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THE UNWAVERING SUPPORT

– *Ms. Ambassador, the United Kingdom is one of the few states in the West, which has the courage to call things by their proper names. Last year the Minister of State for Security at the Home Office Ben Wallace concluded that Vladimir Putin was behind the poisoning of Skripal and his daughter, while the UK's National Cyber Security Centre exposed a large-scale campaign by the GRU, Russian military intelligence service, of reckless cyber attacks around the world. Despite further aggressive actions taken by the Russian Federation, there is an increasing number of voices in Europe calling for the lifting of sanctions. In your opinion, will the West remain united on this issue or Ukraine and the UK have to deal with hybrid challenges on their own?*

– First, the United Kingdom is a country, which was at the forefront of leading the charge for sanctions within the European Union, within the G7 and, more broadly, across the international community, in reaction to Russia's aggression against Ukraine in 2014. Being in London back then, I was the director responsible for policy in this part of the world. At that time, it was not yet clear a) that we would get unity; b) that it would continue. And here we are several years later. I think we should recognize the fact that sanctions are in place as a response, that the EU and international community have been and continue to be united. There is a clear signal being sent that we stand together in upholding the rules-based international order, which Russia has been subverting, and that we stand together with Ukraine. From the UK's perspective, as you have mentioned Salisbury, we were very appreciative of Ukrainian efforts in supporting us in the aftermath of Salisbury and formulating a subsequent response. We are two countries that understand very well the nature of the Russian threat and are prepared to stand up to it. And others have joined us over recent years in doing so. Another example is the Russian attack in the Kerch strait in November last year. Again, the UK was very early in leading the international response. We were the first nation to send a ship to the Black Sea, to Odesa, as a clear sign of solidarity with Ukraine. So, our support continues to hold and we've seen others follow us.

– *The British position is clear. Can we really expect that the rest of the world community will follow the UK's approach in relations with Russia?*

– I think you have to ask that other countries. At the moment, it is evident that the unity has held and held very well. The easiest way to relax sanctions is for Russia to stop doing what it is doing against Ukraine. It is very, very simple. If Russia ensures that heavy weapons are withdrawn, there is a ceasefire and the territories are returned. That is an easy way of stopping sanctions. Since Russia's principal position remains unchanged, the sanctions will hold. As I said, there is unity in that position across the EU and more broadly.

– *It is almost 5 years since the Normandy contact group was created and the Minsk protocol was signed, but we are still no closer to settling the conflict in the east of Ukraine. In March 2017, Poland and the United Kingdom proposed an alternative method of negotiations aimed at settlement of the Donbass conflict, but this initiative was never implemented. Ms Ambassador, your MA is War in Modern World. In your opinion, are there any preconditions for expanding the number of participants of the negotiations, namely involving the United Kingdom?*

– I will correct you on this. Back in 2017, there was a joint visit by then British Foreign Minister Boris Johnson and his Polish counterpart Waszczykowski. We made no such suggestion or announcement. The Polish Minister for Foreign Affairs, in a press release in the follow-up to the press conference, suggested that the Minsk process might be widened but that was not a joint position. That was his own initiative. I just want to be clear on that. Our view on Minsk is the following. There is no such thing as a perfect peace process. They are always very difficult and they never deliver as quickly as people would like. We understand that people, particularly those who have misfortune to live in the conflict zone, just want the fighting to stop. That is what we all want. The most important thing is to bring peace back to the Donbas. We support the Minsk process and the efforts of the French and Germans. We understand that many people would like to expand the existing format but, for the moment, there is only one process and that is the Minsk one. This format underpins sanctions, therefore people have to think carefully about what the end result might be if they open the format. That being said, we stand ready as we have always stood ready to respond to any request from the Ukrainian side or other parties in the Minsk process. Nevertheless, we are not putting ourselves forward into a process that is already up and running and is doing its thing.

