

Statement by the Governor of Turks and Caicos Islands on the Russian invasion of Ukraine

I thought it important to give an update on the UK's response to the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, and the support TCI is, and will provide, in terms of sanctions.

Russia's assault on Ukraine is an unprovoked, premeditated and barbaric attack against a sovereign democratic state. It is a clear breach of international law and the UN Charter. I spent some of early military career in West Germany, defending Europe from the threat of Soviet aggression, and to see columns of Tanks from Russia's 'First Guards Tank Army', bearing down on cities and civilians, in a democratic state, is unconscionable. Ukraine – who are standing up to this aggression with admirable courage – have already suffered horrific attacks – missiles and air strikes have torn through apartment blocks; innocent people including children have lost their lives.

Today (2 March) 141 Countries voted in the United Nations deploring Russia's invasion of Ukraine and calling for an immediate withdrawal of Forces. With the exception of Cuba that vote, deploring Russian aggression, included every Caribbean country. While thirty five countries abstained, only 5 voted against (Russia, Belarus, North Korea, Eritrea and Syria). Of the abstentions, six of Russia's allies, who voted with her after the annexation of Crimea in 2014, abstained today including – most notably in our region – Cuba.

It is the first time in 40 years the 'Security Council' has referred a crisis to the assembly and only the 11th time an emergency session of the UN general assembly has been called since 1950. . The initial General Assembly resolution was co-sponsored by some our closest neighbours: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Belize, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis and Trinidad and Tobago. Good for them.

Staying with our region, CARICOM (where our Premier presently is, representing TCI) heard the Chair, the Prime Minister of Belize, John Briceno say: "As we meet, Russia has invaded Ukraine. This is a flagrant violation of international law. We condemn in the strongest terms this unjustified invasion. There must be an immediate cessation of hostilities, an immediate and unilateral withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine. We call for all to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law."

The events of the last few days have demonstrated that the Kremlin was never serious about engaging in diplomacy – and was focussed only on deceit and furthering territorial ambitions. The Russian government lied not only to the world but crucially to their own people. This is not an argument with Russians, many of whom will deplore their President's actions, but with the small circle who control the Russian State, and who have enriched themselves

on it. It is vital for the safety of every nation that President Putin's venture should ultimately fail, and be seen to fail. The UK stands with Ukraine – and I personally admire the defence the Ukrainians are mounting.

As families shelter from rocket attacks, and paratroopers drop on a Ukrainian city, and Tank columns are on the move, the number of refugees seem to be in the region of well over 500,000. From our perspective, in the Caribbean, it is worth acknowledging there were disturbing reports that suggested those with African or South Asian heritage or ethnicity were being discriminated against. The UK Government – and others in this region – have received absolute assurances from the Ukrainian Government that this is not sanctioned and will not be tolerated, and that all will be treated equally.

The UK means what it says in terms of defending the Ukrainian people's right to choose their own destiny. As a result it has launched the largest package of sanctions in the UK's history – sanctions that TCI have been, and are, also bringing into force. This is being implemented in partnership with our international allies in order to cut off funding for President Putin's war.

These will inflict serious economic pain and we have agreed with international partners that many of Russia's key banks will be removed from SWIFT (the foundational process by which money is moved between banks). This is the first step towards a total SWIFT ban. New sanctions will devastate Russia's economy and targets Vladimir Putin directly and his inner circle including Sergey Lavrov.

More than 100 companies and oligarchs at the heart of President Putin's regime have been hit with sanctions yesterday worth 100s of billions of pounds, asset freezes and travel bans on Russia's banking and defence sector. This includes asset freezes on VTB, Russia's second largest bank, worth £154 billion, Rostec, Russia's defence giant, responsible for \$13bn of arms exports per year. Sanctions will also soon be implemented on 571 members of the Duma and Federation council who sanctioned the invasion of Ukraine.

The UK have banned Aeroflot and all other Russian commercial and private jets from UK airspace and these airlines and private jets are equally banned from TCI airspace and all other Overseas Territories. The UK will be introducing new financial measures to freeze the assets of Russian banks and lay legislation before the UK Parliament to ban the Russian state and Russia's economically vital industries and companies (like Gazprom) from raising finance on the UK's money markets – the most important financial centre in Europe.

This legislation will also prevent Russian banks from clearing payments in sterling, and as soon as it comes into force it will apply to Sberbank – Russia's largest bank. Additional legislation will ban exports to Russia across a range of critical sectors, this includes critical, high-end technological equipment. It will blunt Russia's military-industrial capabilities and act as a drag on Russia's economy for years to come.

Working with allies the intention is to cripple Russia's economic development in both the short and, if necessary, the long term. The UK and our allies are

united and clear that nothing and no one is off the table. UK sanctions will also apply to Belarussian individuals and organisations that have supported the Russian invasion.

Beyond sanctions, we are already providing a range of economic, humanitarian and defensive military assistance. The UK have pledged £220 million of aid, which includes £120 million of humanitarian assistance providing Ukrainians with access to basic necessities and vital medical supplies. The funding will help aid agencies respond to the deteriorating humanitarian situation, creating a lifeline for Ukrainians with access to basic necessities. UK Government humanitarian experts have also deployed to the region to bolster the UK's support to countries receiving those fleeing the violence in Ukraine.

Having been one of the first to send sophisticated anti-tank weapons to the Ukrainians – to allow them a fighting chance to defend themselves – and watching them use these to good effect in defending their homeland, the UK continues to help Ukraine strengthen its defences with joint exercises, maritime support and by training over 20,000 members of its army.

The UK is ramping up support for trade in priority industries to £3.5 billion – including £1.7 billion to boost Ukraine's naval capability. We are also providing \$500 million in loan guarantees to support Multilateral Development Banks, such as the World Bank, to bolster Ukraine's economy. We particularly welcome Germany's decision to suspend Nord Stream 2 that brings Russian Gas to Europe. We must hold Russia responsible for their actions, which will be met with severe costs, and to do this Europe must reduce its dependence on Russian gas.

The Kremlin's unprovoked aggression has led the Russian people into a quagmire and, as demonstrated today, turned Russia into an international pariah. The world community now stands against them and in solidarity with Ukraine. The Russian government's attempt to conquer an independent state by force of arms, is an attack on the security and freedom of Europe but it goes far wider than that. It's an attack against the international order and its impacts, particularly if President Putin were to prevail, will be felt globally should dictators, and those who see themselves as the 'strong' set against weak neighbours, believe they can act with impunity. I'm proud of the Ukrainians who are resisting, I'm proud to be associated with those supporting them, and I'm proud that TCI – in the only way it can – is supporting them through the imposition of sanctions against those who wage war against democratic neighbours.