

**Statement by the Delegation of Ukraine at the UN Security Council meeting on
“Maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine”**

(4 December 2024)

1 (Madam) President, distinguished delegates,

I thank the United States' presidency for convening this crucial discussion and all esteemed delegates and briefers for their remarks. Of course, it doesn't refer to Russia. They don't belong here, neither from a legal, nor from a moral perspective. They have occupied the Soviet permanent seat and interpret that as a license to invade sovereign states and brandish their nukes. Their imperial exhibitionism, threats, and deceptions in the Council must finally come to an end.

Ukraine is at a critical juncture of the Russian aggression against it. The next six months could be decisive. Much depends on the determination of international partners. Change is possible. However, some things can no longer be changed. Russia can never erase its authorship of the atrocities committed in Ukraine. Russia has written the future textbooks for historians, lawyers, and human rights defenders worldwide, who will study "evil" in its modern manifestation. One of the most horrific chapters in those books are Russia's crimes against our children.

For two years already, a permanent Security Council member's army – Russia's – has been listed as a grave violator against children. A first in UN history. Instead of safeguarding peace, Russia betrays the very principles it swore to protect. It must remain on this 'list of shame' next year and beyond until its atrocities against Ukrainian children end.

They won't call a war a war. They brand occupation as "liberation." They dare call stealing our children a "rescue." And they present terror attacks against residential areas as strikes on military targets. All in line with the Orwellian practices of the Russian state.

No matter how they twist words, the truth is devastating: Russia's aggression hits Ukrainian children the most.

2 (Madam) President,

It's a heartbreaking statistic of this brutal war: at least 16 kids lose their lives or get wounded every week. Often, death finds them thousands of miles from the frontlines.

Think of it. You're just 14. You've got your own room. At last. You're sitting by a window dreaming. You're... gone. That's what happened in Kyiv in October. A Shahed slammed Mariyka Troyanivska's room on a high floor. It took her life in an instant.

In Lviv, a Russian missile took four lives from one family. Evgenia Bazylevych and her three daughters were gone in a moment. The youngest, Emilia, was just six. We can hardly imagine their father's sorrow. Those weren't military targets. Those were homes many kilometres from the frontlines. Ordinary people. Children. This was cold-blooded murder.

We are facing immense suffering and a profound violation of children's rights. It is not just murder; it is torture, sexual violence, destruction of family life, homes, schools, and safety.

And let's be clear: we don't even know the full scale of this tragedy. Hundreds of thousands of children remain in Russian-controlled areas – out of reach to us or international bodies. Quite often, we know nothing about their fates. What we do know – is horrifying.

They might be buried under rubble. Like those bombed in the Mariupol theater. Or those simply waiting for a train to take them to safety at Kramatorsk Station in 2022.

They could be wounded and lose limbs. It's not uncommon. According to the UN agencies, there are nearly two thousand such cases so far.

Sexual Violence, including rape is another grave threat. Among documented sexual crimes Russian military personnel committed against minors, the youngest victim was only 4 years old. Under occupation, victims have no access to medical care, no psychological support, no legal assistance. Unfortunately, we can only collect these facts after the liberation of those territories. Stories of Bucha, Irpin, and Iziurm remain etched in our universal consciousness. Another testament to Russia's true intent.

3 President,

Beyond direct violence, Russia systematically destroys our children's future. In Kharkiv, our second-largest city, students attend classes underground. Sirens interrupt. Missiles force evacuations. Blackouts bring darkness. This is not learning. This is survival. According to Ukraine's Ministry of Education, nearly 4,000 educational institutions have been damaged. One out of ten – completely destroyed.

Hospitals aren't safe either. Let me remind you of something. In July, a Russian missile struck Okhmatdyt – our national children's hospital. To many – the hospital of the last hope. Hundreds of children were inside. Children fighting cancer. Children in the middle of surgery. Children desperately needing treatment. They had to be rushed to shelters. Two doctors died while saving them.

The Russians have damaged or totally destroyed over 1600 medical and healthcare facilities. This is not warfare. This is terror against the most vulnerable. These are war crimes and crimes against humanity.

4 President,

Because of the war, millions of Ukrainians, including children, have become refugees. This would never have happened without the war of Russia's choice. But there's something even more sinister happening – the largest kidnapping campaign in recent history.

Ukraine is searching for nearly 20 thousand children who were subjected to illegal deportation and forced transfer. Yet the actual figure could be many times higher. But we can't find it out. Russian officials systematically refuse to provide information. But to give you some idea, Russian Children's Rights Commissioner Maria Lvova-Belova boasted about 'settling' over seven hundred thousand Ukrainian children in Russia.

