

*Elena Leticia MIKUSINSKI,
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
of the Argentine Republic to Ukraine*

ARGENTINE-UKRAINIAN PARTNERSHIP: A COCKTAIL OF OUTSTANDING PEOPLE AND FORMIDABLE OPPORTUNITIES

The year 2021 is a very special one for Argentine-Ukrainian relations. On 5 February, the centenary of a highly significant date was celebrated: the recognition of the Ukrainian People's Republic by the Argentine Republic in 1921.

With an eye to gaining greater insight into the history of this anniversary, Argentine Ambassador Elena L. Mikusinski met with Anatolii Khromov, Head of the State Archival Service of Ukraine, and visited the Central State Archives of the High Authorities and Administration of Ukraine. It is worth noting the great significance of the original documents from 1921, preserved among archives dating back to 1917.

On 5 February 1921, Hipólito Yrigoyen, President of the Argentine Republic, signed a decree recognising the Ukrainian People's Republic after meetings held by the Ambassador of the Argentine Republic in France, Dr Marcelo Torcuato de Alvear, and the President of the Ukrainian delegation to the Peace Conference in Paris, Mykhailo Tyshkevych. Thereby, Argentina became the first and only country in Latin America to recognise the newly created Ukrainian state (1917–1921).

Diplomatic relations between the Argentine Republic and Ukraine were formally established 71 years later, with the signing of a protocol to that effect in New York on 6 January by Jorge Vásquez and Anatolii Zlenko, permanent representatives of Argentina and Ukraine to the UN.

Subsequently, in March 1993, the Ukrainian diplomatic mission was inaugurated in Buenos Aires and, in May of that year, the Argentine diplomatic mission was inaugurated in Kyiv. Such important events were followed by the simultaneous signing of the agreement on the establishment of friendly relations, twinning the two capitals, Buenos Aires and Kyiv, in 2000.

Within the framework of the first centenary of friendship between our states, the Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Argentine Republic, Ambassador Pablo Tettamanti, and the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Yevhenii Yenin, sent their video greetings to the governments and peoples of Argentina and Ukraine.

On 29 June 2021, the Honorable Senate of the Argentine Republic decreed the formation of the new Parliamentary Friendship Group with Ukraine. This group

aims to maintain relations with the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine and to promote the exchange of information and legislative documents, foster investment and economic cooperation, facilitate bilateral trade, and promote cultural, scientific, and technical exchanges.

Among the members of the Parliamentary Friendship Group with Ukraine there are senators Silvia del Rosario Giacoppo, María Eugenia Duré, Dalmacio Mera, Daniel A. Lovera, María I. Pilatti Vergara, Carlos M. Espínola,, Guillermo E. Snopek, Martín Doñate, Pablo Daniel Blanco, Néstor P. Braillard Pocard, Silvia B. Elias de Pérez, Mario R. Fiad, Juan C. Marino, Ernesto F. Martínez, Luis C. Petcoff Naidenoff, Oscar A. Castillo, Clara Vega, and Lucila Crexell.

The local counterpart, the Group of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine for Inter-parliamentary Relations with the Argentine Republic, was formed on 3 March 2020 and is currently composed of the following members: Roman Hryshchuk, Olha Sovhyria, Serhii Larin, Kseniia Semenova, Mykola Babenko, Oleksandr Danutsa, Serhii Ionushas, Anatoliy Kostiukh, Mykyta Poturaiev, Oleksandr Sukhov, Oleksandr Feldman, and Tetiana Tsyba.

Argentina is one of the very few Latin American countries (along with Brazil, Cuba, and Mexico) which have diplomatic missions in Kyiv, a fact reflecting the importance that Argentina has historically attached to its relations with Ukraine.

Hosting the seventh-largest community of Ukrainians worldwide, numbering as many as 300,000 people, Argentina is now home to a thriving and well-integrated Ukrainian community, steadfastly committed to its cultural and religious traditions.

Diaspora networks are a vibrant and increasingly valuable resource providing linkages, helping to create new partnerships or strengthen the already existing ones and, most importantly, connecting people, ideas, and understandings, despite the physical distance. This latter factor, particularly during the challenging global context that all societies have had to face due to the COVID-19 pandemic, has highlighted that an immense range of opportunities are ahead to continue strengthening ties between both countries, even when most meetings are held online.

