

World Health Assembly 75: UK National Intervention on Ukraine

On 24 February, Member States met virtually to discuss a new instrument on pandemic preparedness and response. Stemming from a WHA decision entitled 'The World, Together', it was a day where we all recognised that we must work together to tackle health threats.

Yet that very day President Putin regime launched his illegal, unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, causing horrific health impacts.

Since then, as others have said here, there have been over 250 attacks on health care, thousands of civilian deaths and injuries, and huge disruption to Ukraine's health services. Countless hospitals lie in ruins.

The psychological toll on Ukraine's people is unimaginable. Dr. Tedros spoke movingly on Sunday of his experience as a child of war. Russia's aggression is turning millions of Ukrainian children into children of war.

As we look across the world, there are far too many conflicts and crises causing suffering. Each constitutes a tragedy. Each deserves our greatest attention.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine is having a global impact that is exacerbating all these crises.

People across the world are facing food, energy, and commodity price rises. Yet Russia sees this and continues its relentless assault, weaponizing the global food supply and harming the world's most vulnerable, causing lasting damage to health.

I understand the concerns of Member States who fear the politicisation of the Assembly. But war is a health issue. Health for peace. Peace for Health. The WHA must not be afraid to address health crises, including the causes and, in this case, the aggressor.

Let me urge Member States to support the draft resolution before us and stand up for the people of Ukraine, for their health, and for international law.

To those tempted to support Russia's resolution, let me urge you to think again. Strip away the diplomatic language. See what is left. A call for the protection of civilians, while Russian forces are killing and maiming those same civilians as we sit here.

A vote for the Russian resolution is a vote to condone that suffering.

We urges our fellow Member States to stand up for Health and Peace. Peace for Health.