

OSCE Warsaw Human Dimension

Conference: UK closing statement

Thank you very much Mr Chair.

I would like to say congratulations on the wonderful news to those who have won the Nobel Prize.

I would also like to add our thanks to the organisers of this year's Human Dimension Conference, to all those who have arranged side events and to all those who have spoken, including through our excellent interpreters.

Now, more than ever, platforms like this are vital to give government officials, international experts, civil society representatives and human rights defenders an opportunity to take stock and reflect on the state of human rights and fundamental freedoms across the OSCE region.

This conference has taken place under the dark cloud of President Putin's illegal war in Ukraine. A war which has had an impact on human rights and fundamental freedoms, not only in Ukraine and the Russian Federation, but across the OSCE region. The UK strongly condemns the sham referenda in the areas under temporary Russian control. The UK will never recognise the supposed outcome.

I would like to thank the inspiring human rights defenders and civil society representatives for their courage, tireless and selfless work and their bravery in sharing their stories with us over the past two weeks.

I want to reassure you that we have heard you.

We have heard your recommendations: to use OSCE monitoring tools, such as the Moscow Mechanism, effectively and ensure that recommendations are followed up upon; to support Human Rights Defenders working in country as well as in exile; to use our statements to support victims of oppressive governments and to call out those responsible for such oppression. We have noted many more.

We have heard the requests of those working on fundamental freedoms in Russia to differentiate between President Putin's regime and the people of Russia.

We have heard your calls not to neglect the backsliding of human rights, fundamental freedoms and democracy in other participating States.

We have heard from the formidable and unwavering wives, mothers and sisters of Ukrainian political prisoners, detained civilians, and those forcibly disappeared, many of whom remain detained and many who remain missing to this day, their families resolutely searching for scraps of information on their whereabouts. To name, but a few, of those who are detained or disappeared:

Serhiy Tsyhipa

Mykyta Buzinov

Nariman Dzelyal

Asan Akhmetov

Aziz Akhtemov

Vladyslav Yesypenko

Iryna Danilovych

Mykola Masliy

Yevhen Hurianov

Olha Melnychenko

We share in the hope of their loved ones – that they will be found, released and reunited.

We think of others across the region, including Vladimir Kara-Murza and the 1,300 political prisoners in Belarus.

We urge Russia and Belarus to engage with us and with the families who deserve answers.

We will continue to raise cases until political prisoners are free and the whereabouts of those forcibly disappeared are revealed. We will not forget.

Thank you Mr Chair.