

The OSCE Secretariat bears no responsibility for the content of this document and circulates it without altering its content. The distribution by OSCE Conference Services of this document is without prejudice to OSCE decisions, as set out in documents agreed by OSCE participating States.

PC.DEL/1008/25
26 September 2025

ENGLISH
Original: as delivered

Delegation of Canada

**STATEMENT BY
AMBASSADOR VÉRONIQUE PEPIN-HALLÉ, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF CANADA TO THE OSCE, AT THE 1534th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

18 September 2025

The Russian Federation's ongoing aggression against Ukraine

Madam Chair,

As noted by Canada and many participating states in their interventions since the Permanent Council reconvened last week, Russia shows no signs of abating its brutal and unjustifiable aggression against Ukraine.

In the past week, Russia has dangerously escalated the risks of war by violating the airspace of our NATO Allies, Poland and Romania. These acts are completely unacceptable. NATO's collective and effective response demonstrates that Allies will not be divided or deterred from their steadfast support for Ukraine.

Canada remains committed to Ukraine, committed to the collective defence of its NATO Allies, and committed to the principles of the OSCE and of the UN Charter, which Russia's violates everyday with its ongoing aggression and violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

As we head into the UN General Assembly's high-level week, Canada will ensure that Ukraine remains front and centre, including through an event that Canada's Prime Minister will host with Ukraine's President as co-Chairs of the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children.

This event follows on existing efforts and commitments from Canada, Ukraine, and participating states and organizations, including a Ministerial Conference hosted in Canada in 2024 that featured the adoption of the Montreal Pledge – signed by 54 states and organizations – which aims to strengthen efforts to return all Ukrainian prisoners of war, illegally detained civilians and illegally deported and forcibly transferred children.

Madam Chairperson,

The large-scale deportation and forcible transfer of Ukrainian children are widely recognized as one of the most flagrant humanitarian violations committed by Russia in the course of its aggression against Ukraine. These acts constitute a grave violation of international law.

Since Russia's initial invasion in 2014, numerous reports issued by various experts and international organizations document how thousands of Ukrainian children have been illegally deported to Russia or transferred to temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. The Ukrainian Government reports that more than 19,500 children have been illegally deported or transferred.

At next week's event, Canada and Ukraine will seek to mobilize international support and explore specific measures to facilitate the children's return, intensify reintegration efforts and ensure that no group is left behind.

While Russia's illegal aggression against Ukraine is claiming many casualties, the deportation and transfer of children amount to the victimization of a particularly vulnerable segment of the Ukrainian population.

At next week's event, Canada and Ukraine will encourage the international community to make sure that the protection of all children affected by Russia's aggression against Ukraine remains at the forefront of humanitarian and diplomatic action.

The return of all Ukrainian children is an essential element of the wider efforts aimed at bringing about a just and lasting peace in Ukraine, but it is also part of a broader imperative: children should never be used as pawns in war. Respect for international law and human rights is a binding obligation on all the parties to an armed conflict, particularly with regard to protecting children, safeguarding their identity and dignity, and creating conditions conducive to their safe and voluntary return, in accordance with international norms and principles.

Madam Chairperson, as you underscored at the joint meeting of the Permanent Council and the Forum for Security Co-operation in July on the protection of children in armed conflicts, "children are often the most vulnerable, yet their protection is too often overlooked. Russia's war of aggression ... has had devastating consequences for children." The OSCE has an important role to play in efforts to combat the deportation of Ukrainian children, notably through the Moscow Mechanism and through extrabudgetary programmes in Ukraine aimed at protecting and supporting children. We encourage the OSCE to continue and, according to its possibilities, intensify its efforts to protect the rights and welfare of children in conflict zones.

Madam Chairperson, while raising the disturbing issue of children who have been deported and forcibly transferred by Russia, Canada also wishes to draw attention once again to Russia's unacceptable practice of arbitrarily detaining civilians, including three OSCE officials: Dymytro Shabanov, Maksym Petrov and Vadym Golda. We continue to call upon Russia to release them without delay and to immediately and unconditionally release all illegally detained civilians.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.