Considering the historical interstate ties characterised by long-standing migratory flows, the Embassy of the Argentine Republic in Ukraine maintains contact with Ukrainian representatives of the public and private sectors as well as with diaspora representatives in Argentina by jointly conducting activities and video presentations.

On 9 June 2021, in cooperation with Borys Hrinchenko Kyiv University, the embassy carried out an online presentation dedicated to the Ukrainian translation of the book *Nashi Llude* by Jorge Balanda, a journalist, TV and radio host, Vice President of the Ukrainian Central Representation in Argentina and descendant of Ukrainian immigrants. The academic body and students of the university were involved in translating the book. Among the participants, there was

Hugo Passalacqua, the former Governor of the Province of Misiones in northeastern Argentina, which has historically received the largest numbers of Ukrainian immigrants, Jorge Danylyshyn, President of the Prosvita Ukrainian Cultural Association of Argentina, and Anibal Soutas, an Argentine parish priest.

Since January 2020, Ambassador Mikusinski has been personally researching histories of Argentines with Ukrainian roots and publishing a newsletter named *Discovering My Roots*, a digital periodical in Spanish and Ukrainian that promotes knowledge about outstanding personalities of the Argentine science, business, and culture of Ukrainian descent, whose family origins go back to localities that are currently part of Ukraine. This newsletter constitutes an interreligious, comprehensive, and inclusive initiative, open to the incorporation of new personalities of Ukrainian origin in Argentina. A special section on the embassy's web page has been created, which contains ten editions of the already published newsletter in both languages.

Among the latest interviewed personalities there are actress Cecilia Roth and her father, writer and journalist Abrasha Rotenberg; demographic researcher Oleh Wolowyna; artist Liliana Porter; *yerbateros* (producers of mate – a traditional South American caffeine-rich infused drink) Miguel José Gerula and Ramón Hreňuk; physician, specialist in medical genetics Susana Turyk; and Dr Pedro Lylyk, a neurosurgeon, President of the Ukrainian Central Representation in the Argentine Republic, Honorary Consul of Ukraine in the city of La Plata, the founder and Director-General of ENERI (Endovascular Neurosurgery and Interventional Radiology Team) and La Sagrada Familia Medical Clinic.

The embassy is doing a prodigious task of cultural promotion by offering a wide range of cultural and educational activities mainly organised within the framework of the Action Plan submitted to the Directorate for Cultural Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship of the Argentine Republic. These activities are intended to spread the diversity of Argentine cultural expressions around the world, presenting the main elements that constitute the divergence and particularity of Argentine society.



5 лютого 1921 року Аргентинська Республіка першою з країн Південної Америки визнала незалежність УНР. До 100-річчя цієї важливої події цифрові копії документів, що висвітлюють встановлення двосторонніх відносин між державами, було передано Її Високоповажності Елені Лeticії Мікусиньскі

On 5 February 2021, the Argentine Republic became the first Latin American country to recognise the independence of the UPR. On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of this landmark event, electronic copies of documents highlighting the establishment of bilateral relations were handed over to Her Excellency Elena Leticia Mikusinski



28 червня 2021 року в Національній музичній академії України імені П.І. Чайковського провели аргентинсько-словенський музичний вечір

On 28 June 2021, Petro Tchaikovsky National Music Academy of Ukraine hosted an Argentine-Slovenian musical evening

Another priority for the embassy is a library boasting a vast collection of political, educational, economic, and cultural material, which enriches the process of familiarising Ukrainians with Argentine history and culture by providing high-quality information resources. The library is made up of a collection divided into magazines, newspapers, audiovisual and video materials (films, documentaries, among others), and collections of the most relevant Argentine publishing houses. The book collection includes the most important works of prominent Argentine authors, namely Leopoldo Lugones, Jorge Luis Borges, Julio Cortázar, Adolfo Bioy Casares, Roberto Arlt, Ernesto Sábato, etc. Many of these books have been translated into

Ukrainian within the framework of Programa SUR – Translation Support Programme, which was implemented in 2009 to promote and strengthen the publishing of classic and contemporary Argentine authors in foreign languages.

