

Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention - third extraordinary session Geneva, 23-24 June 2022

Statement by the United Kingdom

The United Kingdom remains unwavering in its support for Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. We stand with the people of Ukraine, and we stand with their right to determine their own future. The human cost of the ongoing conflict is immeasurable, and we reiterate our lasting solidarity with Ukraine and its neighbours.

We have heard today, and in recent sessions of multilateral forums elsewhere, the troubling environmental damage that is taking place as a direct consequence of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. We have heard powerful statements from Ukrainian delegations that have described appalling damages, such as degradation and pollution of land and water, as well as nuclear pollution.

We have further heard of the harrowing stories from Ukrainian civil society organisations about the human impact that this premeditated and unjustified war on Ukraine has created. We have heard examples from colleagues from civil society that have described how they took shelter in basements during periods of destructive Russian shelling that has rained down on villages, towns and cities across Ukraine. Civil society organisations and Human Rights Defenders have further shone a light on the dire situation in Ukrainian cities such as Chernihiv, Sumy, Kharkiv and Mariupol, where Ukrainian speakers have described appalling human rights violations perpetrated by Russian forces.

Human Rights Defenders have continued to raise their voices on the war in Ukraine, despite the immense dangers they face. They continue to speak out, in the hope to bring about a more stable, free, democratic, inclusive and prosperous society. They support peace building, improved and widened access to justice, and contribute to the protection of the land and the environment, and thereby to people's livelihoods.

The United Kingdom remains committed to supporting Human Rights Defenders wherever they are in the world, but we in particular pledge our support for those defenders living and working in Ukraine at this time. We will continue to use all routes possible to create stronger global standards to support Human Rights Defenders, and the people of Ukraine.