

16 August 2018

Her Excellency Madam Angela Merkel
Federal Chancellor of Germany
Bundeskanzleramt
Bundeskanzlerin
Willy-Brandt-Straße 1
10557 Berlin, Germany

Dear Madam Chancellor:

Re: Your meeting with the President of the Russian Federation on 18 August 2018

As you prepare to meet with the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, on 18 August 2018, in Germany, the Ukrainian World Congress (UWC) – the highest coordinating body representing 20 million people in the Ukrainian diaspora, including 200,000 Ukrainians in Germany – wishes to raise grave concerns regarding the relentless Russian military aggression against Ukraine and its devastating consequences, and the acute situation of Ukrainian political prisoners in Russian jails.

As you know, Ukraine continues to be the victim of a vicious hybrid campaign of aggression by the Russian Federation in which lives are lost or forever changed on a daily basis by the course of events. Statistics tell a jarring story. Since the start of the illegal occupation of Crimea and subsequent invasion of Eastern Ukraine by the hybrid forces of the Russian Federation in 2014:

- over 11,000 people have been killed, 25,000 injured, and 1.5 million residents internally displaced;
- 4.4 million people in the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts have been affected by the Russian aggression, which has created the largest humanitarian crisis in Europe since the end of World War II, although it is largely hidden and often forgotten;
- 3.4 million people have required humanitarian assistance: 2.2 million need health care and 1.2 million, food aid;
- over 2,500 people have been victims of exploding landmines, and 1.9 million live on territories littered with hidden landmines;
- over 70 Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars remain imprisoned by the Russian Federation, and over 100 hostages remain captives of the Russian occupying forces on the territory of Eastern Ukraine; and
- Ukraine has protected the peace and security of the European continent by successfully preventing the Russian Federation from making further military advances toward the West. In response, the Russian Federation has engaged in a massive disinformation campaign against Ukraine to falsely portray it as a failed state.

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The UWC and its network in 53 countries, including Germany, therefore, appeal to you, to demonstrate your country's continued strong commitment to the independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine, including Crimea. This commitment should include a strengthened sanctions regime against the Russian Federation until it fully complies with the Minsk agreements and withdraws all of its forces from the territory of Ukraine.

The UWC also urges you:

- to convey a very stern and unequivocal message to the Russian President that Germany, the EU and NATO will never compromise on fundamental principles, namely, the territorial integrity of independent states, including Ukraine, and respect for the basic human rights of all individuals, including Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars; and
- to increase pressure on the Russian Federation for the immediate release of all political prisoners and hostages, particularly those who continue to hold lengthy hunger strikes, now seriously endangering their lives.

We also call upon you both to suspend further discussions on, and the construction of, the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline, which will have an enormous negative impact on the Ukrainian economy and increase its vulnerability to continued Russian military aggression. It will also have a significant negative impact on European energy security, lead to higher gas prices and the general dependence of the EU, including Germany, as well as Ukraine, on Russian gas supplies. As you know, the Russian Federation can be a very unreliable trade partner, having, on several occasions in the past, used gas as a political weapon against various countries.

Germany, as a European leader which holds the principles of freedom, democracy and fundamental human rights as its highest values, is in a strong position to help bring an end to Russian military aggression in Eastern Ukraine and the illegal occupation of Crimea.

We strongly urge you to use the opportunity of your forthcoming meeting on 18 August 2018 with President Vladimir Putin to strengthen your efforts to that end with a view to ultimately restore global peace, security and stability.

Sincerely,

UKRAINIAN WORLD CONGRESS



Eugene Czolij
President

cc: Ms. Lesya Shramko, President, Association of Ukrainian Organizations in Germany

The UWC is the international coordinating body for Ukrainian communities in the diaspora representing the interests of over 20 million Ukrainians. The UWC has a network of member organizations and ties with Ukrainians in 53 countries. Founded in 1967, the UWC was recognized in 2003 by the United Nations Economic and Social Council as a non-governmental organization with special consultative status.

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