



STATEMENT BY THE UNIC CO-CHAIR HANNA HOPKO (UKRAINE) AND ACTING UNIC CO-CHAIR AND NATO PA VICE-PRESIDENT SVERRE MYRLI (NORWAY)

Dnipro, 12 October 2016 – “This meeting of the Ukraine-NATO Interparliamentary Council (UNIC), held for the first time in Dnipro, comes at a critical juncture.

Russia continues to illegally occupy parts of Ukraine and to actively support armed militants in blatant violation of its international obligations. UNIC reaffirmed its full and unwavering support for Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders.

UNIC in plenary sitting had a comprehensive discussion of the security situation in Ukraine. We met with local authorities, commanders of the Ukrainian Armed Forces deployed in the crisis zone, civil society activists and volunteers, and international humanitarian organisations operating in the area. UNIC Members also visited a local hospital where wounded Ukrainian servicemen are being treated.

These meetings highlighted that the security situation in Eastern Ukraine remains unstable, including continued violation of the ceasefire and ongoing attempts by the Russia-backed militants to disrupt the recently achieved agreement on withdrawal of forces in designated areas, as well as hinder the work of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission.

The Minsk Agreements remain the best way forward and Ukrainian members of UNIC reiterated their firm commitment to them. Members of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in turn welcomed the steps undertaken by the Government of Ukraine in order to pursue political resolution of the crisis, and implement the Minsk Agreements.

The first priority is the achievement of a full and sustainable ceasefire. The 21 September Framework Decision on Disengagement provides an important opportunity for moving towards that objective and creating the conditions for the conduct of local elections in accordance with Ukrainian law and OSCE standards.

UNIC members expressed particular concern about the humanitarian situation in the conflict zone, as well as the absence of progress with regard to the release of the Ukrainian hostages illegally detained in Russia and the territories temporarily controlled by Russia-backed militants. They also condemned in the strongest terms Russia’s ongoing illegal occupation of Crimea, and the serious violations of human rights, directed in particular against Crimean Tatars.

Members of the Rada provided a detailed update on political, economic and defence and security sector reforms. We welcomed the progress achieved, and called for intensifying efforts. Further demonstrated progress particularly in the fight against corruption is essential for reclaiming the Ukrainian people’s trust in their institutions as well as for sustaining the much-needed international assistance.

As the parliamentary counterpart to the NATO-Ukraine Commission, UNIC provides an essential forum for members of parliament to monitor and support the objectives of NATO-Ukraine cooperation. We welcomed the Comprehensive Assistance Package agreed by Allied Heads of State and Government at the Warsaw Summit in July 2016, and reviewed progress in its implementation. We also welcomed Ukraine’s request to join the NATO “Enhanced Opportunities” partnership programme. Membership in this programme would provide further recognition of Ukraine’s past contribution to NATO operations and offer further tools to support interoperability.

The NATO Parliamentary Assembly is the transatlantic interparliamentary organisation bringing together national parliamentarians from the 28 NATO member countries and a range of partner countries. While independent from NATO, the Assembly provides a crucial link between NATO and national parliaments. It facilitates parliamentary awareness and understanding of security issues, enhances the transparency of NATO policies, and promotes the shared values upon which the Alliance is based.

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UNIC was created in 2003 and brings together ten high-ranking parliamentarians from Ukraine with an equivalent number of their counterparts from NATO member countries. The Council normally meets twice a year: in Brussels and in Ukraine. Its aim is to demonstrate parliamentary interest and involvement in cooperation between NATO and Ukraine. Over the years, it has become an active political forum where members of parliament from NATO and Ukraine can discuss any and all issues of common concern and interest.”

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