

**MINISTRY**

**INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION**

 **REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**Date of Publication: 25 March 2022**

**1089. Mr M Hlengwa (IFP) to ask the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation:**

1. Noting that during the recent working visit by His Excellency, Mr Filipe Jacinto Nyusi, the President of the Republic of Mozambique, a joint communique was issued on 11 March 2022, covering various matters of joint interest (details furnished), and that on the same date the press briefing notes of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights stated that 549 civilian deaths and 957 injuries had to date been recorded since the Russian armed attack on Ukraine began on 24 February, although the actual figure could be much higher, how has she found that 549 civilian deaths could, based on the documentation available, be viewed as acceptable collateral damage of the incursion;
2. What is the reason that the Republic did not issue a strongly – worded statement condemning the deaths and this blatant violation of human rights
3. Whether she will furnish (a) a detailed motivation, as well as (b) the Republic’s position as at 22 March 2022 on the Ukraine and Russia situation, particularly considering that the civilian death toll has now climbed dramatically; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details?**NW1339E**

**REPLY:**

1. From the outset it is imperative to state that South Africa is not indifferent to what is going on in Ukraine. We are deeply concerned about the continuing conflict, the loss of lives and the deteriorating humanitarian situation. South Africa is on record calling on all the parties to the conflict in Ukraine to strongly consider diplomacy and negotiations to ultimately realise an amicable and lasting solution to the conflict. In the same breath, South Africa cautioned that unless the call was heeded, an armed conflict would likely result in unnecessary civilian deaths and the destruction of critical civilian infrastructure. Since that call, we have noted that all the parties to the conflict have now begun to engage in roundtable talks and for that we commend the role being played by Turkey. Ultimately, the realisation and maintenance of international peace and security is everyone’s responsibility, irrespective of geography.

Cognisant that the parties to the conflict are also members of the United Nations, South Africa has consistently used its voice to remind them of their commitments to international law, including international human rights and international humanitarian law. Equally, South Africa has strongly called for efforts to be made to protect civilians in this conflict in line with the Principle of Distinction.

1. The international community has an obligation to continue to call for restraint on all sides and express alarm at the intense flow of weapons, which is largely unregulated, into the theatre of the conflict. As an African country, we are always mindful of the dangers presented by the flow of arms, which denies societies an opportunity to advance themselves and enjoy uninterrupted peace.

South Africa’s membership of the United Nations is based on the need to support and reinforce processes that can ensure the maintenance of international peace and security. Consistent with that principle, South Africa has continuously maintained that the most viable avenue to resolving the Ukraine-Russia conflict is one within the framework of diplomacy and negotiations. South Africa is therefore encouraged that the negotiation track led by Turkey has thus far managed to bring all the parties to the conflict much closer than at the inception of the armed conflict.

Additional to the processes led by Turkey, South Africa remains of the firm view that the good offices of the United Nations Secretary-General should also be part of efforts to resolve the armed conflict in Ukraine, mindful that the UN is the only multilateral body tasked with converging members of the international community to work as a collective in preserving international peace and security in an unbiased manner.

1. Lastly, South Africa’s articulation regarding the conflict relates to the history on how the South African nation was rebirthed through a series of negotiations and intense engagements following many years of latent aggression that claimed many innocent lives in South Africa and beyond, including in Europe. South Africa has consistently stated that the use of force without consent of the United Nations Security Council contravenes International Law. Our analysis and articulation of the factors fuelling the conflict does not condone Russia’s breach of the UN Charter in regards to this. We are against all illegal wars and breaches of international law by any country. We have also called for action against those who breach the Laws of War and other International Law to be consistent, especially within the United Nations and other institutions of global governance.

The armed conflict in Ukraine continues to evolve and in recent days a breakthrough has been realised in the form of dialogue amongst the parties to the conflict through a track led by Turkey. It is our assertion that the dialogue process should be allowed the necessary space to continue to bring the parties to the conflict much closer instead of being provided with weapons, which will worsen the situation. South Africa also calls for the good offices of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to be part of efforts aimed at resolving the Ukraine-Russia conflict. This is an area of importance as all members of the international community look to the United Nations as an impartial neutral party.