

26 October 2015

**Her Excellency Federica Mogherini
High Representative of the European Union
for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and
Vice President of the European Commission**

Bât. Berlaymont
Rue de la Loi 200
B-1049 Brussels, Belgium

Federica.Mogherini@ec.europa.eu

Dear Madam High Representative:

Object: Response by Ukrainian World Congress to Action Plan on Strategic Communication

The Ukrainian World Congress (UWC) has been closely following the activities of the European Union aimed at countering Russian disinformation.

The UWC welcomes your submission of an Action Plan on Strategic Communication at the European Council meeting (25-26 June 2015) and the creation of the East StratCom Task Force with which the UWC has already been in contact.

It is my pleasure to transmit to you the attached UWC Response to the said Action Plan enunciating our main recommendations on future cooperation with the East StratCom Task Force and on ways to counter Russian disinformation more effectively.

Finally, I would very much appreciate the possibility to meet with you to discuss the attached UWC Response to the Action Plan on Strategic Communication.

Sincerely,

UKRAINIAN WORLD CONGRESS



Eugene Czolij
President

The 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 34 countries and ties with Ukrainians in 14 additional countries. Founded in 1967, the UWC was recognized in 2003 by the United Nations Economic and Social Council as a non-governmental organization (NGO) with special consultative status.

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**Response by Ukrainian World Congress
To Action Plan on Strategic Communication**

Submitted by Her Excellency Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission, at the European Council meeting (25-26 June 2015) further to the invitation contained in the European Council Conclusions on external relations (19 March 2015).

Preamble

The international community is being challenged by Russian President Vladimir Putin who is waging a war against Western values with more than traditional weaponry in the field of combat. President Putin has understood and mastered the media environment of the 21st century with both its potential and limitations, and he is proceeding to use both to his advantage in keeping the West from stopping his imperialist ambitions. Although he rationalizes hundreds of millions of dollars in annual spending on government-controlled media with the need to “*inform the West about Russia*”, Russian media outlets, in fact, offer very little content about the Russian Federation or its people. The goal of the Russian campaign in the information sphere, unprecedented in scope and reach, is to confuse, to make people question, and subsequently, to distract from the reality on the ground, including the subversion of democratic countries.

Specifically, the campaign of disinformation is designed to distract from the very real threat being posed by Russian aggression to the independence and territorial integrity of sovereign countries, the European community, Western values and global security.

It is, therefore, critical for the international community to stay focused on what is at stake, and develop solutions that unequivocally articulate the threat being faced and answer why this issue is important to every individual for whom freedom and democracy are paramount.

The *Action Plan on Strategic Communication* (Action Plan) is a positive step toward demonstrating that the international community has recognized and acknowledged the magnitude and influence of the communication tactics of the Russian Federation toward the post-Soviet countries, and particularly Ukraine.

The Ukrainian World Congress (UWC) believes, however, that the Action Plan requires stronger measures specifically designed to counter the Russian narrative, address the sophisticated nature of the manipulation of information and, more importantly, the effect of this manipulation on the core democratic values of the European community and Western civilization.

The UWC welcomes the creation of the East StratCom Task Force as a step in the right direction. This initiative, however, can be strengthened by broadening the scope of activity beyond the core task force based in Brussels. By partnering with NGOs and media outlets,

the East StratCom Task Force could broaden the reach of its work throughout EU Member States and Eastern Partnership Countries, and amplify the EU message.

The UWC commends the initiatives of countries such as Estonia, Netherlands and Poland that are promoting the launch of Russian-language media to counter Russian disinformation. These initiatives will contribute to the EU objective of supporting pluralism in the Russian-language media space. However, it is necessary to reach out not only to the Russian-speaking population in the post-Soviet countries (more specifically the Baltic States, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine), but to embrace all languages native to the population of EU Member States.

The reach and target audiences of the Action Plan also need to be expanded.

Strategic Objectives

The UWC agrees with the overall objectives outlined in the Action Plan. However, the UWC proposes the additional objectives listed below to further address the priority challenges.

- **Expose the Russian agenda** - The international community is only coming to grips with the magnitude of the information war. In addition to revealing individual incidents of disinformation, the Action Plan must expose the broader Russian agenda to the international community, clearly presenting the end-game of the Russian Federation and its range of consequences in lay terms. It is critical for the EU to answer the question: *“Why does the Russian Federation resort to disinformation?”*
- **Facilitate the promotion of the Eastern Neighbourhood Countries to the European Community** – It is critical for Eastern Neighbourhood Countries to share their progress and positive stories with the rest of Europe. This is particularly important to counteract persistent Russian disinformation designed to present Ukraine as a failed state. The Action Plan must open the lines of communication and create an avenue to assist the Eastern Neighbourhood Countries with such promotion. The media space is extremely crowded and noisy. The voice of the Eastern Neighborhood Countries needs to be amplified and provided the necessary airtime to share the narrative which is currently being drowned out by Russian dominance in the information sphere.
- **Expand engagement with civil society** – The UWC proposes that the engagement with civil society as outlined in the Action Plan be broadened to include civil society structures throughout the international community. There is a multitude of NGOs, think tanks and foundations that have the capacity and the will to amplify the messages being addressed by this Action Plan. They need to be formally included into the framework for the effective implementation of this strategy.

UWC Added Value

The UWC is in a very unique position to partner with governmental and non-governmental institutions to promote and achieve the objectives outlined both in the Action Plan and in this Response. Taking advantage of its global network, the UWC engages Ukrainians in numerous countries of various generations and social strata, and understands both the Eastern and Western psyche. The UWC coordinates a very powerful network of volunteers who are dedicated to the success of a democratic Ukraine and the unity of a prosperous European community. Specifically, the UWC offers the following added value to the effort

dedicated to winning the information war:

- The UWC, with its international partners, including the Atlantic Council of the United States, has the human resources to develop the narrative which objectively addresses the Russian agenda and presents, in lay terms, the nature of the threat and the consequences being faced by Western civilization. The UWC is also discussing various forms of cooperation with EU-based think tanks which would further enable refining and targeting the message to EU citizens.
- The UWC, with member organizations in 34 countries and ties in an additional 14 countries, has a wide reach spanning the globe in a multitude of languages. The UWC network engages various levels of government throughout the world and the grass roots population.
- The UWC has developed a network of media relationships throughout the world via its member organizations. The UWC has also forged partnerships with numerous Ukrainian media outlets, including 5 Kanal, Espresso TV, Ukraine Crisis Media Centre, TVi and Lviv-TV. As a result, the UWC can contribute to the amplification of the messages as outlined in the objectives of the Action Plan.
- The UWC has developed a strong working relationship with Ukrainian government structures and Ukrainian civil society primarily through its newly established, Kyiv-based UWC Mission to Ukraine. The UWC participates in the Working Group to Promote Ukraine. The UWC is supporting Ukraine with the development of its positive narrative and translating the narrative into numerous languages. The UWC also stands ready to cooperate with the East StratCom Task Force in sharing this narrative with EU member States, including via the strategic communication network launched by the European External Action Service.
- The UWC is developing a network with NGOs from other ethnic groups interested in promoting unity in civil society in support of democracy and respect of fundamental freedoms and basic human rights in the world.

Conclusion

The UWC is willing to cooperate with the EU institutions, including the East StratCom Task Force, that are interested in effectively countering Russian disinformation and promoting fundamental freedoms in the world. In any such cooperation, the UWC would be offering communication channels via its extensive network of member and partner organizations around the globe, including in twenty-five EU member States, as well as its close working relationship with Ukraine's governing authorities.

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