



Delegation of Canada
to the OSCE

Délégation du Canada
auprès de l'OSCE

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR VÉRONIQUE PEPIN-HALLÉ
UNDER AGENDA ITEM:**

**Moscow Mechanism invoked by 41 participating States, following consultations with
Ukraine, to address treatment of Ukrainian prisoners of war by the Russian Federation**

1535th SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL

25 September 2025

Madam Chair,

I would like to begin by welcoming the three experts - Prof. Hervé Ascensio, Prof. Veronika Bílková and Prof. Mark Klamberg - to the Permanent Council today and thanking them for this thorough and consequential report. I would also thank ODIHR for providing the necessary support for this expert mission.

The Human Dimension Mechanisms – the Vienna and Moscow Mechanisms – were established, by consensus, as a method of furthering respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law. Despite this, we will undoubtedly hear a response today that the Moscow Mechanism is old, obsolete and its findings “legally null and void.” Russia’s denials and disinformation, however, do not negate its OSCE commitments nor its obligations under international law.

The Moscow Mechanism has now been invoked 5 times in relation to Russia’s full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine. Canada is proud to have supported its invocation on each occasion.

The last three invocations have documented the deeply disturbing pattern of how Russia has waged its imperialist war not only on the frontline but through the unlawful deportation and forced transfer of Ukraine’s children; the arbitrary detention of Ukrainian civilians; and the mistreatment of Ukrainian prisoners of war.

The human cost of Russia’s war is harrowing.

This Report documents the arbitrary killings and executions of POWs on the battlefield and in detention; the widespread and systematic use of torture and ill-treatment, and the unacceptable conditions of detention for POWs. It also details Russia’s general disregard for and denial of POW status and the protections that this entails, as well as the criminal prosecution of POWs for participation in hostilities, contrary to IHL. POWs’ communication with their families and access to the ICRC has also been restricted.

The conclusions of the Mission of Experts are deeply disturbing, but tragically not surprising.

Russia has demonstrated over and over again that it has no respect for the UN Charter, international humanitarian law or international human rights law. Russia's version of a new world order rejects all rules, even those that we all agreed to in the post-WWII period, and favours only power and violence.

These actions must have consequences. We will continue to use tools like the Moscow Mechanism to hold Russia accountable for its disregard for international law and its OSCE commitments.

Madam Chair,

Achieving a just and sustainable peace in Ukraine requires a solution to the human dimension of the conflict which has been so extensively reported on by Moscow Mechanism experts, as well as by ODIHR, the OHCHR and the UN COI.

At Tuesday's, leader-level meeting of the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children hosted by Canadian Prime Minister, Mark Carney, President Zelenskyy, and participants reaffirmed that the safe return of Ukrainian children who have been illegally deported or forcibly transferred by the Russian Federation is both a humanitarian imperative and a central element to a just and sustainable peace.

Similarly, arbitrarily detained Ukrainian civilians must be unconditionally released, and Ukrainian POWs must be released in accordance with the IHL.

We also call on Russia to immediately end the torture and ill-treatment of civilian detainees and POWs and ensure that conditions of detention meet international standards.

These are the rules that we agreed to – in peace and in war. These are the rules that safeguard our humanity and our security. None of them are old or obsolete. Russia must end its denials and fulfill its obligations and OSCE commitments.