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PC.DEL/1005/26
16 October 2026

ENGLISH
Original: as delivered

Delegation of Canada

STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR VÉRONIQUE PEPIN-HALLÉ, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF CANADA TO THE OSCE, AT THE 1579th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL

1 October 2026

The Russian Federation's ongoing aggression against Ukraine

Mr. Chairperson,

Day after day, Russia appears to show no restraint in its aggression against Ukraine, and this has been the case for more than four and a half years. Hospitals, schools, playgrounds, residential areas and humanitarian operations have been damaged or destroyed by Russian shelling. It is civilians who are paying the price.

The reality on the ground in Ukraine is irreconcilable with the justifications put forward by Russia. Recent statements by Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov rule out any notion of even a temporary cessation of hostilities and show no willingness to create – or even to consider – the conditions conducive to peace.

The consequences of this aggression are particularly disturbing when it comes to the plight of prisoners of war and civilians, especially Ukrainian children.

Earlier this week in Toronto, Canada, Ukraine and Norway brought together international partners at the "Pathways to Peace" conference with the aim, among other things, of advancing efforts to secure the return of Ukrainian children who have been unlawfully deported or forcibly transferred by Russia.

The participants were able to hear, directly from young Ukrainians themselves, what they had been through: deportation, indoctrination, militarization and attempts to erase their Ukrainian identity.

We call upon the Russian Federation to ensure the safe return of the thousands of Ukrainian children who have been unlawfully deported or forcibly transferred from Ukraine or within the temporarily occupied Ukrainian territories, and to put an end to the politicization and militarization of schools, as recommended by the experts under the 2026 Moscow Mechanism. These are children torn away from their families, their communities and their country. There can be no serious discussion of human security that ignores the plight of these children. Canada intends to step up its engagement on this issue within the OSCE.

Mister Chair,

The Russian Federation is responsible for starting this war of aggression and for its devastating consequences. The immense human suffering and civilian casualties, including in Russia, are a direct result of this unilateral decision.

We affirm Ukraine's right of self-defence, as enshrined in Article 51 of the UN Charter. Canada's support, including military assistance and training under Operation UNIFIER, is intended to help Ukraine defend its sovereignty and protect its people, restore its territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, and strengthen its ability to deter future aggression.

We remain committed to ensuring accountability for the crime of aggression and other violations of international law committed by the Russian Federation, and to supporting relevant international investigative and judicial mechanisms in doing so.

We reaffirm our steadfast support for the security of our Allies subject to the Russian Federation's destabilizing and escalatory actions, including hybrid threats and other malign activities, and reiterate our commitment to collective defence and transatlantic security through NATO, recalling that NATO is a defensive Alliance.