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UKRAINE-NATO
INTERPARLIAMENTARY COUNCIL (UNIC)
SUB-COMMITTEE ON
TRANSITION AND DEVELOPMENT (ESCTD)
SUB-COMMITTEE ON
NATO PARTNERSHIPS (PCNP)

SEMINAR REPORT

ODESA, UKRAINE

5-6 MARCH 2018

1. **Iryna GERASHCHENKO**, co-chairperson of the Ukraine-NATO Interparliamentary Council (UNIC) welcomed the delegates to Odesa and noted that the President of the Parliament had just presented a national security bill to the Rada. A number of allied countries helped with that draft and this has been widely appreciated in Ukraine. The goal of the bill is to move Ukraine closer to NATO standards across a wide spectrum of the security sector. Ukraine is increasing civilian control over security policy making and, in the future, it is expected that the Minister of Defence will be civilian. She noted that the war in Donbas began fourth years ago and the aggression has never ceased.
2. **Raynell ANDREYCHUK**, the NATO member co-chairperson of the Ukraine-NATO Interparliamentary Council (UNIC) added that she was pleased that two women were chairing this Council and thanked the Rada and the Governor of the Odesa Region for helping to plan and host the seminar. She noted that the first bilateral meeting between member parliamentarians from the NATO PA and the Rada had taken place in 1988 and that the forum for this dialogue was renamed UNIC in 2003. The dialogue had taken place even as Ukrainian governments changed. The work of UNIC became particularly important after the illegal annexation of Crimea. The NATO PA then immediately affirmed its support for the sovereignty of Ukraine and was one of the first international organisations to sanction Russia for its actions. The NATO PA continues to condemn Russian actions in Crimea and the Donbas and it is offering support to the Rada to help it deal with the consequences of this difficult situation. She noted that Ukraine would likely feature at the upcoming NATO Summit and hoped that the Statement by the UNIC Chairs would help inform those discussions.
3. **Maksym STEPANOV**, Governor of the Odesa Region also welcomed the delegation and thanked it for meeting in the important coastal city of Odesa where, he said, security remained a critical priority for the authorities.
4. **Ivanna KLYMPUSH-TSINTSADZE**, Vice-Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration of Ukraine, opened her remarks by stating that Ukraine wants to develop even closer ties to NATO and ultimately to join the Alliance. It is working toward this end and plans to apply for membership when the proper time comes.
5. She noted that after an important arbitration court ruling on an energy dispute with Russia that Russia lost, that country has lowered the pressure in several gas pipelines to make it seem that Ukraine is an unreliable energy partner for Europe. Ukraine moved quickly to counter this effort, but the crisis demonstrated that Russian aggression continues and that it is willing to use the energy weapon for these ends. Its aggression is thus hardly limited to Eastern Ukraine and takes various forms, the Vice Prime Minister said. She added that no country alone can resist the sophisticated toolbox of subterfuge the Russian government deploys. International solidarity is thus essential.
6. She noted that both the EU and NATO have been very helpful and have helped focus Ukrainian reform efforts. The trust fund has underwritten a number of critical activities designed to advance the reform agenda and many ministries have been engaged in this. The goal is not a Membership Action Plan (MAP) adopted by 2019 which will be critical to drawing out a road map for NATO membership. This will be more focused than the 2017 MAP, the Minister added.
7. She noted that the Yanukovich government did a great deal of damage and set the country back on its plans for Euro-Atlantic integration. Many of the personnel forging closer ties with the West were lost and cooperation with NATO was frozen. All of this has had to be reactivated but there were bottlenecks including a lack of expertise. The NATO Professional Development Program has helped in this regard and it has begun to train up officials at an array of relevant ministries. She also noted that public support for eventual membership in NATO is rising but more efforts are needed to dispel some of the old myths about NATO that persist in parts of Ukrainian society.

