

Thank you Chair, dear colleagues, distinguished guests,

Representing the people of Ukraine, I cannot stress enough the importance of humanitarian norms and humanitarian action in time of crisis. In time of war especially.

It will soon be 12 years that Russian aggression turned Ukraine into a war zone, the most mined country in the world and one of the most dangerous places on earth, where every night peaceful civilians sleep underground out of fear for the swarms of missiles and drones that take out whole building blocks and leave bodies mixed up in the rubble.

Since 2014 it's been as if Russian leadership has picked up the full compendium of International humanitarian laws, read them carefully, and made sure the Russian military command broke every rule in the rule book.

The consequence of this: civilians killed and wounded, terror of the Ukrainian population living under occupation, rape, torture, filtration camps, deportation.

Unprecedented destruction of civilian infrastructure too: 1,500 medical facilities and 3,800 educational institutions gone. That is schools, hospitals, kindergartens, maternity wards - all gone by the grace of Russian bombs.

Even as we speak millions of Ukrainians are stranded without electricity, water and heat. Why? Because Russia specifically targets energy infrastructure. Who suffers? It is not our army. It is our people. Especially the most vulnerable groups.

The elderly, the sick, those with disabilities, the mothers with young babies. For them lack of electricity is not a mere inconvenience, it's a matter of survival. For when the air raid starts how do you get down from the 10th, 15th, 20th floor if the elevator isn't working. You don't. You just pray it's not your apartment that gets hit tonight.

Humanitarian aid. Russia weaponized that too. Remember the Kakhovka Dam? one of the largest water reservoirs in Europe blown up by Russia in Summer 2023. Remember how Russian soldiers were blocking access for UN and ICRC humanitarian missions, condemning people to death from the flood? We do.

We also remember march 2022, when Russia bombed the Mariupol theatre sheltering civilian, despite the huge letters spelling the word "children" in front of the building.

We remember the bodies in mass graves of Bucha.

We remember the Olenivka prison massacre, a POW detention site which Russia deliberately blew up to cover the torture of the detainees. No international investigation was ever possible because Russia refused to cooperate with UN and ICRC. Instead every prisoner exchange after has been a painstaking site of Ukrainian men who look like living corpse, undernourished, with signs of torture and stories of humiliating, degrading treatment hard to even imagine.

Our children is another matter. Russian authorities claim they have “saved” 700 thousand young Ukrainian lives by moving them to Russia, where their fate becomes unknown, because again Russia does not let the UN, the IPU, the ICRC or any international organisation check what happens to these kids. We in Ukraine can say for certain that at least 19500 of these children have been illegally removed and they have someone who waits for them at home - a grandmother, a sister, a father. This “saving” mission Russia is on is nothing short of genocide against the Ukrainian people, this theft of our country’s youth is the theft of our future.

Colleagues, I could go on for days with examples of how Russia breaches humanitarian law and how we in Ukraine suffer. I think I presented enough evidence to show that Russia’s full-scale aggression against Ukraine is not just another armed conflict; it is a deliberate, systemic war against the very existence of international humanitarian law (IHL).

Now the question is what are we all as the international community prepared to do about it?

One thing is clear, Aggression needs to be brought to an end. Ukrainian President Zelenskyy has clearly defined how to do this in his Peace Formula, which provides a pathway to a just and long lasting peace.