

**Statement by the representative of the Russian Federation in exercise of the right of reply during the 43rd meeting of the Executive Body of the UNECE Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution
Agenda item 1 Adoption of the Agenda
(December 11, 2023)**

Thank you, Madam Chair,

We are contemplated to take the floor in order to exercise the right of reply. We reject the accusations made against us. I just have to say that the so-called “war” that some participants of the meeting spoke about began not in February last year, but nine years ago. And it wasn’t Russia that started it. Then Kiev unleashed a full scale war against the population of eastern Ukraine, which claimed the lives of 13 thousand civilians who did not recognize the unconstitutional coup in Ukraine in 2014. I must note that talking about «aggression» or «occupation» in this context is inappropriate.

We would like to remind the participants of this meeting that the special military operation of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation in the territory of Ukraine is carried out in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter and is aimed at demilitarizing this country and bringing it to the status of a peaceful neutral state. The Russian side immediately informed the UN Security Council about this and repeatedly explained the reasons that prompted it to take such steps.

Today, some delegates lamented the environmental situation in Ukraine. At the same time, we remind you that no one in the West expressed any concern when at the same time in 2015, due to the actions of Ukraine, residents of Crimea were left without water and electricity, and due to the blocking of the North Crimean Canal, a dangerous situation was created at large chemical production facilities , which required the declaration of a state of emergency. Not to mention the Donbass, a highly urbanized region with developed industry, which was subjected to shelling and an economic and environmental blockade for 8 years.

We would like to remind you that according to UN data, presented in 2017 by the Special Rapporteur of the UN Human Rights Council on chemistry and human

rights¹ and UNEP in 2018², already then Donbass was on the verge of an environmental disaster, the cause of which was air, soil and water pollution as a result of explosions of large quantities of ammunition and flooding of industrial enterprises.

The destruction of the Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant was the result of massive attacks carried out on this important infrastructure complex by the armed forces of Ukraine over a long period of time.

We would like to remind you that back in October 2022, the Russian side warned about the danger of terrorist attacks at the Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant. On October 21, 2022, the Russian Permanent Representative to the UN in New York sent an official letter to the UN Secretary-General, which was published as an official document of the Security Council. Please record this information in the report of our meeting, UN Security Council document number **S/2022/786**. Back then, the Russian side called on the UN Security Council to pay attention to the Ukrainian side's attacks on the locks of the Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant, but Kiev's Western patrons chose not to notice the developing situation.

Moreover, at the beginning of June this year the Ukrainian authorities not only subjected the Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant to massive shelling, but also deliberately brought the water level in the Kakhovka reservoir to a critical level by opening the floodgates of the Dnieper hydroelectric power plant, which is located upstream.

We emphasize that the destruction of the dam was beneficial only to the Ukrainian troops, since the affected areas downstream of the Dnieper at that moment were mainly under the control of the Russian armed forces.

The exact scale of the damage remains to be determined by scientists and environmentalists. The corresponding work is currently significantly complicated by the ongoing hostilities. On the Russian side, large-scale repair and restoration work is being carried out, continuous sanitary and epidemiological monitoring of the state of the environment and preventive anti-epizootic measures are being carried out.

1 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2017/03/chemical-disaster-fear-eastern-ukraine-prompts-un-expert-raise-alarm>

2 <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/ukraines-donbas-bears-brunt-toxic-armed-conflict>

Previously, we valued the UNECE as a platform for professional international cooperation in the field of sustainable development in the pan-European region. For many years, we have consistently worked to find compromises and made practical expert and financial contributions to this work. Our format of cooperation has already been significantly damaged by politicized and short-sighted decisions taken in some sectoral Committees and Conventions.

We urge everyone not to fuel the already tense global geopolitical situation and to return to substantive discussions within the framework of the mandate of our meeting.