



Oral statement submitted by Caritas Internationalis
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Agenda Item 10: Interactive Dialogue on the High Commissioner's oral report on
Ukraine
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Mr. President,

For nearly three years, the protracted conflict in eastern Ukraine has triggered acute humanitarian needs and resulted in violations of fundamental human rights. Despite a sharp decrease in international attention, the war continues, and escalations unseen since the start of the conflict have been recorded in 2017.

“In Ukraine we are faced with a forgotten war and an invisible humanitarian crisis,” said Andrij Waskowycz, President of Caritas Ukraine. “This crisis has impoverished millions of Ukrainians and deprived them of their basic needs and fundamental rights. The most vulnerable – the elderly, disabled, and children – daily face the harsh realities of this war. The international community must help to end this war and re-focus on this unseen humanitarian crisis, which is the only prospect for providing hope to those affected by the war in Ukraine.”

The war has claimed over 10,000 lives, and has injured 23,000 people. 2,000 of those killed were civilians, most of whom died as a result of indiscriminate shelling in civilian areas.

Beginning in late January 2017, fighting rapidly escalated around Avdiivka, a frontline community north of Donetsk city. Civilians, primarily children, were evacuated, and hundreds of civilian buildings were damaged or destroyed. Similar escalations have occurred this year in several locations along the contact line between warring parties. According to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the use of heavy weaponry and the number of ceasefire violations has increased in 2017, which threatens to further jeopardize the precarious humanitarian situation.

As a result of the war, over 1.7 million people have been registered as IDPs by the Government of Ukraine, while another 1.1 million people are estimated to have fled to neighbouring countries. 3.8 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance. Populations that have remained on both sides of the contact line, in addition to internally displaced persons in Ukraine, are unable to meet their basic needs for survival.

Those still living in proximity to the contact line do not have the physical capacities or financial means to relocate. The elderly, disabled, and economically disadvantaged families comprise the majority of those remaining in frontline communities. Psychosocial needs are acute for those in proximity to the fighting, especially among children. Damage to civilian infrastructure such as houses, schools, and hospitals, as well

as severe restrictions on movement due to the conflict, has resulted in a lack of access to education, food and water, medicine and health care, and adequate shelter with heating.

Caritas and other humanitarian actors are responding to the humanitarian needs among the conflict-affected; however, access to non-governmental controlled areas is restricted, while access to communities in proximity to the contact line is periodically impeded due to ongoing fighting.

We call on the international community to use its influence, to ensure that all humanitarian actors can access non-governmental controlled areas, where 2.3 million people, including 700,000 children, need life-saving assistance. Secondly, we are calling the parties to respect the fundamental human rights of civilians, as articulated in the Geneva Conventions, in the affected territories. International attention on the crisis in Ukraine may have diminished, but the humanitarian needs and violations of fundamental human rights are higher than ever. Urgent action is needed to protect the vulnerable and to allow the delivery of humanitarian assistance to those in need.

I thank you Mr. President.