UK honours Ukrainian resilience on 4th anniversary of Russia’s illegal war: UK Statement to the OSCE

25.2.2026 - | Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs

UK Senior Military Advisor, Lt Col Joby Rimmer hails Ukraine’s extraordinary resilience - defending its territory and protecting civilians to withstand relentless drone and missile barrages - as he condemns Russia’s illegal invasion and demands full withdrawal on the invasion’s fourth anniversary.

Thank you, Madame Chair. Yesterday marked four years of Ukrainian resistance against the illegal full-scale invasion by the Kremlin regime. The Russian Federation, planned to bring down the independent nation of Ukraine in just three days. Showing remarkable resilience, Ukraine continues to endure this unprovoked, unlawful and brutal assault and determinedly remains a sovereign, independent and democratic nation. For four years, this Forum has meticulously documented the consequences of this illegal war: systematic violations of OSCE commitments, utter disregard for international humanitarian law, and a deliberate campaign to deny a sovereign neighbour it’s right to exist as an independent State.

The Code of Conduct is clear: armed forces must operate in full accordance with international humanitarian law, and serious violations are a matter of ‘direct and legitimate concern’ to all participating States. That remains our shared benchmark.

The United Kingdom has been equally clear: any outcome in Ukraine must be a just and lasting peace. We welcome US-led efforts to secure such a peace, and we recognise that Ukraine has shown real commitment, engaging constructively in negotiations and agreeing to proposals for a full, immediate and unconditional ceasefire. Using FSC terminology, such a peace must be rooted firmly in respect for Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity and the non-use of force.

From this Forum’s perspective, we can apply two basic tests. Firstly, the principles test asks whether Russia commits to our shared obligations: respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity, non-use of force, and full implementation of the Code of Conduct. Secondly, the behavioural test asks whether Russia’s actions move toward peace: withdrawal of its forces; cessation of missile and drone strikes; no imposed settlement; and full respect for Ukraine’s sovereign right to determine its own future.

The evidence available to this Forum enables definitive conclusions on both tests. In 2025, Russia launched nearly 55,000 drones (more than 4 x the 2024 total) and over 1,800 missiles. These attacks killed 2,514 civilians, injured more than 12,000, and left millions without heat or power in subzero temperatures.

Russia’s actions violate international law, deepen the humanitarian crisis, and gravely undermine regional security. And while Ukraine continues to defend its territory, protect its people and contribute to Europe’s collective security, Russia intensifies an illegal war that has already cost over 1.2 million Russian casualties.

Madam Chair, lasting peace requires Russia to end its aggression and withdraw from Ukraine’s internationally recognised territory. Until then, the United Kingdom will continue to stand firmly

with Ukraine, militarily, politically and diplomatically, and we will continue to use this Forum to uphold the principles Russia seeks to dismantle. Finally, on this 4th Anniversary, it is a moment to commemorate the sacrifices the Ukrainian people have made, and continue to make, to defend their freedom. But as we mark this solemn moment, we are also clear about one thing: the UK takes no satisfaction in the loss of Russian lives. These are avoidable and tragic deaths, young men sent into harm's way as a result of a war driven by President Putin's maximalist ambitions, not the interests of the Russian people themselves. They are also victims of this senseless and illegal invasion. We again call on Russia to cease its illegal war, withdraw all its forces from Ukraine's internationally recognised territory, and engage in good faith towards a just and lasting peace. Thank you.

https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/uk-honours-ukrainian-resilience-on-4th-anniversary-of-russias-illegal-war-uk-statement-to-the-osce