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THE EU AND ITS CITIZENS STAND WITH UKRAINE

– *Mr Ambassador, in your opinion, what are the main areas of cooperation between Ukraine and the EU? What have been the main areas of EU assistance since the outbreak of the full-scale invasion?*

– First, the EU is united in its steadfast support for Ukraine in the face of the Russian Federation's unprovoked and unjustified full-scale invasion. The European Union has stepped up its political, humanitarian, financial support and military assistance to Ukraine and is imposing massive sanctions against the Kremlin to cripple its war machine. Since the start of the Russian full-scale invasion, the European Commission, EU Member States, and its financial institutions have mobilised over 19 billion euros in financial, humanitarian, emergency, and budget support to Ukraine, with up to 3 billion euros in additional macro-financial assistance under preparation. Military assistance measures have also been provided under the European Peace Facility, amounting to a total of 2.6 billion euros.

The EU and its citizens stand with Ukraine. According to the latest Eurobarometer poll¹, 70 percent of EU citizens support the financing of supply and delivery of military equipment to Ukraine.

This includes 2.2 billion euros in EU macro-financial assistance and a resilience grant of 120 million euros in budget support already disbursed; and a further 5 billion euros in macro-financial assistance set to be disbursed this year. This latter macro-financial assistance will be provided to Ukraine in the form of long-term loans on preferential terms. It is the second stage of the implementation of the planned EU macro-financial assistance to Ukraine in a total amount of up to 9 billion euros, announced by the European Commission on 18 May 2022.

The EU Civil Protection mechanism provided assistance that amounted to 66,200 tonnes worth 425 million euros, as of mid-September 2022. At the same time, 348 million euros has been made available for humanitarian aid projects to help civilians affected by the war. This EU humanitarian aid provides food, water, healthcare, shelter and helps cover people's basic needs.

¹ European Commission (2022). *Eurobarometer: Europeans set defence and energy autonomy as key priorities for 2022*, 15 June [online]. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_3756 [in English].

As for the EU's normal assistance, we, the Delegation in Kyiv, have a portfolio of 250 million euro yearly – all EU projects. They all have been allowed to repurpose to support Ukraine's resilience, in particular, the EU's flagship programme EU anticorruption initiative (EUACI). People who had been fighting corrupt judges before 24 February, in March were purchasing bullet-proof vests and helmets for the same judges in order to help Ukraine's resilience.

About 7.5 million Ukrainians entered the EU since February 2022, and 4.2 million registered for temporary protection across the EU member states. During a visit to Kyiv, EU Home Affairs Commissioner Ylva Johansson stressed that Ukrainian nationals seeking refuge in the EU were allowed to come and go under their protection status as long as Russia's war continued.

I am particularly delighted that on 23 June, the EU leadership and leaders of the EU member states admitted Ukraine as a candidate country for the European Union. Ukraine is a European state, which has given ample proof of its adherence to the values on which the European Union is founded.

Granting candidate status to Ukraine is a truly historic event. We live in unprecedented times and circumstances, which require extraordinary steps. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has changed the geopolitical context. However, becoming a member of the European Union is not something that happens overnight, it is subject to a thorough process involving substantial work across all membership criteria.

– *What do the seven European Commission's recommendations mean? Who will check their implementation?*

– They relate to the basics: to reform the rule of law, including judiciary and fight against corruption, money laundering, reform the law enforcement sector, ensure de-oligarchisation, tackle the influence of vested interests in media, and finalise the reform of the legal framework for national minorities.

A number of these reforms have already been launched, including with EU support, and need to be finalised. We have seen some very positive results of their implementation, such as the appointment of Head of the Specialised Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office (SAPO) or the appointment of two new members of the High Council of Justice of high integrity by the Parliament in August. Such decisions and steps set a high bar for progress in other of the seven areas.

We believe in order to fulfil the EU recommendations, Ukraine does not need historical innovations; they can be implemented during the war. Besides, the EU is there to assist you and Ukrainian authorities know what needs to be done.

