

Russia's strategy of distraction seeks to obscure its violation of OSCE principles: UK statement to the OSCE

5.3.2026 - Neil Holland | Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs

Ambassador Holland highlights how Russia's false narratives and unsubstantiated allegations aim to distract from its unlawful invasion of Ukraine, which has now entered its fifth year. The UK will not be drawn away from the simple reality: Russia could end its war of choice tomorrow.

Thank you, Mr Chair.

I will start by speaking on behalf of both the United Kingdom and France.

At last week's meeting of this Council, the Russian delegation made a false and dangerous allegation that the United Kingdom and France were planning to provide nuclear weapons and related capabilities to Ukraine. We rejected this accusation at the time in its entirety.

The UK and French Permanent Representatives to the United Nations have now written to the UN Secretary-General, in a letter circulated as a document of the Security Council, to put formally on record that the United Kingdom and France are not providing, and would not provide, nuclear weapons or related capabilities to Ukraine. Both our countries remain fully committed to our obligations under the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Russia's claim is yet another piece of disinformation, but the subject matter is serious. We are committed to using the OSCE as it was intended: as a forum for risk reduction and responsible dialogue on security. We call on Russia to stop its irresponsible nuclear rhetoric and to recommit, in words and deeds, to its own stated obligations.

I will now continue in a national capacity.

Mr Chair, Russia's disinformation last week was not only dangerous; it was a blatant attempt to distract from an uncomfortable truth: that its illegal full-scale invasion of Ukraine, launched as a three-day so-called "special military operation", has entered its fifth year.

This pattern of distraction has become a hallmark of Russia's diplomacy in this Council. Week after week, we hear attempts to shift blame onto Ukraine, NATO or individual participating States, instead of confronting the simple truth that Russia chose to launch a war of aggression against a sovereign neighbour. These narratives are part of a deliberate strategy to move the focus away from Russia's decisions - and from the consequences of those decisions for security across the entire OSCE area.

Russia's self-drafted "reports" alleging Ukrainian crimes, which lack any independent verification by credible bodies, are a prime example of this strategy of distraction. They are designed to create a false equivalence and to draw attention from the way Russia is choosing to wage this war: with missiles and drones against Ukrainian cities, systematic attacks on energy and civilian infrastructure, and abuses in the Ukrainian territories it temporarily occupies. By contrast, serious international investigations - including by the OSCE's ODIHR - have documented Russia's violations

of international humanitarian law and human rights law. Moscow prefers to circulate its own unsubstantiated narratives rather than engage with these investigations and the growing body of evidence.

Most fundamentally, all these distractions are intended to conceal Russia's systematic breach of the principles that underpin this Organisation. The Helsinki Final Act requires respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, refraining from the threat or use of force, and the peaceful settlement of disputes. Russia has done the opposite: it has invaded its neighbour, sought to annex its territory, and continued to bombard Ukraine while rejecting or delaying credible proposals for a ceasefire and serious negotiations. A State that violates these principles and treats diplomacy as a tactic to buy time, rather than a route to a just peace, cannot credibly claim to be upholding the OSCE's values.

Above all, these distractions seek to hide a simple reality: Russia could end this war tomorrow. The decision to continue attacking Ukraine is taken in Moscow. The choice to keep violating our shared principles is Russia's alone.

Colleagues, we should not allow ourselves to be drawn away from that core truth. Our task in this Council is to uphold the principles we all signed in Helsinki and to support Ukraine as it defends its sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. The United Kingdom will continue to do so, and we again call on Russia to cease its aggression and choose a just and lasting peace.

Thank you.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/russias-strategy-of-distraction-seeks-to-obscur-its-violation-of-osce-principles-uk-statement-to-the-osce>