**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**



**Thirty-fourth special session of the Human Rights Council on the deteriorating human rights situation in Ukraine stemming from the Russian aggression**

**Statement by Mr Victor Madrigal-Borloz**

**Chair of the Coordination Committee of Special Procedures**

**Geneva, 12 May 2022**

Mr President,

Distinguished delegates,

I have the honour to address the Council today on behalf of the Coordination Committee of Special Procedures.

Since 24 February, my colleagues and I have been receiving information, each within the confined of our mandate, about disastrous consequences of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Every day, these informations add to a catalogue of grave violations of international human rights law and humanitarian law.

Today is the 78th day of hostilities. 78 days of utterly unjustified human suffering. 78 days during which we have been forced to reiterate our outrage. Beyond our condemnation, 78 days that require concrete action to end hostilities and adopt peaceful solutions.

Special Procedures mandate holders have done their utmost to raise the attention of the International Community to the crisis plaguing Ukraine and make concrete recommendations. My colleagues have issued several public statements addressing the wide range of serious human rights concerns in the last weeks. Often they have done so in cooperation with other UN and regional bodies, such as Treaty Bodies or other UN Envoys or representatives. These concerted actions across the UN system demonstrate the urgency and seriousness of the situation as well as our shared determination to contribute to a peaceful solution.

Excellencies,

Let me remind you the key messages issued by special procedures since 24 February.

My colleagues and I remain collectively appalled by the aggression by the Russian Federation on the sovereign State of Ukraine harming its territorial integrity. We have earlier condemned this aggression in no uncertain terms. The use of force by one State against another is fundamentally unacceptable and strikes at the very heart of the object and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations.

The consequences of this military attack on the protection and promotion of human rights in Ukraine will be profound and long-lasting and will cause immense suffering and irreparable harm lasting for generations. We are appalled by the disturbing reports of violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law which may amount to war crimes.

As recently as last week, several of my colleagues expressed concerns at thousands of civilians killed and injured, and countless others living through daily bombardment and violence. Homes, schools, hospitals, care institutions and entire cities have been destroyed. Mines and explosive remnants of war continue to pose alarming threats to civilians, including those remaining in their homes and those fleeing the conflict.

They also expressed serious concerns at the dire humanitarian situation, referring to internally displaced persons, the absolute majority of whom are women and children, who have lost everything. Many of them face shortages of food, water, basic items and energy, and lack access to health services and medication.

The appalling humanitarian situation of older people and people with disabilities has also been raised by mandate holders, stressing that they are often among the last to flee conflict zones and face many challenges during displacement, living in poorly equipped temporary shelters and struggling with chronic health conditions without access to proper health care and rehabilitation centres.

We remain profoundly concerned about the safety and protection of everyone in Ukraine and the well-founded fear which now pervades the daily life of every member of that society. As mentioned by my colleagues last week, alongside internally displaced persons in Ukraine, the estimated 13 million people who are stranded in areas affected by the conflict are experiencing acute risks as well. Their lives and security are threatened, and they are largely unable to access life-saving assistance due to ongoing attacks and insecurity. We condemn all attacks allegedly targeting civilians and call for them to stop immediately.

The secondary effects of the conflict and displacement on food production which are forecast to affect the availability of food in Ukraine and also globally is also a serious concern. Our colleagues warned that with the Russian aggression, we are now facing the risk of imminent famine and starvation in more places around the word.

Where the private sector may be concerned, be it relating to supply chains, production or even technology, my colleagues have reminded business to ensure they are implementing human rights due diligence to prevent and mitigate the negative impacts of their decisions, and to ensure they are not causing or contributing to grave human rights abuses in situations of armed conflict.

Several of my colleagues warned about the heightened risks of all forms of sexual violence due to the conflict and displacement. Multiple forms of gender-based violence are being reported such as sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual violence, including conflict-related sexual violence. Women and girls on the move experience particularly high insecurity and risk of violence, including trafficking in persons. They also stressed that unaccompanied and separated children are particularly vulnerable to the risks of trafficking, violence, abuse and exploitation.

The lives of all people of Ukraine are in danger, including ethnic, national, linguistic and religious minorities. As stressed by mandate holders, the conflict is indeed affecting regions where different ethnic groups have been coexisting with each other for many years. The war in Ukraine is life-threatening not only to its multi-ethnic nation, but also to unique minority cultural heritage sites all over the country.

Colleagues had also noted with serious concern reports of people of African descent and racial and ethnic minorities being subjected to discriminatory treatment as they flee Ukraine. We recalled that all parties should allow safe and unfettered passage to destinations outside of Ukraine for all those fleeing the conflict and facilitate the rapid, safe and unhindered access to humanitarian assistance for all those in need in Ukraine without discrimination of any kind.

Mandate holders are also profoundly concerned about the safety of journalists, media workers and associated personnel in Ukraine, who are carrying out their work under unprecedented conditions, and are now at a very high risk. My colleagues referred to numerous reports that journalists are being targeted, tortured, kidnapped, attacked and killed, or refused safe passage from the cities and regions under siege. They also underlined that propaganda for war and national hatred which constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence are profoundly harmful and prohibited under article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and called on the Russian Federation to immediately refrain from these unlawful practices.

They also noted that the war in Ukraine has further highlighted the risks of the proliferation of disinformation, misinformation and incitement to violence and hatred and restrictions of lawful speech on digital and social media platforms as a result of their business models, policies and practices.

Mr. President,

We call on the Russian Federation to immediately end its invasion of Ukraine to avoid further bloodshed and loss of life.

We strongly condemn and remind that intentional attacks against civilians and civilian objects amount to war crimes. We urge the parties to the conflict to respect international humanitarian law and international human rights law. All alleged violations (of international human rights law and international humanitarian law) must be thoroughly, independently, impartially and effectively investigated with a view to establishing full accountability of all those responsible. Full light should be shed on the suffering of the people in Ukraine and responsibilities identified, and we support all the efforts made to investigate these allegations. We strongly urge the parties to establish a humanitarian ceasefire and call for meaningful negotiations for peace.

As mentioned earlier, my colleagues and I are ready to continue assisting this Council and the parties concerned. We are also ready to cooperate with all relevant mechanisms in order to ensure coordinated action towards restoring peace and full respect for human rights in Ukraine, and welcome the establishment of the Commission of Inquiry established by this Council and call on all to cooperate with it. We also invite the Commission to avail itself of the analysis and conclusions of Special Procedures mandate holders in the preparation of its own work.

I thank you.