– *In January 2019, the United Kingdom, together with Canada, assumed the role of the NATO Contact Point Embassies in Ukraine. What goals and objectives do you set for yourselves in this function?*

– The Contact Point Embassy role is about a NATO ally taking on the role of public diplomacy for NATO and helping the NATO Liaison Office communicate to ordinary citizens of a country. What is this organization, what is it about? It is a public diplomacy exercise for members of the Ukrainian public. This is the first time it has ever been done by two nations together. We have done that

because we realize that both the UK and Canada wanted to work together rather than compete against each other for the role. Why not join our forces? Canada and the UK are very close partners, particularly when it comes to Ukraine. It is a win-win situation since you also get two countries for the price of one. That is much more powerful when you have two strong supporters of Ukraine going out and talking to people about NATO. Now I spend a lot of time with my Canadian colleagues. Our most recent trip was to Sumy. At the Sumy University, I had a really good session with Ukrainian students who were actively engaged and asking about NATO: what NATO is, what the NATO offers to Ukraine, what Ukraine needs to do to, etc. I think this is an important mission. I am pleased that we are doing it and doubly pleased that we are doing it together with Canada. We should help people understand more about what NATO is and also what it is not, because there is a lot of myth out there and there is a lot of propaganda that is often put up against NATO. For example, yesterday I was on a stage with the Canadian Ambassador and the NATO Liaison Office representative participating in a panel discussion with young Ukrainians here in Kyiv, answering all their questions in terms of what our views are.

– *Are you doing all of this with your own resources?*

– Yes, as contact point embassies, we put our own resources and time into this. We also put a lot of resources into NATO. The UK is a lead nation for one of the NATO trust funds for Ukraine, puts funding into several more trust funds as well as supports Ukraine bilaterally and through the European Union.

– *Ukraine abolished visas for the UK citizens in 2005. Even though Ukrainians have been granted visa-free travel to the Schengen area since June 2017 and about two million Ukrainian citizens have used this right by the beginning of 2019, the United Kingdom remains among the states having the toughest visa policies towards Ukrainians. In August 2017, the Minister of State for Europe and Americas Sir Alan Duncan agreed that the existing visa regime with Ukraine was inadequate and assured that this issue would be further considered by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. What steps have been taken in that direction, if any? Can we expect the facilitation of the visa regime for Ukrainians?*

– Visa policy is the responsibility of the Home Office of the United Kingdom. At the moment, there are no plans to change the UK's visa regime policy towards Ukraine. However, it is something that we always keep under review. We do listen to feedback from visa applicants. First, there is no discrimination against Ukraine. We have the same visa approach around the world. Another source of criticism is the fact that our visa decision-making body is in Warsaw, but we have similar models elsewhere. When I was ambassador to Georgia, our visa decision-making centre was in Istanbul. We have a kind of hub-and-spoke model of visa decision-making organized around a small number of centres throughout the world. In terms of listening to feedback, we have understood

that there have been issues and we have responded to that. There was an issue with payments and that issue is now gone. We also made more appointments available for the applicants at the visa application centre. We have been always responsive to feedback. I think there are still some myths out there. Actually, according to our figures, the approval rate has been going up and increasing. People have been rejected in many cases because they have not provided the information that is asked for. What I would ask people to do is to read carefully what the information is required and then to provide it. Because without that information the positive decision cannot be taken. Nevertheless, we will always listen to feedback and will always try to improve our service.

– *Following the entry into force of the EU–Ukraine Association Agreement, a free trade area between our two states was launched. What will the future of bilateral trade look like after Brexit? Are there any prospects for concluding an individual agreement between Ukraine and the United Kingdom?*

