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| Description: Description: Description: C:\Users\amessent\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.Outlook\MN1HAVZZ\Brand NZ-no agency High Res.jpg | **51st session of the UN Human Rights Council**  **Item 8: General Debate**  **Delivered by New Zealand Permanent Representative**  **Lucy Duncan**  **3 October 2022** |

Thank you Mr Vice-President,

Aotearoa New Zealand condemns unequivocally Russia’s sham referenda in the occupied Ukrainian regions of Luhansk, Donetsk, Kherson and Zaporizhia. These sham referenda were not free or fair, and they very clearly were not held in accordance with democratic principles. Instead, they were organised under the threat of force and we do not recognise their results.

Mr President, under the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, the processes of promoting and protecting human rights should be conducted in conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and international law.

Attempts to annex these regions in Ukraine are a further act of aggression by Russia in clear breach of the UN Charter and in violation of international law. Russia’s actions undermine the VDPA, and the very principles of this Council.

Aotearoa New Zealand does not recognise any attempt by Russia to unilaterally change Ukraine’s internationally recognised borders. Russia’s purported annexation of these regions in Ukraine has no basis in law.

We reiterate our support for Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Russia’s illegal and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine has already caused thousands of deaths, a massive humanitarian crisis and untold suffering.

Any steps by Russia that risk a further escalation to the war in Ukraine are reckless. As we have from the start of Russia’s invasion, we continue to call on President Putin to act consistently with international obligations, cease Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, withdraw troops and return to diplomatic negotiations as a pathway to resolution of the conflict.

I thank you.