It is a fact generally acknowledged that tango is a national symbol of Argentina and one of the most representative forms of cultural expression, which was declared by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2009. Its lyrics and music, transformed into dance and poetry, interpret and express diversity and cultural dialogue.

In this respect, the embassy organised several activities in commemoration of the centenary since the birth of the legendary Argentine musician and composer Astor Piazzolla, which took place on 11 March 2021. Considered one of the greatest Argentine musicians of the 20th century and the creator of the ‘new tango’, Piazzolla iconised tango around the world by virtue of his extraordinary and innovative talent.

The first commemorative activity was held at the National Philharmonic of Ukraine, where several of the artist’s most popular writings were performed in the arrangement of accordionist, composer, and conductor Viacheslav Samofalov. Other local artists involved were pianist Maria Vikhliaieva, violinist Kyrylo Bondar, and contrabass player Nazarii Stets. Actor and reciter Oleksandr Rudko also participated in this musical performance. In addition, the embassy invited different tango schools of Kyiv to take part in a contest on the occasion of the centenary since the birth of Astor Piazzolla.

The second commemorative activity was held at Petro Tchaikovskyi National Music Academy of Ukraine, whose professors and students paid a heartfelt tribute to Astor Piazzolla. The renowned Argentine musician Juan Carlos Carrasco also participated from Paris in the format of a videoconference. The event also featured an especially created audiovisual material of the masterpiece 'Spring' from *The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires*, interpreted by the famous clarinetist of Theatre Colón in Buenos Aires Mariano Rey with the talented Ukrainian violinist Illia Bondarenko and pianist Oleksii Boholiubov.

On 30 May, two additional concerts took place in tribute to Astor Piazzolla at the Great Hall of Petro Tchaikovskyi National Music Academy of Ukraine, in cooperation with the UKR Artists National Concert Agency. Piazzolla's most memorable works, such as *The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires*, *Aconcagua*, and *Libertango* were performed by the Kyiv Soloists National Chamber Ensemble, violinist Marko Komonko, and bandoneonist Ihor Saienko under the direction of maestro Ihor Puchkov.

For most of its history and as many other Latin American countries, Canada or the United States of America, Argentina has been characterised as a country of immigration. Naturally, as with Ukraine, a strong bond is maintained with those countries that were once sending immigrants, with whom active joint activities are held to trace those historical blends.

On 28 June 2021, a musical evening jointly organised with the Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia in Ukraine took place at Petro Tchaikovskyi National Music Academy of Ukraine. The concert featured the Argentine-Slovenian baritone Lucas Somoza Osterc as its main artist, who delighted the audience with several interpretations of Slovenian and Argentine composers, including Piazzolla.

Argentine cinema also raises notable interest in Ukrainian society. In this regard, in late December 2020, the embassy held an online masterclass conducted by Marco Berger (film director) and Gastón Re (actor and producer), jointly organised with Kyiv National I. K. Karpenko-Karyi Theatre, Cinema and Television University, on the topic 'Tools for the realisation of a film project from the first idea to its production. Three points of view: the producer, the director, the actor'.

Both Argentine artists have participated in the Molodist Kyiv International Film Festival: Two films directed by Marco Berger won the best film award in the Sunny Bunny category that covered the LGBTQI topic (*Taekwondo* in 2016, *A Blond* in 2019); Gastón Re, who played the leading role in the film *A Blond*, attended the festival to present the film.

Furthermore, the 50th Molodist Kyiv International Film Festival, which was taking place from 29 May to 6 June 2021, stood out for its Argentine flavour. For the first time within the framework of the festival, Argentine cinematography became the cynosure of attention. Under the sponsorship of the embassy, a programme with six screenings of Argentine films was presented in different

sections of the festival. It included *Guauguaychú. The Carnival* and *Young Hunter* by Marco Berger; *The Rabbits' House* by Valeria Selinger; *Carnival* by Juan Pablo Felix; *The Dog Who Wouldn't Quiet* by Ana Katz; and cult film *Tangos, the Exile of Gardel* by Fernando Solanas. Three of the abovementioned Argentine film directors Berger, Selinger, and Félix – visited Kyiv for the first time to present their films during the festival.

