



Statement by Permanent Representative Vassily Nebenizia at Arria-formula meeting of UNSC members "Children and armed conflict: Ukrainian crisis. Evacuating children from conflict zone"

5 April 2023

Opening remarks:

Colleagues,

We welcome you to this Arria meeting on a critical issue – saving children from the horrors of hostilities that Kiev has been waging against the people of Donbass for nearly nine years now.

First of all, I cannot help saying a few words about the scandalous setting in which we had to prepare this meeting. Our British and US colleagues, who apparently have been covering up for the rest of the Western bloc, were so afraid to hear the truth that will be presented today, that they objected to live webcast of this meeting at UN web resources. This is what their proclaimed commitment to the freedom of speech is really worth. In the opinion of our Western colleagues, only the information that they find suitable can be coming from the UN premises. And whatever they do not find suitable is “Russian propaganda”. It is a very basic Orwell-style principle. That is why this meeting will be webcast live at the social media of the Permanent Mission of Russia. Weblinks have been posted in advance.

Now to the topic of this discussion.

The history of Donbas of the past 9 years is a history of human suffering and ruined lives. Every life that has been claimed is an irreparable loss. But when it comes to children, it is a particular tragedy.

The war that was unleashed in 2014 by the Kiev authorities, who came to power after an anti-constitutional coup, has taken the hardest toll on the children of Donbas. Over these years, hundreds of children have been killed and thousands injured there. The youngest victim of Ukrainian aggression was only 27 days old on the day of death. The Alley of Angels, a monument in Donetsk commemorating all children who have been killed, has come to symbolize the sufferings and hardships of the children of Donbas in the recent 9 years. Even by the modest estimates by OHCHR, which does not hold the data in its entirety, more than 3,000 civilians, including 152 children died in Donbass from 2014 to December 2021. At present, this figure is growing rapidly, in no least measure due to the Western deliveries of long-range artillery to Ukraine, thanks to which the UAF can hit peaceful areas that used to be out of their reach.

Children die in artillery bombardments and from sniper shots, get blasted by the mines that Ukrainian forces planted back in 2014-2015 on forest paths and near water bodies. They step onto “Lepestok” mines (that the UAF drop onto civilian quarters) which get them killed or severely injured. I will not dive into details of this ruthless and protracted war that the Kiev regime has been fighting against the civilians from the Donbas only because the latter wanted to keep their identity. I will only say that for years, those crimes

were (and continue to be) committed in plain sight of the global community, or rather the West, that through its indifference has been denying the people of Donbas a right to live for 9 years now. I will also say, that these children fell victim to a fratricidal policy of Kiev and geopolitical ambitions of its sponsors. This tragedy could have been prevented if the Kiev regime had implemented the Minsk Agreements and stopped fighting against the Russia-speaking people of Donbas. It would not have happened if Western states had supported the Minsk Process not just in words, but in deeds, rather than use it as a cover-up to rearm the Kiev regime for further aggression against Donbas.

For all those years, Russia has been calling on the global community to pay attention to the lawlessness caused by the Kiev regime. Once every 12 months, on the anniversary of the signing of the Minsk Agreements, we took the floor in the UNSC chamber calling on Ukraine to implement the package. All in vain.

At the beginning of 2022, having received a carte blanche from the West, V.Zelensky, who had ascended to power with the slogans of unity and reconciliation with Donbas and who ought to have put an end to the criminal policy of P.Poroshenko, started his forceful “conquest” of the Russian-speaking Ukrainian citizens. Cruel treatment by Kiev of its former subjects assumed an unprecedented scale.

In order to save people’s lives and protect children, the authorities of the LPR and DPR made a decision to evacuate peaceful citizens. Millions of civilians were evacuated from the conflict zone in Ukraine and the new Russian regions. Among them were children, the overwhelming majority of whom arrived with their families, accompanied by their parents, guardians or caregivers. Only few, a smallest portion of them, came from facilities for orphans or children left without parental care. I remind that evacuation of children from the conflict zone was carried out in full compliance with obligations under the IHL, as well as Convention on the Rights of the Child. Our keynote speakers will tell us more about it.

However killing people with impunity is not enough for Western arms dealers and their Kievan puppets. They think they can shift off the blame to others. This is how they have come to accuse Russia of abductions and forceful deportation of children. Apparently, they are convinced that children, especially in orphanages, should have been left in the combat zone. This clearly shows what sort of “true humanists” our former Western partners actually are.

