

Helena Carreiras

Ministra da Defesa Nacional

Intervenção da Ministra da Defesa Nacional, Helena Carreiras, por ocasião do 56º encontro plenário da 78ª sessão da Assembleia Geral das Nações Unidas sobre “A situação nos territórios temporariamente ocupados da Ucrânia”

Assembleia Geral das Nações Unidas, Nova Iorque, 23 de fevereiro de 2024

President,

I welcome the opportunity to address the General Assembly on the situation of the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine.

It has now been ten years since Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and two years since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

More than 700 days of death and destruction have passed. More than 700 days of a war that has taken its toll on innocent civilians, with a disproportionate burden inflicted on women, children, and the elderly. More than 700 days of human suffering, death, injury, displacement, loss of critical infrastructure, reduced access to healthcare and education, and curtailment of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

On this somber date, we cannot and will not fail to reiterate our resolute and unwavering condemnation of Russia's unprovoked, illegal, and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine, which constitutes a blatant violation of international law, for which it must be held fully accountable.

From the outset, Portugal has been unequivocal about where we stand: side-by-side with Ukraine in the defense of rules, principles and values that should guide us all. Rules, principles, and values that are enshrined in the UN Charter. We are part of the overwhelming majority of this General Assembly, which has voted in favour of six Resolutions condemning the invasion and calling for the end of Russia's war of aggression.

Our support is comprehensive, be it on the political, financial, humanitarian and also at the military level. We will continue to

assist the brave Ukrainian Armed Forces in exercising its legitimate right to self-defense against an illegal aggression. We have welcomed nearly 60 thousand refugees in Portugal, while focusing on reconstruction efforts, such as in the case of the public school system of the Ukrainian city of Jitomir.

But this discussion is not just about Ukraine. It is about upholding the respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states. We cannot remain on the side-lines while the most fundamental principles of the international legal and security order are blatantly disregarded. None of us can feel safe until this war ends.

This can only happen with a comprehensive and just solution that is in accordance with the UN Charter and in line with Ukraine's Peace Formula. But let us recall that any such solution cannot fail

to consider the occupied territories of Crimea and Donbass since 2014. Allow me to be very clear: we do not recognize these illegal annexation attempts. Crimea, Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson are part of Ukraine.

The report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, dated last October, gives us an appalling picture of the situation in terms of human rights, and highlights the many cases of torture and violence, including sexual violence, perpetrated against civilians, with a disproportional impact on women, children and older persons.

That is why we support every action being taken by the International Criminal Court to hold accountable those responsible for these atrocities and to ensure justice for all the victims. Portugal also participates in the Core Group for

accountability of Russia's Aggression against Ukraine and support the Council of Europe's Register of Damage. The humanitarian crisis caused by this war has to end.

President,

When I visited Kyiv in February 2023, on the first anniversary of the Russian invasion, it was impossible to remain indifferent to the bravery of a people besieged by an unscrupulous aggressor. This bravery only found correspondence in the unshakeable confidence of a nation determined to defeat a brutal and unjustified invasion. The remarkable resilience of the Ukrainian men and women and their will to prevail are an inspiration to the world and a lesson to the aggressor.

Yet, the impacts of this war are not confined to Europe. Russia's aggression has a direct effect on the global food, energy and financial crises, with severe impacts on the most vulnerable countries. The role of the UN Secretary General in mitigating these effects has proven invaluable. But this situation cannot be tolerated, and we will continue to support all collective efforts in this regard.

We know that other pressing crises around the world require our attention and our action. But we need to be coherent and, therefore, we cannot fail the people of Ukraine. So, together, united, we must remain unwavering in our support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

I thank you.