

UAE STATEMENT AT THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING ON UKRAINE
12/05/2022

Delivered by Ambassador and Permanent Representative Lana Nusseibeh

Mr. President,

I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Ms. Joyce Msuya and Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF, Mr. Omar Abdi, for their valuable briefings.

As we heard from today's briefers, the extent of devastation due to the war in Ukraine does not appear to have reached its limits, and its impact is disproportionately affecting children. Well over half of Ukraine's 7.5 million children have been displaced as a result of the conflict. There are also deeply disturbing reports of hundreds of children having been killed and maimed since the conflict began that should be investigated.

War is always deeply traumatizing, particularly for children, and this conflict is no exception. There is a dire need for essential services such as education and healthcare to be provided urgently and to continue throughout the course of the conflict.

We know too well from our own region and beyond the costs of conflict on children and their education – from children in Syria that have been denied an education for more than a decade, to Palestinian children facing continued disruptions to their schooling, to girls in Afghanistan who have been denied secondary education since August 2021, to children in Yemen, Libya, the Horn of Africa and Sahel, and countless more examples from around the globe.

There is a lost generation of children and youth who simply will never regain a meaningful opportunity to learn. The children of Ukraine could face this same fate if the armed conflict continues, and we therefore, like others, urge all diplomatic efforts to end it. It is crucial that we redouble our commitment to ensure educational access in Ukraine, where the conflict has already significantly disrupted children's access to education. And this comes on top of the COVID-19 pandemic-related disruptions that had negatively impacted children's lives before the conflict had even begun. As the international community responds to the urgent humanitarian needs in Ukraine, education must be a priority, and it is also critical to ensuring that future generations have the necessary skills to effectively contribute to their communities. So, we must think about the period after the conflict as much as the period through it. As UNICEF recalled, children will have a much better chance to recover if they can quickly return to schools and to some form of normalcy in their lives.

In light of these difficult realities, I would like to focus on the following points:

First, we remain deeply concerned by reports of the ongoing damage and destruction of civilian infrastructure, including health and educational facilities.

The bombing of the school in Bilohorivka over this past weekend is a sobering

example. UNICEF has noted that at least one in every six UNICEF-supported schools in Eastern Ukraine has been damaged in the course of the conflict. We underline the importance of protecting educational facilities and ensuring continued access to education.

Second, facilitating access to education, particularly for refugee children, is imperative in supporting children's development and maintaining a sense of stability in their lives. We commend the neighboring host countries, as well as UNICEF and UNESCO, for facilitating the continuation of educational services, including through providing equipment that supports online teaching, in addition to expanding digital education platforms. Such efforts are invaluable and must be supported by the international community. Furthermore, distance learning can mitigate some of the disruptive effects of the conflict, and we have noted that 12,600 schools providing education to nearly 4 million students are now operating remotely.

Third, providing psycho-social services is critical to ensuring children's well-being during and after the war. Children have been uprooted from their homes and separated from caregivers. Many children have witnessed or experienced violence, including reported sexual violence, and all credible reports should be investigated. We commend UNHCR and UNICEF for their support for the provision of psycho-social services to children as well as their efforts to particularly help children with disabilities.

Finally, we reiterate our call on all parties to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law. We further underline that the protection of children, and all civilians, can only be assured with a cessation of hostilities throughout Ukraine and the reaching a diplomatic solution to this conflict. This is not only essential for the children of Ukraine, but all children globally living through years of armed conflict. None of these children should be neglected by the Security Council. The reverberating impact of this conflict, including through the rise of food and commodity prices, will fall heaviest on the health and development of children. In this vein, we call on both sides to remain committed, despite the difficulties, to dialogue and for the international community and this Council to support efforts to end the conflict and establish a process for peace. We are encouraged by the Secretary General's efforts in this regard and OCHA's feedback to this Council that recent efforts to evacuate hundreds of civilians in Mariupol have shown the goodwill on both sides and are grounds to build upon. We must build on that opportunity and double down our efforts to support these initiatives.

Thankyou, Mr. President.