– Just in terms of Brexit and knowing that it was a concern for Ukraine, I would like to note that Brexit has not changed our policy towards your country. It has not affected our support, it has not affected our engagement. In fact, since the referendum, I have only seen our support increase and the number of ministerial visits and the level of engagement are on the increase since then as well. In terms of trade and economy, we pursue the policy arising from the existing Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement between Ukraine and the European Union, of which we are still members. Once we cease to be members of the European Union, that is not the case anymore. Therefore, we have taken an important decision and prioritized Ukraine as a country with which we want to negotiate a new DCFTA. We cannot formally have negotiations now because we are still members of the European Union, but de facto the talks have already started. I have a new staff member in my Embassy whose responsibility is to manage the post-Brexit relationship with Ukraine. We are looking forward to the next round of these talks in the UK. We want to take it forward and look at opportunities for both Ukraine and the UK in bilateral trade. I want to see bilateral trade between our two countries grow, I want to see investment from the UK to Ukraine grow. I think in order for that to happen, we need the underpinning of a new trade agreement. What we also need is further and more vigorous reform in the justice sector, so the companies are confident that they will be treated equally and fairly before the law in Ukraine. More progress is needed in tackling corruption because the UK has very strict anticorruption legislation: if companies are found to engage in corrupt activities overseas, they can be prosecuted in the UK. There are a number of things that we all need to do to improve those figures and get our trade into a position where it is more mutually beneficial for both sides. There is a huge potential in Ukraine, you are the largest emerging market in Europe. That is an important thing to note.



Посольство Великої Британії в Києві спільно з Європейською Бізнес Асоціацією провели зустріч з британським бізнесом в Україні. 26.09.2018
The Embassy of Great Britain in Kyiv, in cooperation with the European Business Association, holds a meeting with representatives of British business. 26.09.2018

– *Is there a plan for that transition period between the termination of the DCFTA and conclusion of a new trade agreement?*

– We do not have one at the moment. First, one should look where our debate in the UK is. We have an extension until Halloween, and there is quite a robust and vigorous democratic debate in the UK ongoing over the final shape of Brexit. When we know it, then I think some of technicalities will be clear. The key thing is that Ukraine remains a priority for us.

– *Your Excellency, you became the first woman appointed as the Ambassador of the United Kingdom to Ukraine. An interesting fact is that in such a difficult time for our country the world's leading powers choose women to serve as their diplomatic representatives to Ukraine. What is the place of gender equality issues in your work as the Ambassador? How do you assess Ukraine's progress in this area over the last five years?*

– In some ways, when I was first appointed in 2010 an ambassador to Georgia, being a female ambassador was unusual. Now it is not so unusual, that is a good thing. I think people are less and less surprised that there are such things as female ambassadors. 30% of the UK's ambassadors are now female. It is still not enough, but 30% is a huge change from where we were, say, 10 or 15 years ago. We have a foreign policy that is very heavily focused on gender equality.

We have appointed women's envoy and we are very keen that all we do is done through the prism of understanding gender equality and the importance of equality for all across the society. Now if I look at Ukraine, I think women are actually quite well represented in your society. There is always more that you can do. Increasing the number of female MPs in the Rada would be a good thing, as well as increasing the number of female ambassadors. It is something I hope will continue to improve. The area where we still see less female representation is the Ukrainian defence and security sector. I do not see any female generals here. I see them in my system. That is what we are trying to encourage, because women do have a role to play in defence and security. We have now opened up all frontline combat roles to women. In 2017, HMS Duncan, Type 45 destroyer, the world's most advanced warship, came to Odesa. I was on the bridge as she came into dock at the bottom of the Potemkin Stairs. Captain was a woman, the navigator was a woman, number of the other officers up on the bridge were women, and the Ukrainian guests were very surprised. We should demonstrate that this is actually normal and women are perfectly able to serve in this positions. We had the battleship commander Eleanor Stack engage with junior Ukrainian female soldiers and they had an opportunity to ask the practical questions, like "how do you shave your legs when you are on a shift?" These are important things because nobody is going to ask these questions for you. I want you to start seeing that gender is no bar to serving at these levels of military, because at the end of the day, as a country that is fighting a conflict, transforming, battling on a number of fronts, you cannot afford to lose more than 50% of your population, and this is the way my country counts as well. It is important that the gender has not been politicized malignly in certain quarters. What we are talking about is equality, nothing more, nothing less.

