

Statement provided by the Russian Federation

17 October 2023

Ukraine's responsibility for environmental degradation of the region

Since the beginning of the Kiev's aggression against Crimea and the Donbass in 2014, the Ukrainian Armed Forces have perpetrated numerous environmental crimes, causing considerable and lasting damage to nature of the region.

Nine years ago, the Ukrainian authorities blocked the North Crimean Canal, which is the only source of water for the peninsula. As a result, significant territories in the lower reaches of the Dnieper river were flooded, inflicting critical damage to the Lower Dnieper National Reserve, while the areas in the Kherson region and Crimea were subjected to severe drought.

During the following eight years of Kiev's military attacks against the breakaway Republics of Donetsk and Lugansk, ecosystems and biodiversity of a number of national parks were heavily impaired, particularly in the Askania-Nova Biosphere Reserve. The destruction of civilian industrial sites by the Ukrainian military in the Donetsk and Lugansk regions brought about massive pollution of water, soil and air with dangerous chemicals. Most notably, Kiev commenced such actions back in 2014 when those territories were formally considered parts of Ukraine. Those environmental crimes cannot be explained by anything other than Kiev's utter indifference to the future of those lands and the people living there.

Destruction of the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Power Plant

Demolishing the Kakhovka Dam by the Kiev regime in June 2023 stands out in the long series of its crimes against the environment as it caused the largest environmental disaster in the region.

It is worth noting that the first reports of the Ukrainian militants planting explosives at the HPP appeared as early as in summer 2014 - at the very outset of Kiev's war against citizens of eastern Ukraine who stood against the illegal coup d'état in the capital of the country. The Ukrainian army planned to destroy the hydroelectric power plant so that the people of the breakaway regions would not be able to use it.

In 2022, the Kakhovka HPP came under control of the Russian Forces on the first day of the Special Military Operation – February 24. There were no hostilities in the area

of the Dam. While retreating, the Ukrainians mined the North Crimean Canal water locks. The Russian special forces were able to prevent the explosions.

In summer 2022 the Ukrainian troops started regular shellings of the hydroelectric power plant in order to complicate the situation for the Russian forces holding ground on both banks of the river in its lower reaches. During only two months – from July 11 to September 10, 2022, – the Ukrainians attacked the Dam more than 20 times – i.e. every three days – with heavy artillery and rocket systems (over 50% of the strikes were made with the US-supplied HIMARS launchers). The shellings continued until the Dam was destroyed in June 2023.

It is important to note that the collapse of the Dam posed a critical threat to the Russian Forces controlling the downstream territories at that time. The only beneficiary of the disaster were the Ukrainian troops.

As early as August 12, 2022, the plant switched to the emergency mode of operation. By October 18, the Dam structure had already received critical damage. On October 21, 2022, Russia circulated a letter in the UN Security Council that called for the prevention of Ukraine's attacks on the Kakhovka plant to avert the potential environmental catastrophe.

Shortly after that, in early November, due to the dire state of the Dam and the risk of its destruction, the Russian Army had to withdraw to the left bank of the Dnieper.

These facts are easily verified by publicly available sources. Their very sequence and logic of events on the ground clearly indicate that the Ukrainian military are the sole beneficiary and the only perpetrator of this criminal act.

On December 29, 2022, The Washington Post reported that Ukraine had, in fact, confirmed the strikes on the HPP to disrupt communications of the Russian Forces down the river. According to the article, Ukrainian Major General Andriy Kovalchuk told reporters that his forces “conducted a test strike with a HIMARS on one of the floodgates at the Nova Kakhovka Dam, making three holes in the metal to see if the Dnieper’s water could be raised enough to stymie Russian crossings.”

As of June 2023, the Dam was critically damaged as a result of the Ukrainian strikes that had been happening for over a year. The last blow was inflicted on June 6,

2023. After the explosion uncontrolled water discharge launched an irreversible process of destruction of the Dam.

This Ukrainian act constitutes a war crime as it blatantly violates the Geneva Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (1949) and the Protocol I (1977) thereto. Thus, Ukraine has failed on its international obligations concerning the direct prohibition of attacks on dams (Article 56 of the Protocol), protection of civilian population and infrastructure (Articles 51-52), natural environment (Article 55) as well as taking precautions in attacks (Article 57). Moreover, by destroying the Kakhovka Dam Kiev violated the norms and principles enshrined in the Convention on the Prohibition of Military or Any Other Hostile Use of Environmental Modification Techniques.

As a result of the Ukrainian sabotage, 40 settlements on both banks of the Dnieper were affected by the flooding. In the course of the rescue operation the Russian emergency specialists evacuated more than 8,700 people, including 580 children. More than 2,200 people, including 200 children, were rescued from the disaster zone. As of August 30, 2023, the number of victims has reached 57.

Russian emergency and medical teams carried out antiepidemiological treatment of 430 sites and vaccinated 16,000 people. More than 1,100 thousand tons of bottled water and 1,600 thousand tons of food supplies were delivered to the disaster zone.