It should be noted that the film *Tango, the Exile of Gardel* (1985), was included in the programme to commemorate the centenary since the birth of Astor Piazzolla and in recognition of the cultural legacy of its director, Fernando Solanas, who was, until his recent death due to COVID-19, Permanent Representative of the Argentine Republic to UNESCO in Paris. Moreover, the film was the first great cinematographic work dedicated to one of the darkest pages in Argentine history. It portrays the story of Argentine exiles residing in Paris who had to flee their homeland during the rule of the military junta that lasted from 1976 to 1983, escaping from the terror unleashed by the ones who seized power to torture or kill political opponents. The film *The Rabbits' House* directed by Valeria Selinger, on the other hand, also approaches the same topic, but recounts the experiences of the revolutionary movements that stayed in Argentina during that period.

In this regard, it bears mentioning that ESMA (Navy School of Mechanics), currently named 'Space for Memory and for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights', played a central role in the organisation of state terrorism between 1976 and 1983 and constitutes an emblem of the illegal repression based on the forced disappearance of persons that has been recognized and classed by the United Nations as a crime against humanity.

It should be noted that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship of the Argentine Republic is actively carrying out international action in 2021 to give visibility to the nomination of the ESMA Museum to UNESCO's World Heritage List.

When it comes to Argentina's public policies on issues affecting women, gender, and sexual minorities, it is worth mentioning that Argentina was the trailblazer in this field. In late 2019, the Ministry of Women, Genders and Diversity was established as part of President Alberto Fernández's cabinet.

Argentina was the first country in Latin America and the Caribbean to set a gender quota for the Congress in 1991. Since 2017, a parity law for the Congress has been in force: More than 42 percent of parliamentary seats are held by women. Besides, Argentina was the first country in Latin America to authorise same-sex marriage in 2010. In 2012, the National Congress approved a law on gender identity that allows for individual self-determination of sex. On 24 June 2021, Argentina's Senate approved sweeping legislation mandating that one percent of all public sector jobs should be reserved for transgender individuals, whilst also establishing economic incentives for businesses in the private sector that employ transgender workers.

Thus, conducting these gender policies, in October and November 2020, the embassy in cooperation with Ukrinform (National News Agency of Ukraine), the Marianne Argentina Association, and the Argentine cultural magazine *Be Cult* organised a unique exhibition of photographs titled 'Argentina through the eyes of women artists', dedicated to the diversity and beauty of Argentina and its inhabitants as seen and reflected by women.

On this occasion, the Ukrainian public was invited to familiarise themselves with the magnificent work of Argentine artists Gisela Ajzensztat, Stephanie Ferrón, Celine Frers, Eve Grynberg, Nora Iniesta, Zulema Maza, Patricia Parodi, and Graziella Riou. The role of women in this exhibition took on an unusual strength and sensitivity thanks to photography as a communication tool that captures a sublime moment in space and time. Different techniques, creative styles, experiences, and emotions in taking photos were presented together with the diversity of landscapes, faces, and costumes of Argentina.

At the invitation of Ambassador of the Argentine Republic to Ukraine Elena L. Teresa Mikusinski, First Lady of Ukraine Olena Zelenska visited the exhibition. Likewise, the exhibition was inaugurated in the city of Lviv, where Kateryna Kit-Sadova, an art critic and wife of the Mayor of Lviv, Andrii Sadovyi, was present. From late December 2020 until late February 2021, city residents could enjoy Argentina through the aesthetic and subtle gaze of talented women.

In economic terms, due to historical conditions and abundant natural resources, the Argentine economy is mainly oriented towards the production and export of commodities, fuel, energy, and agricultural products.

Top Argentine export items include foodstuffs (corn, wheat, soybeans, legumes, ground nuts, soybean meal, wine, fruit juice, bran, bovine meat, crustaceans, poultry meat, fish fillets, soybean and other oils), tobacco, mineral products and precious metals (crude and refined petroleum, aluminium, iron pipes, gold); animal hides (tanned equine and bovine hides), stone, glass, plastic, paper (made from cellulose fibre), wood products, etc.