– *The United Kingdom is currently implementing more than 70 different projects in Ukraine. Which ones can be regarded as the most successful? Could you please tell us more about the "Learn to Discern" project, which was launched under the auspices of the British and the U.S. embassies? How does this initiative help to struggle the hybrid challenges facing Ukraine such as propaganda, disinformation and spreading of hatred?*

– We have a broad range of support to Ukraine. As for humanitarian support, particularly important for the conflict areas, there is one thing I'm especially proud of. It is the UNFPA program, to which we are donors. It is aimed at helping victims of domestic violence and those who are suffering the consequences of conflict. That's the program I regularly visit when I go out to the East to various towns. When I see that now in Ukraine there are hotlines for people to call, there are mobile teams who can respond, come and help families when things are going wrong, and the police are trained to deal with it, and there is now a safety net for people who find themselves in such an awful position, I am very

proud. First of all, because I can see the difference that it is making to ordinary people's lives. In the UK, we had seen the transition some thirty years ago in terms of acknowledging these issues and then dealing with them. It is really important to see that happening in Ukraine.

We provide support on the defence track. The operation ORBITAL has now trained at least 9,500 Ukrainian troops and is ongoing. It is a big commitment for us, so at any particular point of time have at least a hundred UK soldiers here training your soldiers. We know, for example, that some of the battlefield medical training that we have provided has saved lives on the battlefield. We have been able to give techniques that help people to survive in the first hour after they have been injured and can get to the help that they need. Alongside the defence track, we have provided the huge tranche of money to defence reform to help you get into the position where you can achieve your goal of NATO interoperability in 2020. Then, there is a huge reform piece. We have been very proud to play out hard in setting up things like the business ombudsman, setting up the anticorruption institutions, helping with the appointment of judges. There is a whole range of projects where we can see tangible progress in reform. The reform is being done by Ukraine, but we have been able to help.

You are absolutely right, there is a large portion of our attention spent not just on Ukraine. More broadly, it is about countering disinformation, because, of course, in the twenty-first century one of the biggest threats we see is the use of information as a weapon. That is obviously not new, propaganda and disinformation have existed since time immemorial, but now the technology enables this in a way that was unimaginable before. You have mentioned the "Learn to Discern" project, which I think is a really good program. In the end, even if you have spent a lot of time dealing with disinformation, you will never stop it. It is better to educate people in terms of how they consume information, make people more discerning and start with schoolchildren, asking questions like "how do you know that what you are reading is true? how do you know that the British Ambassador did not violate Ukraine's electoral laws during the presidential elections by holding a bulletin paper?" That was a fake story but it was out there. So it is piloting in 50 schools, and the initial findings are that those who have had this training, are twice more likely to be able to spot hate speech and much more likely to be able to spot disinformation. We have some figures on that. People will be less vulnerable to disinformation if they have been educated how to consume information. I think this process is a two-way street. Hopefully you are learning from us but we are actually learning from you, because you are a country on a frontline in this regard and this is something that we all need to understand. Disinformation has had an impact globally and we are all trying to get to come to terms with it.

– *Ms Ambassador, you are actively using cultural diplomacy tools in your work and take part in various campaigns. In your opinion, how important are art campaigns for modern diplomacy? Do they help diplomats to achieve their desired goals? What is the best way of communication and spreading information among citizens of the receiving state?*