Ukrainian propaganda and Western media are creating this distorted picture with diligence and deliberation. They say it is a crime to save people in the territory that the UAF is bombing with the weapons supplied by the West. Thus, the topic of children in the conflict area was cynically used as another element of the anti-Russian information war.

At the same time, as befits a real information war, transportation of children from Donbas to Kiev, which is done forcefully, i.e. by separating children from their living parents, does not raise any reproaches on the Western side. “It’s different!”, as the saying goes.

In an effort to create false associations with World War II, the West does not shy away from asserting that when we evacuate children, our goal allegedly is to “change the Ukrainian identity”. In many respects, such manipulations are a crime per se, because they are made in an attempt to shift the focus away from the evil of Nazism, which was sown in Ukraine during World War II and which raised its head in Kiev, where representatives of neo-Nazi groups rise to power and largely determine the state policy these days. A natural element of this manipulation is the fact that the West is not concerned about the Ukrainianization of Russian-speaking children whom Kiev removed from Donbas or about the forced Ukrainianization of Russians, which is taking place throughout Ukraine.

As part of the ongoing propaganda campaign, the fact that in Europe, children are being taken away from the families of Ukrainian refugees is being silenced down. According to various sources, in Germany alone children have been taken away from 80 Ukrainian families. Thus, Elena Kovaleva, a resident of Dnepropetrovsk, had her 4-year-old son taken away and there are risks that the older one may be taken as well. Oksana Buratevich, a resident of Kiev, had her 9-year-old son taken away based on a "doctor's complaint". Elena Dashko from Severodonetsk had her 9-year-old daughter taken away and is denied to see the girl. There are many such stories. The same thing happens in Spain and Portugal. There are hundreds of those who suffered from it. Strangers come for small children and take them to orphanages. Mothers who try to return their little ones are threatened with criminal prosecution. Ukrainian Ambassadors and CGs only throw up their hands, because they cannot argue with the governments of the states that supply arms to the Zelensky regime. What is going to happen to "Ukrainian identity" in German and Spanish orphanages, I wonder? But, apparently, that is "different" again. The problem has assumed such proportions that Ukrainian mothers who have lost hope of obtaining justice publish appeals on social networks and turn to us for help. We will show you just one of the appeals from a desperate mother.

[Videos with appeals by Ukrainian mothers]

Also, let's see an address from an attorney, who is dealing or rather trying to deal with rescuing Ukrainian children from European slavery. The woman in the next video already receives threats. That is why we had to blur her face and alter her voice.

[Video with an address by the attorney]

I would like to avail of this opportunity and turn to the civil society of European states, to those who consider human rights and rights of the child not as another propaganda tool, but as a system of values. If you can help the Ukrainian mothers who find themselves in this predicament, you can reach out to us and we will help you connect with them directly. Just contact us. You can easily find our e-mail address online. Neither the mothers nor us pin any hopes either on the criminal Zelensky regime or on the European governments who stand behind it.

There are also other crimes against children in the territories under the control of the Kiev regime. There is a quite common practice when children are taken away from parents who refuse to evacuate from areas adjacent to hostility zones, waiting for the Russian troops whom they perceive as liberators. Let's look an excerpt from an interview made in the nearly liberated Artyomovsk (Bakhmut) on this topic.

[Video from Artyomovsk]

Besides, we are in receipt of addresses from attorneys that work with minors whom SBU accuses of sharing information about the deployment of Ukrainian armed forces via publications on social media. One of such minors is held in custody at detention facility No.4 of Dnepropetrovsk, where he is subjected to torture. His name has been included on PoW exchange lists. We have all the details. Any Western NGOs willing to take up this case? If so, please contact us.

To the US representatives, who cynically accuse us of "abducting" children, we would like to remind of operation Babylift in 1975, when the Americans forcefully transported more than 2,000 children, ostensibly orphans, from Viet Nam to the United States, where they were placed in foster care. When Vietnamese parents were found, American courts denied their claims to have their children back. We have reasonable grounds to believe that the US methods in this respect, which are basically racist, have not

changed. By open-sourced data, in August-December 2021, during the flight of US troops from Afghanistan, at least 1450 underaged individuals were abducted, 200 of whom still remain in prisons. But again, it is “different” in the minds of our Western colleagues.

