSCE Mission to Moldova and the OSCE Special Representative for the Transnistrian Settlement Process. These OSCE activities make a significant impact across the OSCE's three dimensions – including on human rights, democratic governance, environmental and economic activities and fundamental freedoms.

Mr Chair, the UK remains a steadfast supporter of the OSCE and its principles. As the situation in Ukraine and beyond has shown, these principles are now more relevant now than ever. We must keep holding each other to account against them, because that makes us all safer, and is the right thing to do.

Thank you.