– I am very lucky here that I have the British Council. It is an organization I am extremely proud of, not only that they provide world-class English language training, but they also conduct a lot of cultural diplomacy. This activity is really important because of the importance of soft power in this increasingly confusing world: how the people understand what you as a nation stand for, who you are and then recognize you. That quite often comes through the interaction with films, music, culture, etc. One of the great things about being British is that you can see your culture wherever you go. If you look at any country's top 10 music charts, you find British artists in there. You also find us winning Oscars, as last year it was the British actress who won the Best Female Actress award. It is about how you harness culture not only to help people understand who you are, what values you stand for, but also to build bridges. That is particularly important with countries where our relations, unlike with Ukraine, are less easy or less friendly. Quite often, the culture can be that bridge you can build on. I think one of the challenges for Ukraine to go forward is how Ukraine uses cultural diplomacy to change people's perspectives. Because I suspect when you talk about Ukraine to people, they still think of the war and corruption. Getting them to think in terms of your wonderful software programmes, your hipsters, your creative side, art and culture is a good way of drawing people in and attracting tourism, attracting investment and attracting people to come and engage with you.

– *Is there any methodology of how we can assess the success of cultural diplomacy in a particular country?*

– Cultural diplomacy is a sort of intangible thing. Still, we have carried out surveys here to understand what the level of understanding of the UK is, what are the “word clouds” that people come up with (Sherlock Holmes, the Queen, etc.). There are ways you can measure it in terms of understanding what people's consciousness and their willingness to engage is. You can measure it through tourism in terms of how you reach out to people and how later they travel to your country. So yes, there are various methods. However, it also depends on what you want to achieve. I think sometimes cultural diplomacy just for the sake of it is not necessarily effective. If you think about what you actually want to achieve, what the message you want to project, what you want to get out of this, it really helps you target your cultural diplomacy.

– *Another strong point of your Embassy's work is public diplomacy. We are impressed that only two officers do this great job. Are you also engaged in these activities?*

– Yes, they do a brilliant job. Sometimes I also take part, so do not blame them for ‘starushka’. It is a team effort. I think if you are going to do digital diplomacy, it has to be authentic. If you have something by committee, something from a script all the time, who is interested into that? You need the personality of a person and it sometimes needs to take risks. There are far too many tweets from ambassadors saying, “I am delighted to be at... I am thrilled to...” It is not that exciting to read. So, I think we have a good creative team, we bounce ideas around. It is the 21st century diplomacy.

– *No way to do it without humour?*

– Yes, we need it, thank you. That is something I know will have an impact. Not quite that much of an impact, but still. I think that shows actually where Ukraine is, the fact that people can do that. Humour shows that Ukraine is a democracy where you can speak freely. A good healthy satire, humour, if it is present, is always a good sign.

– *I would like to return to your point that Ukraine should promote its image abroad. During your tenure, you had an opportunity to get acquainted closely with Ukrainian history, culture and traditions, value our economic and tourism potential. Unfortunately, there are stereotypes about Ukraine abroad. From your perspective, what should be done in order to truly open Ukraine to the world? How can we attract British tourists and investors? What can we ‘sell’ to them?*

– The flippant answer would be cheap beer (laughs). I think you have a lot to ‘sell’. You benefited hugely from a Eurovision in 2017 and the Champions League Final last year where many people, who would never have ordinarily come to Ukraine, came to Ukraine and found it very welcoming. It turned to be a very diverse crowd, both the Eurovision attendees and Liverpool fans. They had a very good time. Ukraine and Kyiv in particular, made them feel very welcomed. Coming back to your question, I think Ukraine should capitalize on some of that, get people to understand that, for example, you have a beautiful historic capital city, because for lots of people that first image they have in their mind is of “spalni raiony” and those sorts of buildings. You also have some very good people that sail under the radar, that you could deploy more. Like one of the top cookery writers in the UK at the moment, Olia Hercules. She is Ukrainian, she is from Kharkiv, she has written two very good cookery books, and she appears regularly on television. I would co-opt somebody like her to better promote Ukraine. I think you have other people out there that can also be co-opted. In other words, better use people you have and sell the vision of a country that is going forward. The IT industry can help you as well. You are starting to get more recognition as you keep engaging in hackathons and various competitions. The recognition of your software programming and your IT professionalism is really growing and Ukraine can capitalize on that. However, it does require resources, out-of-the-box thinking

and being prepared to take some risks. I met one of your culture diplomats the other day when I was at the Book Arsenal, namely Irena Karpa from the Ukrainian Embassy in France. I think she is a great advocate for Ukraine. She is somebody who is in fashion, in the arts, and she sells a very competent vision of Ukraine. Sometimes ambassadors are the worst cultural ambassadors, because career diplomats like me are not the best people to 'sell' this stuff. We are too boring (laughs). Actually, it is about getting people that would appeal to other people and that is not necessarily us.