For the record, Argentina ranks first worldwide in exports of soybean meal, soybean oil, peanut oil, processed peanuts, and lemon juice. It is also the world's top exporter of organic fresh fruit to the EU (mainly pears and apples). It is worth highlighting that Argentina is the biggest exporter of yerba mate in the world; several producers of Ukrainian origin, who are mainly settled in the largest yerba mate producing area (Misiones province), have played an extremely significant role in the development of this field. Other facts that deserve to be underlined are that Argentina ranks second globally in exports of must and fresh lemons, third in exports of corn, sunflower meal, and sunflower oil, fourth in exports of olive oil, and fifth in exports of wheat.

Nonetheless, the productive and export matrix of Argentina is not limited to those headings. The achievements made in other sectors with high added value

and manufactured goods of industrial origin (MIO), such as transportation (trucks, cars, vehicle parts), chemical products (industrial fatty acids, pesticides, medicaments), and machines (engines, pumps), also constitute an important share of the Argentine economy.

All in all, Argentina is rapidly recovering its productive capabilities and even exceeding the levels prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Argentine exports for the period from January to May 2021 registered a year-on-year increase of \$28,314 million (24.4 percent), as compared to the similar period in 2020. This is the highest value achieved in the last 8 years. In the first five months of 2021, exports have already exceeded the levels of 2019 by 10 percent. This surplus for the first five months of 2021 (\$5,624 million) mainly corresponds to exports destined to the three main partners – Brazil, China, and the United States – absorbing 27.7 percent of the total. This result has also been achieved due to exports to other important partners, such as the EU, Chile, India, Vietnam, Indonesia, Egypt, among others.

Argentina is known as the sixth largest exporter of beef worldwide, with around 56 million head of cattle in the country. In September 2020, the Ukrainian market was reopened for Argentine meat. Since then, the embassy has carried out a series of Argentine meat tastings for Ukrainian importers and representatives of the HoReCa sector.

The first such tasting of Argentine meat and wine was held on 5 November 2020, at the facilities of the renamed Goodwine chain. The event was attended by special guests, such as local authorities, chefs of different restaurants, and managers of supermarket chains.

Soon after, on 12 November 2020, a second meat and wine tasting took place at the Chalet Equides restaurant, where, besides importers and representatives of the HoReCa sector, distinguished guests were present: Hennadii Chyzhykov, President of the Ukrainian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Anna Krysiuk, President of the Women Business Club, Pavlo Kryvonos, GDIP Director-General, representatives of the Stolychnyi market, etc. Then, a few other tasting activities were organised at the Gastro Market, Beef Meat & Wine, and Gastro Hub restaurants in November and December 2020. Chefs from different prestigious restaurants in Kyiv, representatives of supermarket chains, sommeliers, meat and wine importers, business people, and representatives of the HoReCa sector were invited to all of the aforesaid activities.

The city of Lviv also hosted a meat tasting on 29 December 2020 at the prestigious Kavalier restaurant, attended by Dmytro Aftanas, President of the Lviv Chamber of Commerce and Industry, local authorities, restaurant chefs, representatives of the HoReCa sector, and local meat and wine importers.

As has been mentioned above, all the meat-tasting activities that took place involved wine tasting as well, inasmuch as Argentina is also recognised for the

quality of its wines based on its flagship strain, Malbec. Argentina is the world's fifth biggest wine producer and tenth biggest wine exporter.

Every year 17 April is celebrated as World Malbec Day. Due to the global situation in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, there were certain restrictions for such celebrations. However, the embassy managed to organise a tasting of Malbec wines at the official residence on 27 May 2021. This activity was carried out in cooperation with the Cheese Kingdom chain, which was reflected in a cheese pairing tasting. The tasting featured online participation of top Argentine sommeliers, including Valeria Gamper (Best Sommelier of Argentina 2019), Juan Pablo Murgia (Best Argentine Winemaker sub-40 in 2021), and Emiliano Stratico (Professor at Wine & Spirit Education Trust (WSET) in Bordeaux), who advised pairing wines and cheeses. Among special guests, there were Volodymyr Kucherenko, President of the Ukrvynprom corporation, Denis Priimagi, the owner of the Cheese Kingdom chain, sommeliers and chefs from different Kyiv restaurants, representatives of the industry and local press.