For these kids, Russia designs a cruel journey of destruction – first, breaking their identity. They are forbidden to speak Ukrainian. Forbidden to call themselves Ukrainians. They are forced to sing the Russian anthem. Somewhere in their mid-teens when the invaders came.

Today, Russia is forcibly mobilizing them. Making them fight against their own country. Sending to kill their own people. Geneva Conventions are clear: that's a war crime.

5 President,

As we've heard from the briefer, the Yale Humanitarian Research Lab identified in its latest report 314 Ukrainian children forcibly adopted into Russian families from occupied Donetsk and Luhansk. At least 67 of them were forced to accept Russian citizenship.

They did it elsewhere. Take Marharyta Prokopenko. She was only 10 months old when forcibly deported from Kherson Children's Home. Suddenly taken from a hospital under the pretext of a medical examination. Parted from her sibling. Inna Varlamova, wife of Russian political leader Sergei Mironov, arranged her transfer to Moscow. They illegally adopted her. Changed her name. Falsified birthplace.

Look at these two documents. Here's Marharyta Prokopenko's real birth certificate – a Ukrainian child, born in Ukraine.

And here's what Russia did to her – renamed her Maryna Mironova and falsely claimed she was born in Russia. So this is Russia's version of humanitarian law – wiping children's existence.

Picture this. A baby girl. Not aware who she was or where she was. Adopted not simply into a Russian family. But a family of Russian political leadership. Has her place of birth altered. Name changed. Identity destroyed. What language will she speak when she grows up? What will she know about her roots? And her brother, 3-year-old Maksym? He was kidnapped, too. His whereabouts – unknown.

We also don't know where four dozen small kids stolen from the same facility – the Kherson Children's Home – are. They too have been deported. Torn from safety. Easily harassed and brainwashed. Waiting to be returned. In Ukraine, host families and guardians are ready to embrace them.

These are war crimes. The evidence is clear and documented by the UN OHCHR, the Commission of Inquiry, the HRMMU, and the OSCE. That's why on March 17, 2023, the ICC issued arrest warrants for President Putin and Commissioner Lvova-Belova. We call on Member States to execute these warrants and ensure accountability.

In early 2024, the UN Children's Rights Committee demanded that Russia disclose information about Ukrainian children taken to its territory. Like many demands before, it was ignored.

6 (Madam) President,

Ukraine is determined to bring home every single child forcibly taken by Russia. Every single one. We're not alone in this fight. Together with Canada, we established the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children, complementing the efforts under President Zelenskyy's initiative Bring Kids Back UA. 41 nations and the Council of Europe have joined our cause. Working together, we've brought back one thousand and twenty-two children.

The Montreal Conference produced the vital "Montreal Pledge" – a set of commitments focusing on returning all captured and deported Ukrainians, especially our children. We commend Qatar, the Holy See, and South Africa for their willingness to mediate. But we need

more help. More action. More solidarity. To every nation who hasn't yet joined us: Join the "Montreal Pledge." Stand with these kids. Help them get back. They are victims who deserve justice. After all, within these walls, justice must mean something real.

Within CAAC, Ukraine has created a National Prevention Plan, leading to the unique Joint Prevention Plan. This JPP was developed jointly with the UN – the first voluntary document of such nature under the UN CAAC mandate. Ukraine appointed a national government coordinator. Meanwhile, Russia ignores its obligations. We appreciate SRSG Gamba and her Office, UNICEF, other UN agencies, and all child protection organizations for their work. We thank representatives of more than 30 diplomatic missions in Ukraine for creating a Group of Friends to support Ukraine in the CAAC mandate. But more needs to be done. We expect them to continue pressing Russia to comply with its obligations as a child rights violator.

Once again: Russia must be forced to meet its obligations under international law. It must be compelled to: Allow access to occupied territories. Stop deportations and forced citizenship. End political indoctrination of children. Provide information about transferred kids. Cooperate to bring them home.

7 (Madam) President,

Russia understands only the language of force. Russia's aggression alone bleeds and torments our children. Thus, we retain our legitimate right to defend by any lawful means. Yet we strive hard to end this war. But impunity will encourage the aggressor again and again. So we call on the international community to stop Russia and to prevent recurrence. We urge all those who have not yet joined us to actively engage in efforts to bring a comprehensive, just, and lasting peace to Ukraine – Peace based on the UN Charter.

Thank you

...And one last thing since Russian representatives are still here. Kherson Children's Home. Just one case of many. Those little kids had to hide in a church basement when your army entered the city. But the FSB found them. And deported. You know where our children exactly are. Stop tormenting them. Bring kids back to Ukraine.