It is the European Commission that will monitor progress to address these priorities and report on them. The Commission will reflect how best to take forward our monitoring as part of the regular enlargement package. We are in regular touch with Ukraine's authorities to support them in fulfilling/

implementing the seven steps. These do not constitute big surprises to Ukraine but are rather well-known and outstanding reform areas, in which we have supported Ukraine in the past.

– *In your view, how has the Russian full-scale war impacted the EU-Ukraine relations?*

– Certainly, not only does war kill people but also complicates a lot of things. That is clear. One may justly say: ‘How can we reform the security service while the war is ongoing?’ One of the huge achievements of Ukraine during this war is keeping the government running and keeping Ukraine’s democracy working. So even in March in the very difficult first weeks, the Verkhovna Rada was meeting and adopting reforms and laws. That gives me hope and confidence that the issues that are entailed in the recommendations can be dealt with.

On top of the deepening cooperation – and because of that – we trust each other even more than previously. If I had drafted the decision to grant Ukraine the candidate status, I would have used the wording of “trusting that work is being done in these seven areas” (now it says, “with the understanding”). It is a show of trust towards Ukraine. You know that normally it works the other way round, as by the method that was applied to Georgia: first you do this, this, and this – then we consider a candidate status. The trust towards Ukraine is so high in the EU at the moment that our leaders were able to make decision this way round. Again, I am very proud of that.

None of this would have been possible without the Association Agreement that actually triggered the Revolution of Dignity and also was the reason that Putin started the war against Ukraine in 2014. The implementation of the Agreement over the last five years has brought us closer together, taught us to work together and also helped Ukraine to move in the EU direction in several areas. In all these areas that are now in these recommendations, work has been done already, things are under work.

– *In your opinion, how can we attract investors from Europe to rebuild our country?*

– Ukraine has been following through on a reform agenda since the Revolution of Dignity and has made important progress. Ukraine has an impressive anti-corruption machine – but now these institutions need teeth and the right people in senior posts.

Judicial reform has to move ahead. Institutions must come to life, so that they can deliver.

The same goes for legislation. Ukraine has a law to break the oligarchs’ grip on its economic and political life – it has to be implemented in a legally sound manner, taking into account the forthcoming opinion of the Venice Commission. a law on media needs to be adopted, to align Ukraine’s legislation with current EU standards and empower the independent media regulator.

Ukraine has shown that it keeps delivering on its reform commitments even in times of war. The EU will continue supporting this grit.

As for the future reconstruction. At the Ukraine Recovery Conference in Lugano, its participants stressed the necessity of an inclusive approach and application of the principle of shared responsibility during the recovery phase to ensure its success.

The conference agreed on these seven “Lugano Principles”: partnership; reform focus; transparency, accountability and rule of law; democratic participation; multi-stakeholder engagement; gender equality and inclusion; and sustainability. If Ukraine follows these principles – and why wouldn’t it? – then that will form the best basis to regain the investment attractiveness.

– *What is the role that the EU could play in Ukraine’s war recovery?*

– Allow me to quote President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen in her address to the Ukrainian Parliament on 1 July: ‘Your European path and the reconstruction of the country will go hand in hand. Ukraine will be in the lead. Massive investments will have to come. But to maximise their impact and to foster business confidence, investments will have to be coupled with a new wave of reforms.’

There is no doubt that a real big reconstruction can only start when the war ends. The European Commission has proposed to the Government of Ukraine to set up a reconstruction platform for mapping investment needs, coordinating action, channelling resources, and of course in support of an ambitious reform agenda.

“Rebuilding back better” a post-war Ukraine means embedding reconstruction in its European choice, and linking it with EU-driven reforms – in particular, on the rule of law and fight against corruption.

The platform will bring together countries, institutions, the private sector and civil society; our partners range from around the globe, from Switzerland to the United States, including European and international organisations – from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development to the European Investment Bank; from the IMF to the World Bank.

The platform will involve business and business associations with all their incredible know-how: we need that know-how, we need that expertise. The platform will be open to everyone who cares about the future of Ukraine.