Humanitarian organizations condemn continued attacks on civilian infrastructure leaving people in Ukraine without water, electricity and heating in freezing temperatures

Joint statement – 25 November

International and Ukrainian NGOs strongly condemn the latest round of airstrikes across Ukraine by the Russian Armed Forces. News reports estimate that 10 civilians have died and at least 50 have been wounded. The targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure is in direct violation of international humanitarian law.

The repeated airstrikes hitting critical civilian infrastructure across the country are significantly impacting Ukraine’s ability to provide electricity, water and heating to millions. To date, more than half of the entire country’s energy infrastructure has been damaged. With temperatures now below freezing and expected to plunge as low as -20 degree Celsius in some parts of the country, the destruction of civilian infrastructure is threatening people’s lives and ability to meet basic needs. The capacity to rapidly repair damaged infrastructure is diminishing and, as a consequence, outages are lasting longer. Yesterday’s attacks also caused huge power outages in neighboring Moldova, which is hosting the largest number of refugees from Ukraine per capita.

The near-daily missile attacks are disrupting Ukraine's healthcare system, harming people’s mental health and livelihoods, as well as preventing or interrupting children’s schooling. This will have lasting effects on children’s wellbeing and their resilience. The attacks on energy and infrastructure supply have also escalated the risk of gender-based violence and increased women’s and girls' unpaid care and domestic workloads, negatively impacting their access to public services, health and livelihoods.

Ukraine also had to make an emergency shutdown of three nuclear power plants after the latest attacks. Without immediate respite, the entire country will become paralyzed and people left in intolerable conditions, without access to life-saving services. Humanitarian organizations are increasingly worried that this will trigger new waves of forced displacement of people fleeing in search of safety.

The constant shelling is preventing humanitarian aid workers from providing vital aid to populations affected by the conflict, as they too need to take shelter from the danger. Humanitarian organizations are being forced to assess on a day-by-day basis how to continue delivering, currently a nearly impossible task, while ensuring the safety of their staff. NGOs are finding it increasingly difficult to maintain communications between their teams and local communities because of bad mobile connections and limited access to the internet. Operational work is mostly dependent on internet and electricity and they have for now no contact with their teams in several areas of the country. Aid organizations are now only able
to provide limited assistance to many communities due to these significant access constraints. Some people living in areas of active hostilities and areas outside of Ukrainian Government’s control have had virtually no aid for months.

Humanitarian organizations call for:

- An immediate cessation of attacks targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure, and strict distinction between civilian and military targets, particularly in urban and densely populated areas;
- Safe and unhindered humanitarian access, including across conflict lines for humanitarian assistance to reach all those in need, particularly those in vulnerable situations, with respect to the independence of humanitarian actors and the protection of humanitarian personnel and volunteers;
- To abide by international humanitarian law and to unconditionally protect civilians and provide security guarantees for relief workers to reach people in need of humanitarian assistance without any discrimination and anywhere in Ukraine.
- United Nations Security Council members to uphold their mandate to ensure the protection of civilians and maintain international peace and security.

SIGNATORIES:
ActionAid
Action contre la Faim
arche noVa
Caritas Ukraine
Caritas Zaporizhzhia
Christian Aid
Corus International
Finn Church Aid
HealthRight International
Help Ukraine. Donbass
NGO "Institute of psychosomatic and traumatherapy"
INTERSOS
IRC International Rescue Committee
Medicos del Mundo
Mercy Corps
NGO “Girls” (ГО 'Дівчата')
NGORC
Norwegian Refugee Council
OXFAM
Plan International
Première Urgence Internationale (PUI)
Solidarités International
War Child