Moreover, the embassy participated with a Malbec tasting stand in the Kyiv Food Travel Awards 2021 Festival, an occasion in which Ambassador Elena L. Mikusinski participated in the awards ceremony, delivering prizes to the three best restaurants in the city.

Scientific, academic, and research fields provide an outstanding basis for future joint projects. In this matter, the embassy carries out various activities with the most important Ukrainian universities.

On 23 February 2021, a visit to the National Technical University of Ukraine Ihor Sikorskyi Kyiv Polytechnic Institute took place. Ambassador Mikusinski met with the Vice-rector on International Relations, Prof. Serhii Sydorenko, to discuss future cooperation in the field of scientific technologies.

After the signing of an agreement on agricultural cooperation between the two countries, the Argentine Agricultural Technology Week was held from 19 to 23 April 2021 with the involvement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship of the Argentine Republic, the National Institute of Agricultural Technology of Argentina (INTA), the Agrarian Business Club of Ukraine (UCAB), the AgroKebety project, and the National University of Biore-sources and Natural Resources of Ukraine. The activity was organised by the INTA, the UCAB, the Undersecretary for Promotion of Trade and Investments at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship of the Argentine Republic, the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries of the Argentine Republic, and the Embassy of the Argentine Republic in Ukraine, under the auspices of the Minister of Agrarian Policy and Food of Ukraine. It consisted of lessons on new technologies in the agricultural sector delivered by four INTA speakers to representatives of the UCAB and students of different agrarian universities of Ukraine. This remarkable activity depicted Argentina's leadership



15 липня 2021 року посольство спільно з мережею «Сирне королівство» організувало дегустування вин із винограду сорту «мальбек»

On 15 July 2021, the embassy held a tasting of Malbec wines together with the Cheese Kingdom chain

in the field since the country has stood out for decades now in the agricultural sector due to its constant improvements and achievements in the no-till direct seeding technologies.

Although Argentina and Ukraine may appear to be competitors at first glance, both economies have a high potential to complement each other. Owing to the fact that some goods are not found in one of the countries due to geographical or climate conditions or simply because growing and harvesting times vary because of different hemispheres, trade opportunities naturally arise.

That said, a complementarity perspective should be pursued with a view to creating a gear, which would generate new economic and commercial opportunities for all different agents involved. Furthermore, it should be conceived as part of a global strategy aimed at improving food security in the world. In this respect, Ukraine offers a strategic location to acquire Argentina's exportable products to later re-export them to the Middle East, the Caucasus, and Central Asia.

One more different but strictly related aspect is that in economies highly contingent on the agricultural sector like the ones of Argentina and Ukraine environmental protection and sustainable use of natural resources are key elements in development plans and public policies in general.

To this end, Argentina is actively working at the international level, striving to provide for the needs of future generations and prevent arbitrary restrictions on production and trade. Argentina fosters solutions that contribute to maintain-

ing a balance between the three pillars of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental, as set forth in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The country also plays an active role in multilateral environmental forums. Of note is the Paris Agreement, in the context of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

At the initiative of the Business Women Club, Ambassador Elena L. Mikusinski, accompanied by the Ambassadors of Germany, Egypt, Slovakia, and Vietnam to Ukraine, participated in the global Greening of the Planet campaign organised by the Greening of Ukraine Charitable Foundation and sponsored by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources of Ukraine, where they planted trees on Diplomatic Avenue in Kyiv's Holo-siivskyi Park.