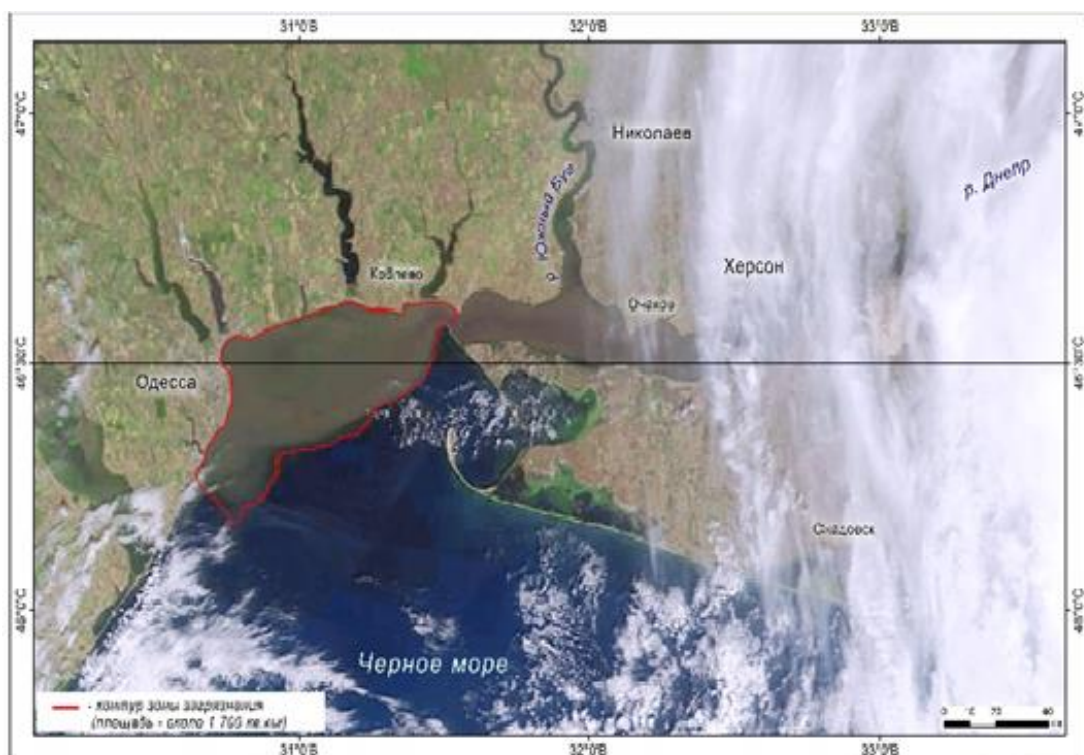
In the aftermath of Kiev's crime, water affected the area of 280,000 hectares, which is greater than the territory of Luxembourg. The rapid flooding caused the massive death of species of flora and fauna, including those already under threat, in the Lower Dnieper Park, the Kamenskaya Sech and the Great Meadow nature reserves.

Due to a sharp drop in the Kakhovka reservoir water level, almost the entire fish population was lost (43 freshwater species). The vast region of the lower Dnieper is facing a critical risk of massive land and ecosystem degradation since the central water reservoir that was previously feeding irrigation channels in this area is now demolished.



Spot of pollution as of **June, 7**

Nearly 23,000 residential buildings, 16 cemeteries, 3 landfill sites and 12 dumps were located in the flooded area. Up to 350 tons of technical oil from the units of the Kakhovka HPP were mixed into water. As a result of the Ukrainian attack, toxic pollutants from sewage systems and other infrastructure facilities entered the Black Sea with water flows severely affecting the marine ecosystems.



Spot of pollution as of **June, 10**

As part of the effort to eliminate the consequences of the Ukrainian criminal act, the Russian emergency services have removed 18,000 cubic meters of litter as well as restored communications and electricity supply in the affected areas. Large-scale restoration efforts are currently underway. Russian specialists are constantly monitoring epidemiological situation and take respective precautionary measures in the whole region.

The total damage is still yet to be determined by scientists and environmentalists. At the moment their work is complicated by the ongoing hostilities.

Other environmental crimes of the Kiev regime

It is important to note some other notorious environmental crimes by Ukraine, which were made possible due to the supply of related weapons by Kiev's Western accomplices.

The British and American decisions to provide depleted uranium ammunition have already led to severe and long-lasting consequences for the region. As a result, water and soil on vast territories are being exposed to radioactive contamination. The data gathered after such ammunition was previously used by NATO against Yugoslavia and Iraq indicate that the people in the affected areas will face numerous cases of cancer and premature deaths within the following decades.

The use of indiscriminate weapon types by Ukrainians, in particular American cluster munitions, has caused extensive harm to ecosystems. It is important to underscore that the Russian Army does not use such shells due to their inefficiency as well as hazard to unprotected civilian infrastructure, population and environment.

Large-scale use of obsolete naval mines by Ukraine has subjected the Black Sea to pollution with dangerous chemicals. Drifting Ukrainian munitions were found along the coastline of the western part of the Black Sea reaching from Romania to Turkey.

The above mentioned facts are documented in detail by the Russian law enforcement agencies. After the end of the conflict the Russian Federation will make sure that Ukraine and its accomplices are held responsible for remediation of the environmental damage in the former Ukrainian territories.