

17 January 2013

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Dear Baroness:

Dear Sirs:

Re: Ukrainian World Congress calls for Ukraine's expedited Euro-integration

The Ukrainian World Congress strongly believes that the integration of Ukraine into Europe is of great strategic importance to Europe, Ukraine and the Ukrainian diaspora, whose interests are represented by the Ukrainian World Congress. As stated in its *Resolution of 25 November 2010 on Ukraine*, the European Parliament also:

2. Stresses that Ukraine has a European perspective and strong historical, cultural and economic links to the European Union and that it is one of the Union's key partners in its Eastern neighbourhood, exerting a significant influence on the security, stability and prosperity of the whole continent.

Therefore, the Ukrainian World Congress urges the European Union (EU) leadership to move their existing timetables forward in order to expedite the signature of the *EU-Ukraine Association Agreement* – even by 25 February 2013 – at the EU-Ukraine Summit in Brussels.

EU-Ukraine Association Agreement

The decision whether to sign the *EU-Ukraine Association Agreement* should be made, not on the basis of the actions of the current governing authorities in Ukraine, but rather, according to the long-term best interests of Europe, Ukraine and regional security, stability and prosperity.

By signing the *EU-Ukraine Association Agreement*, the EU will be reconfirming the intrinsic European character of the people of Ukraine. Such a gesture of trust and faith in the Ukrainian people will provide a strong stimulus to democracy and social progress in Ukraine.

The *EU-Ukraine Association Agreement* will also increase the self-assurance of the Ukrainian people who have much to offer the EU. Moreover, it will increase the confidence of foreign investors and consumers in Ukraine, which will improve its standard of living over time and make it an even more attractive partner for Europe.

EURO 2012, co-hosted by Ukraine, gave us only a glimpse of the enormous potential of Ukraine's Euro-integration. The opportunity to achieve this integration on a more permanent basis, particularly of Ukraine's intellectual capital, industries, market and natural resources, comes only once in a lifetime.

At this critical time, that unique opportunity is in jeopardy unless the EU takes unequivocal steps to ensure that the *EU-Ukraine Association Agreement* is signed, ratified and implemented in the near future.

Russia-dominated Customs Union

On 25 April 2005, in a report by *BBC News*, Russian President Vladimir Putin described the collapse of the Soviet Union, in his annual state of the nation address, as the “*greatest geopolitical catastrophe*” of the 20th century.

Today, President Putin is aggressively promoting his new world vision to establish a *Eurasian Economic Union* of former Soviet republics, including Ukraine, with a common political, military, customs, humanitarian and cultural space, by the year 2015. A crucial step to achieving this would be the integration of Ukraine as a member of the Russia-dominated *Customs Union*.

On 6 December 2012, the *Financial Times* reported that:

The US is trying to prevent Russia from recreating a new version of the Soviet Union under the ruse of economic integration, Hillary Clinton warned on Thursday.

“*There is a move to re-Sovietise the region,*” the US secretary of state told a news conference in Dublin hours before going into a meeting with her Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov.

“*It’s not going to be called that. It’s going to be called a customs union, it will be called Eurasian Union and all of that,*” she said, referring to various iterations of a Moscow-backed plan to deepen economic ties with its neighbours.

“*But let’s make no mistake about it. We know what the goal is and we are trying to figure out effective ways to slow down or prevent it.*”

Thus, notwithstanding Russia’s commitment in the 1994 *Memorandum on Security Assurances in connection with Ukraine’s accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons* to refrain from using economic coercion against Ukraine to secure advantages of any kind, Russia is continuing, notably by using natural gas as a political weapon, to pressure Ukraine into joining the *Customs Union*. For instance, on 1 January 2013, *Kyiv Post* reported that:

Russia is not going to lower the price for its gas for Ukraine unless it joins the Belarusian-Kazakh-Russian Customs Union, says Alexander Gorban, the director of the Russian Foreign Ministry’s economic cooperation department.

“*As for Ukraine’s demand that gas should be sold to it at the same prices as it is sold to Belarus, it is impossible. Russia will not agree to this. And why should it?*” Gorban said in an interview with Interfax.

“*Russia and Belarus are members of the Customs Union, and we are moving toward a common economic union,*” Gorban said. Russia has invited Ukraine to join the Customs Union and receive gas at the same prices as Belarus does, he said.

“*However, Ukraine wants to preserve two vectors simultaneously, that is, to join the European Union, where it is not really welcome, and to take part in the Customs Union, but only concerning some parameters that are beneficial to it. But such things never happen. You can’t be just a little bit pregnant,*” Gorban said.

Furthermore, Russian soft power politics, including the financing of “*Russkiy Mir*”, are aimed at driving Ukraine away from Europe and into Russia’s sphere of influence. The EU must not underestimate the extent of Russia’s deep influence on religion, economic activity, language, culture and the media in Ukrainian society.

Moreover, the supporters of the current governing Party of Regions are not that sympathetic to Ukraine’s Euro-integration. A study conducted from 10 to 24 February 2012 by the Sociological Group “*Rating*” revealed that only 40% of Party of Regions supporters favour Ukraine’s Euro-integration, as compared to 70% to 80% of opposition party supporters.

The constant pressure exerted by Russian authorities, the uncertainty associated with the *EU-Ukraine Association Agreement*, the pro-Russian stance of very influential members within the governing authorities of Ukraine, and its challenging economic situation, are all strong factors pushing Ukraine toward the Russia-dominated *Customs Union*.

