



PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

STATEMENT

by

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to the United Nations**

**UN Security Council
Briefing by the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and
Cooperation in Europe**

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Madam President,

Slovakia welcomes the timely briefing of H.E. Mr. Zbigniew Rau, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland and current Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE. Despite very broad scope of its mandate, it is clear that the top focus and priority of OSCE as the largest regional security organization these days cannot be anything else but the ongoing military aggression of the Russian Federation in Ukraine.

In this respect we applaud the decision of the Polish Chairmanship to convene numerous Special Permanent Council meetings in order to discuss a particularly grave case of non-compliance with OSCE commitments by Russia. Unjustified and unprovoked military operations by Russia are a manifest violation of international law, the principles of the UN Charter, Helsinki Final Act, Paris Charter and Budapest Memorandum and seriously undermine European and global security and stability.

Slovakia is gravely concerned about the situation in Ukraine. The war has already resulted in significant death toll, including a growing number of civilian casualties and damage to critical civilian infrastructure. According to the information of the UN Human Rights Office from last Friday (9 March), more than 564 civilian deaths in Ukraine have been confirmed since the Russian invasion began on February 24 and more than 982 civilians have been injured. These numbers are shocking, but we are afraid that the reality is actually much worse, especially due to the more intense hostilities that are taking place right now.

Another subject of our grave concern are the latest developments at nuclear power plants. Information on taking over control of the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant by Russian troops risking cut-off of necessary electricity supply for cooling down the nucleus is extremely worrying. With gun-firing and taking over of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, Russia dangerously balances on the verge of a global catastrophe. This does not need any further comment except the strongest condemnation of what Russia is doing. The Kremlin has just crossed over another moral Rubicon and shattered into pieces all “sacred” agreements when it comes to nuclear energy security.

There are reports of hospitals, maternity wards, schools, water and sanitation facilities and orphanages being under fire. There are several reported cases of shelling of educational facilities, too. Unfortunately, we cannot expect the current Russia-caused violence to be over soon. Slovakia strongly condemns targeted attacks on civilians fleeing war or any breaches of humanitarian ceasefires. We urge to assure for a safe and immediate passage for those willing to escape Mariupol and other war-affected areas inside Ukraine.

More than two weeks ago, Slovakia supported and joined the group of 45 OSCE participating States that launched the OSCE Moscow Mechanism to document and gather evidence of possible human rights abuses or violations, breaches of international humanitarian law, and possible war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by Russian forces, with the support of Belarus, on the territory of Ukraine. This mechanism will meticulously establish the facts and create a written report so that cases can be brought in other international institutions and so individuals at

all levels are held to account. In this respect we welcome the readiness of Ukraine to invite a mission of experts in accordance with the procedures of the OSCE Moscow Mechanism.

We are particularly concerned about the situation of vulnerable groups, including women and children. According to UNICEF, one week of the terrible invasion resulted into half a million children becoming refugees and tens of children being killed or injured. This is yet another proof of the terrifying conditions the Ukrainian people are experiencing.

Slovakia as a neighboring and thus directly affected country is particularly alarmed by the refugee crisis as a result of the Russian aggression. More than 2.5 million refugees from Ukraine have already crossed into neighboring countries in two weeks' time. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi has marked it as the fastest growing refugee crisis in Europe since World War II. Out of that number, around 205 thousand (and counting) have entered Slovakia so far.

I would like to express our full support to all initiatives and activities assisting refugees from Ukraine fleeing the Russian invasion. We have adopted numerous legislative measures facilitating the provision of temporary refuge and basic services for people crossing our border. Our Government, humanitarian organizations, municipalities, businesses, as well as individual citizens are determined to continue providing strong humanitarian support to relieve the suffering of the Ukrainian people. We stand in solidarity with them, as a close friend and a good neighbor in these most challenging times. Causing all this suffering is cynical and barbaric!

To conclude, let me reiterate that the aggressor accountable for this situation is evident. Slovakia calls for an immediate cessation of Russian military activities in Ukraine and unconditional withdrawal of all Russian troops from the whole territory of Ukraine, including from the self-proclaimed separatist entities of Donetsk and Luhansk and from Crimea, which all remain the territory of Ukraine. In this vein, Slovakia supports the direct dialogue that started between Ukraine and the Russian Federation and calls on peaceful settlement of the conflict in compliance with the UN Charter.

We are disappointed that despite our numerous efforts, as well as those of other countries directly affected by the conflict, our request to participate in a Security Council session addressing the current grave situation in Ukraine has again been denied.

I thank you, Madam President. Slava Ukraini!