– *Your tenure here is almost at its ending point. How do you feel now, after spending four years in Ukraine?*

– Exhausted (laughs). No. I am here still for another couple of months. I am not going yet and I still have a lot to do. In our system, you are not sent somewhere, like in some diplomatic services when you get a phone call and they say "Pack your bags, you are going." You have to apply and you have to go into a competition. So, I wanted this job and I applied for it. I think it is the right approach. It means that when you have people arrive from countries like mine, they are somebody who wants to come and work here, who is engaged, who is interested. For me it has been a huge privilege to work in your country over the last four years. I have seen how you have started to transform, how you have defended yourselves, how you stood up against the aggression, and despite all of the challenges have shown huge resilience and determination to move forward. We know that transitions and transformations are not lineal: there will always be two steps forward and one step back. It has been a great honour to be part of that, hopefully to have played some tiny, tiny role in all of that. I will leave here having learnt a huge amount, and having found a country that I want to return to and spend more time in. I do enjoyed here, having learned a language that I will keep learning forever (laughs) and that I enjoy speaking, having made a lot of friends that I hope we will stay in touch with, but also having had a privilege to be part of your journey. It will be very hard to leave, very hard.

– *Do you already know what position you are going to take?*

– Yes, I do. I am going to be ambassador again. There will be an announcement.

– *Your Excellency, you demonstrate an advanced level of proficiency in Ukrainian. Was it difficult for you to learn another foreign language and what inspired you to do that?*

– I had no time to learn it but was determined to do so. I had about two weeks of formal lessons, maybe a couple extra bits on top. However, I was determined that if I were going to be the ambassador to Ukraine, I had to speak Ukrainian as well as Russian. When I arrived, my son was two years old, and I watched how he learned the language because I did not have time for formal lessons. I thought, "I am going to try and learn Ukrainian like a two-year-old,"

which sounds derogatory, but if you are a child, you just listen, and listen, and listen, and then try it out. That is how we all learn language. So, at every conference I took headphones off, listened and tried out as much as I could. That is the way I have learnt it. Actually, that has been a much more fun way of learning a language and it helps if you have got a basis in Slavonic languages. I am not as good as I would like to be, because I did not have the time, but sometimes learning a language as we first do it rather than academically learning is really helpful. Reading my son's schoolbooks was very helpful as well, because there is no point in reading Shevchenko if you cannot read Harry Potter books.



Yevgeniya [Ogryzko, Media and Digital Communications Officer at the British Embassy], what do you think?

– *I think your speech, for instance, at the Ukraine Reform Conference in Copenhagen, fifteen minutes of Ukrainian only in front of the whole Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine and other international partners speaks for itself.*

– Yes, it was quite nerve-racking but important. Communication is important and I think when you learn a language, you learn much more about the culture and soul of somewhere, because language is that external reflection of what you are thinking. You can always say something in English or through an interpreter, but when you really find out how it is expressed that is when you really learn. For me it is very important.

– *Is there any tip that you would give to the next ambassador? A kind of a life hack of being an ambassador in Ukraine.*

– Expect the unexpected (laughs). Do not try to plan too much. Ukraine is a country in transition. If you are engaged as an ambassador, then you are very, very busy. Of course, there are different types of ambassadors. Some ambassadors have a much quieter life here. But there are countries which genuinely are here to support and help and make a difference, which have clear foreign policy objectives, the exhausted and engaged countries. For others it is not quite the same. However, you should take it as a sign of Ukraine mattering to the UK rather than just me being narcissistic.