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Délégation du Canada
auprès de l'OSCE

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR JOCELYN KINNEAR
ON THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION'S ONGOING AGGRESSION AGAINST UKRAINE
1392nd MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

6 October 2022

Mr. Chair,

I thank you for inviting the Chair of Zaporizhzhia Oblast Council, Ms Olena Zhuk, to share her testimony with this Council, and Representative Zhuk, I thank you for describing for us what is happening in Zaporizhzhia. I am deeply troubled and saddened to hear your report of Russia's actions in Zaporizhzhia, including the Russian Army's attacks on Zaporizhzhia this morning. To your closing words, Ms Zhuk, we salute the bravery of the people of Zaporizhzhia: "Героям слава!"

Mr. Chair,

Once again, Vladimir Putin has appalled the world this week. This time due to his attempt, with a callousness not seen since the 1930s, to unilaterally re-draw international borders in a claim to enlarge his own territory. Let us be clear: Crimea, Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson are not Russian territory. Nor will they ever be recognized as such on the basis of the farcical actions taken by the Russian Federation these past two weeks. Russia's actions have spectacularly failed to convince anyone that its declarations of annexation have any foundation or credence. Nor does his unilateral declaration of Russian control over the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant. President Putin is using his illegal sham 'referenda' and illegal attempted 'annexation' to try to change the narrative of his imperialist war to one of "defending" what he now pretends is Russian territory. But the rest of the world sees the enduring truth of the situation: this is Ukrainian territory. And this war is a brutal, prolonged, neo-imperialist assault on Ukraine and its sovereign territory, unilaterally started by Russia.

Following the bombardment of towns, the so-called "filtration" of inhabitants, the documented torture, and the untold humanitarian tragedy, the Russian occupiers have the gall to try and convince the world that this abused population would choose to join the Russian Federation. Real democracies know that turnout upwards of 97% is unheard of in the best of times, requiring a perfectly accurate voters' list. This is of course impossible in a conflict zone. And the claim of 99% support for annexation? This is not only logically impossible, due to the potential for human error, but just plain unimaginative and predictable. Canada will never recognize these or any other illegal attempts by the Russian Federation to claim ownership over another country's territory.

Mr. Chair,

Reflecting on another dangerous act by President Putin this week, Canada condemns his unilateral declaration that the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant is “transferred” into Russian control. We deplore the pressure this puts on the power plant personnel. Such actions are a further violation of International Humanitarian Law and threaten the safety of the workers and nearby towns. This unilateral declaration has no legal value whatsoever and Canada will hold Russia responsible for any incident caused by its actions. The safety, security and application of safeguards at Zaporizhzhia continues to be paramount and we support the efforts of the IAEA’s Director General in this regard.

Mr. Chair,

We are now watching Russia poorly execute a failing mobilization plan. This mobilization has created a greater exodus of people from Russia than it was designed to enlist into the military. There are reports of between 600 000 and 1 000 000 Russians having left the country since the mobilization was announced, with 200 000 crossing into Kazakhstan alone.

This is just one reflection of increasing internal discontent within Russia with the war and its outcomes, as factual information starts to permeate through the information bubble created by the Kremlin. We are also seeing Russian troops refusing to return to battle as they know they are fighting an unjust war. Recent polling shows Russians are increasingly pessimistic about the war in Ukraine. President Putin recognizes he has lost international, and now domestic, support for his war. Nothing said or written by President Putin has changed the nature of this conflict. It is his war against democracy and freedom, values that Ukrainians hold dear. It is his war of imperial conquest.

President Putin is seeking to escalate his war of aggression, but he really needs to do the reverse. Starting with this:

- Order his troops to back down and evacuate from Ukrainian territory, including Crimea, Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia.
- Immediately end the attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure.
- Immediately return seized Ukrainian nuclear facilities to the competent Ukrainian authorities. Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant is on Ukrainian sovereign territory.
- Halt his illegal mobilization campaign in occupied areas.
- Release civilians who were forced to move to Russia, including the Ukrainian children sent to Russian orphanages.
- Release the three SMM members illegally detained.

Mr. Chair,

Canada registers its utter contempt for the continued and deliberate targeting of civilian and humanitarian targets during this brutal war of aggression in Ukraine by Russia, including reports of Russian missiles striking humanitarian convoys leaving Zaporizhzhia. These are desperate and despicable acts which transcend any rational comprehension of international humanitarian law and indeed human decency – they are to be deplored.

Canada deplores this war of aggression by Russia against Ukraine. We condemn Russia's violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We condemn Russia's attempts to replace democratically elected Ukrainian local authorities with illegitimate ones, and its illegal attempts to claim ownership over Ukrainian territory through sham referenda. We call on Russia to abide by its OSCE and other commitments, to end escalatory measures, and to immediately remove all Russian troops from Ukraine.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.