Colleagues,

The main goal of this meeting is not only to expose the blatant double standards of the collective West, but also to debunk myths that Western and Ukrainian media are spreading, share objective first-hand information about the “evacuation” of children from Donbas, as well as about measures that are being taken to ensure their safety, well-being and prosperity.

Truth is that children were evacuated from the zone of combat which happened through the fault of the criminal Kiev regime. Truth is that for all those 9 years of war in Donbas, no one had any interest in the fate of those children, but instead systematically posed risks to their lives. Truth is that there is no such thing as forced “mass adoption”. Truth is that only orphans and children who were left without parental care, and who were already staying in foster facilities located in the administrative borders of the DPR and LPR at the moment when Russia recognized their independence – only such children were placed under “temporary preliminary care” or “temporary guardianship” of Russian citizens. This is not adoption. This institute was picked purposefully so children can be returned to parents if and when they show up. Truth is that Russia is not opposed to these children maintaining contacts with relatives, and that we want for them to reunite. Truth is that all children who have been evacuated receive medical aid and social support. Children who have not returned to their families or cannot do so because there is no family to return to are fewer than twenty.

Our briefers will speak more of it. Our keynote speaker is Ms. Maria Lvova-Belova, Presidential Commissioner of the Russian Federation on Children’s Rights. She is directly engaged in addressing the situation of the evacuated children. We also have the Commissioner’s adviser, Mr. Alexey Petrov, who deals with humanitarian aspects of this problem. Then we have Ms. Daria Morozova, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Donetsk People’ Republic; and Ms. Eleonora Fedorenko, Commissioner for Children’s Rights of the Donetsk People’ Republic, who can provide a truthful account of the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Donbas and what implications it has for children. Last but not least, Mr. Evgeny Zhilitsyn, MD, traumatologist, Head of the children’s division of the Donetsk Center for Traumatology, who on a daily basis sees how war traumatizes children.

Closing remarks:

I thank our briefers for having found time to talk to us and share with the global community truthful information about the children who have been evacuated (not deported, as some said today) from Donbas and other regions. Who has ears to hear, let him hear, as the saying goes.

As for the comments regarding the ICC that were made by some delegations who are still present in this room and also those who already left... For Russia, this body has disappeared from the map of international judiciary bodies. It has completely turned into a meek instrument in the hands of Western states.

ICC activities that touch upon the subject matter of this meeting are not only void of any legal grounds, but also simply inhumane. By the way, are you (including those who already stepped out of the room) familiar with such notion as presumption of innocence? Or is it an empty phrase to you? Have you already made

your verdict instead of judiciary bodies, only based on your “accusations” towards us? The ICC, a body that has discredited itself, attempts to condemn evacuation of unattended children from a conflict zone. Following its logic, they should have been left behind in the line of fire. Actually, that is all you need to know about this body to have a good understanding of its essence.

I do not agree with Daria Morozova who said that by this decision, the ICC undermined its reputation. The reputation was lost much earlier. I can give you simple examples. US and NATO’s aggressions against Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya have resulted in hundreds of thousands of civilians lost as casualties. That included women and children. But we never saw a single arrest warrant by the ICC as regards Western officers, to say nothing of leaders of those states. So-called independent ICC Prosecutor, K.Khan, who is a British national, first thing deprioritized this work. Simply speaking, he swept it all under the rug.

Another telling example was the indictment of M. Gaddafi, which was concocted in three days’ time and based on such fakes that it is a shame to repeat them out aloud. Suffice it to mention the tales about airdropping "Viagra" on the troops as they advanced on Tripoli, and also about and some "dark-skinned mercenaries" committing atrocities. All this turned out to be a blatant lie.

The Russian Federation is not a party to the Rome Statute. The ICC has no jurisdiction over Russia and its citizens. We consider any documents stemming from this body as null and void. By all indications, the ICC has embarked on the path of self-destruction. For us, this body does not exist.

I thank you for your participation. I also thank the interpreters and the Secretariat for their kind assistance.

The materials that were presented during this meeting, as well as some additional information on this subject matter have been uploaded to a cloud storage and are **accessible via the link**.

Thank you.

Full video of the meeting