On 30 June 2021, within the framework of the Greening of the Planet campaign, a meeting of the members and mentors of the Business Woman Club took place at the official residence. The event brought together Volodymyr Kucherenko, Director-General of the Ukrvynprom corporation, Natacha Díaz Aguilera, Ambassador of the Republic of Cuba to Ukraine, Anica Djamić, Ambassador of the Republic of Croatia to Ukraine, Dragica Panorac, Ambassador of Montenegro to Ukraine, Anna Krysiuk, President of the Business Woman Club, Yuliia Bychai, Director of the Business Woman Club, Liliana Dmytrieva, the founder of Brusviana LLC, Iryna Asman, CEO of Kartel PJSC, Iryna Yevtushenko, a homoeopath, Ihor Kozlovskyi, the mentor of the club, philosopher, and theologian, Vitalii Romanchukevych, Vice President of the Association of Banks of Ukraine, and First Deputy Chairman of the Board of Industrialbank, Vadym Parasochka, a group coordinator at the Business and Investment Club, and Dmytro Kulibabin, a co-organiser of the Greening of the Planet project in Sumy region. Besides discussing Argentina's tourism and trade potential, the participants planted paradisiacal apples and grapes donated by Mr Kucherenko in the garden of the official residence.

Tourism was one of the sectors hit hardest by the global COVID-19 pandemic. In pre-pandemic times, Argentina ranked 38th worldwide in terms of tourist arrivals, totalling approximately 8 million foreign visitors per year.

Gifted with a vast territory and a variety of climates and microclimates ranging from tundra and polar deserts in the south to tropical climate in the north through fertile grasslands contrasting with the highest mountains outside Asia, arid areas, and temperate Atlantic beaches along its coastlines, Argentina is one formidable cocktail of wanderlust.

But travelling experience is not limited to beautiful landscapes: Tourists visiting Argentina will be able to see firsthand the diversity of its people and their friendliness, customs, folklore, cuisine, and many other aspects of the country's endless culture.

Among the main Argentine tourist destinations and attractions worth mentioning there are the Iguazú Falls, the Perito Moreno Glacier, the Wine Route (Mendoza and San Juan provinces), the Tierra del Fuego National Park, Puerto Madryn and the Valdés Peninsula, the Seven Lakes Route, Quebrada de Humahuaca, the Ibera Wetlands, and carnivals in northeastern provinces during the summer season.

Many Argentine cities throughout the country attract business and leisure travellers with their variety of traditions, sports activities, and fabulous sceneries, but Buenos Aires merits particular mention. Ranked first among tourist destinations in South America and second in the Latin American and Caribbean region, the city receives more than 3 million tourists annually, and its lifestyle and vibe are simply irresistible.

At present, in order to protect public health at such challenging times in terms of sanitary measures, the borders of the Argentine Republic are temporarily closed to foreign tourism.

However, mindful of the future and the visa waiver agreement for tourist purposes signed between Argentina and Ukraine, the embassy presented a stand at the rescheduled UITT Annual Tourism Fair, which took place from 11 to 14 May 2021. The Embassy of the Argentine Republic in Ukraine was the only Latin American embassy that had a stand in the fair. In addition to the country's top tourist destinations, some aspects of Argentine culture and customs were presented as well, such as a Malbec wine tasting and performances of local tango dancers for visitors.

As part of the cooperation activities between Argentina and Ukraine, the first half of 2021 was concluded with an important tasting of Argentine Malbec wine paired with local cheeses.

Argentina is building solid relations with various entities. In particular, an important partnership action plan was devised in early 2020 together with Ukrvynprom and the Ukrainian Wine Institute chaired by Volodymyr Kucherenko.

We were also honoured to welcome a few renowned Ukrainian and Argentine sommeliers, such as Emiliano Strático, an expert of the WSET in London, Agostina Bonino, Brand Ambassador of the Argento winery, Andrii Petrovskyi, a WSET Level 3 expert and Vice President of the All-Ukrainian Bartenders Association, and Oleksii Bondar, a representative of the Wine Time gastronomic chain importing Argentine wine. Special thanks to Mrs Kateryna Yushchenko, WSET representative in Ukraine.

Regardless of the challenges and difficulties posed by the COVID-19 pandemic during the last year, the Embassy of the Argentine Republic in Ukraine has channelled all its efforts towards continuing the development of activities focused on mutual cooperation and the achievement of greater and deeper points of convergence between the two countries in all spheres as another faithful sign of Argentina's interest in maintaining solid historical ties with Ukraine on a bilateral basis.