At this time, the governing authorities in Ukraine are openly promoting a 3+1 framework agreement between the existing three member states of the *Customs Union* and Ukraine. On 11 December 2012, as reported by *Kyiv Post*, President Viktor Yanukovich stated that “*We’re currently harmonizing our laws, rules and regulations with those of the Customs Union*”.

Given this geopolitical reality and the strategic importance of Ukraine’s Euro-integration to Europe’s long-term interests, the signing, ratification and implementation of the *EU-Ukraine Association Agreement* should be made a high priority of the EU.

The signing of the *EU-Ukraine Association Agreement* would also enable Ukraine to establish a more balanced relationship with Russia, which is likewise in the interests of Europe.

EU-Ukraine awareness campaign and cooperation with Ukrainian civil society

To counter the relentless and pervasive pro-Russian propaganda in Ukraine, the EU should launch an immediate and effective awareness campaign aimed at the Ukrainian population at large, to highlight that the EU is strongly committed to Ukrainian membership in the EU, as well as the benefits of the *EU-Ukraine Association Agreement* for both Europe and Ukraine.

Such a campaign should focus on two themes: (i) that the *EU-Ukraine Association Agreement*, a significant part of which is a comprehensive free trade arrangement to advance Ukraine’s economic integration with Europe, will give Ukrainians access to the largest economy in the world (on 14 January 2013, Steven Pifer, former U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine wrote in the *Financial Times* that “*The customs union represents a combined gross domestic product of about \$2.1tn [trillion], which is dwarfed by the EU’s combined economy of \$17.6tn.*”); and (ii) that Ukraine’s Euro-integration will give Ukrainians the opportunity to live in harmony within a European community that shares their values and respects the principles of the inviolability of state borders, democracy, fundamental freedoms and human rights, in contrast to the Russian Eurasian alternative which continues to be expansionary and authoritarian in nature.

The lectures on Ukraine’s Euro-integration given by the former President of the European Parliament, Prof. Jerzy Buzek, in September 2012, to Ukrainian students at the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy and the V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University, and his YouTube message on the importance of voting during the 28 October 2012 Ukrainian Parliamentary Elections, were excellent examples of how Euro-integration should be promoted in Ukraine using both traditional means of communication and social media.

In addition, to this end, the EU should actively engage Ukrainian civil society, particularly through increased cooperation with pro-democracy NGOs, many of whom have established relations with the Ukrainian World Congress.

Student exchanges and visa liberalization

The EU should also take additional concrete steps to promote Euro-integration among Ukrainians through student exchanges and the easing of visa requirements for travel between the EU and Ukraine. Such measures will have a positive impact on public opinion in Ukraine toward Euro-integration.

On this note, it is worthwhile to consider the following findings:

- 1) a survey conducted from 30 March - 4 April 2012 by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation revealed that: (a) support for EU membership among Ukrainians increases significantly among those Ukrainians who have visited one of the EU member states, the USA or Canada (78% of those who visited vs. 45% of those who have not); and (b) only 17% of Ukrainians have ever been in any of the EU member states, the USA or Canada; and
- 2) a survey conducted from 25 September - 5 October 2012 by the Sociological Group “Rating” showed that support for Ukraine’s Euro-integration is strongest among young people aged 18 to 29 (with almost 67% in favour vs. 38% among the elderly).

Human rights issues and the Magnitsky Bill

As for the legitimate concerns of the EU over the lack of adherence by Ukraine’s current governing authorities to fundamental principles of democracy and human rights (including the political persecution of prominent opposition leaders such as Yulia Tymoshenko and Yuri Lutsenko), they can be addressed by other much more effective means.

Legislative tools similar to the highly publicized *Russia and Moldova Jackson-Vanik Repeal and Sergei Magnitsky Rule of Law Accountability Act of 2012*, signed into law by U.S. President Barack Obama on 14 December 2012, might be an option for dealing with those who violate human rights and ignore decisions of the European Court of Human Rights. The *Magnitsky Bill* restores normal trade relations with Russia, while providing for such measures as the denial of visas, prohibition of transactions and freezing of assets, to discourage human rights violations.

Ukrainian World Congress calls for Ukraine’s expedited Euro-integration

In summation, the Ukrainian World Congress urges the EU to expedite Ukraine’s Euro-integration. By signing the *EU-Ukraine Association Agreement*, the EU would be taking an important step in that direction and to furthering the modernization and Europeanization of Ukraine, the sixth most populous country, and the largest by area, in Europe. It would be a very positive decision with tremendous future benefits for the EU and Ukraine.

The alternative is for Ukraine to continue drifting between the poles of Europe and Russia, maintaining the current instability in the region with all of the attendant negative consequences. Or even worse, Ukraine could become a member of the Russia-dominated *Customs Union*. This would inevitably harm the geopolitical balance in Europe, significantly undermine Ukraine’s sovereignty, cause further deterioration of its human rights record, and embolden Russia’s expansionary ambitions.

Sincerely,

UKRAINIAN WORLD CONGRESS



Eugene Czolij
President

c.c. His Excellency Viktor Yanukovich, President of Ukraine
Ukrainian World Congress Member Organizations

The Ukrainian World Congress (UWC) is the international coordinating body for Ukrainian communities in the diaspora representing the interests of over 20 million Ukrainians. The UWC has member organizations in 33 countries and ties with Ukrainians in 14 additional countries. Founded in 1967 as a non-profit corporation, the UWC was recognized in 2003 by the United Nations Economic and Social Council as a non-governmental organization (NGO) with special consultative status.