8. In 2017, Ukraine allocated roughly 5% of GNP to defence in 2017 and 5.2% in 2018. The country understands the need for higher defence spending across the Alliance. Ukraine increased the number of exercises in participated in by 30% in 2017 and hopes to increase the number over the coming year. Ukraine also hopes to increase the level of interoperability with NATO countries and the support of the Alliance and its members have helped make Ukrainian forces more effective.

9. **Alexander VINNIKOV**, Head, NATO Representation to Ukraine and Director, NATO Liaison Office discussed the annual national programme which he indicated represents the key instrument by which Ukraine promotes its Euro-Atlantic ambitions. In the past it did not fully avail itself of these opportunities but this has clearly changed. NATO welcomes the change but would like to see Ukraine adopt a more strategic approach. The programme itself is not simply about security sector reforms. It is also about democratic principles and values. The North Atlantic Council (NAC) visited Kyiv in July 2017 and this was a very strong demonstration of support for the country. NATO Ambassadors discussed the comprehensive assistance packages with Ukraine including the advisory assistance, capacity building and ten trust funds in areas like logistics, medical management, command and control, career transition and other areas. NATO has built up its presence in Ukraine and the new office there now hosts 60 staff members. An allied advisory team of 15 experts seconded from Allied countries is helping on a diverse range of issues including cyber security and medical rehabilitation. NATO has developed a professional development that has trained roughly 1,500 public employees, and its Champions 100 programme has helped Ukraine create a pool of reform makers to drive positive change in their respective institutions.

10. Mr Vinnikov said that despite the burdens of the ongoing conflict Ukraine has managed to undertake a series of important reforms. The country has passed a new law that provides a legislative framework for needed security sector reforms. Efforts are needed to make essential reforms in defence sector oversight including efforts to reinforce the role of the Rada in this regard. NATO is currently helping 200 staff members learn English. The fight against corruption must be the cornerstone of the effort and Allied nations are very focused on this particular issue. Ukraine's economy continued to recover in 2017 and the government has made important strides on fiscal and financial policy. Signing a visa free arrangement with the EU has also been an important step for the country.

11. Mr Vinnikov noted that Ukrainian armed forces have made great strides over the past three years and have set of goal of reaching NATO standards by 2020. Their tactical capacity has increased substantially, and NATO training efforts have been particularly helpful in this regard. Still there is a clear need for broader systemic reform and reforms need to be made irreversible. In short, good governance, full respect for human rights, the development of a functioning liberal economy and democratic oversight are the critical challenges for Ukraine. All of these require changes in mindsets and the way institutions operate. The adoption of NATO's technical standards will mean little if Ukraine does not move more quickly on these fronts.

12. **Barbora MARONKOVA**, Director the NATO Information and Documentation Centre in Kyiv told participants that the Centre's function is to work with the public on matters related to NATO. She noted that there is a great of interest in NATO in Ukraine and that the level of public support for the alliance now ranges between 43% and 60% which is historically high. She noted that her office is reaching out to regions which have been traditionally more sceptical of NATO and the idea is to share information about how the Alliance works and the values it upholds. While the Ukrainian public increasingly supports NATO, the level of understanding about how it works is relatively low and old myths persist. She suggested that in a recent sociological research it was learned that many Ukrainians define security in economic terms. Unemployment and high inflation are a greater concern than the prospect of a war.

13. The NATO Information and Documentation Centre in Kyiv also provides advisory support in developing strategic communication and works with many institutions and government ministries on this mission. This too is part of a broader effort to increase governmental and public resilience in the

face of hybrid warfare and propaganda. Ukrainian NGOs are very engaged in this effort and the Centre reaches out across civil society to better prepare it for operating in today's information environment.

14. **Mytro SHYMKIV**, the Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration of Ukraine, noted that Ukraine's national agenda is very ambitious. The President said recently that he wants to capture that ambition in the constitution. But the country also confronts serious challenges including the threat of Russia hybrid military assaults, disinformation and cyber threats. The Ukrainian economy suffered enormously as a result of the war but has now enjoyed four successive quarters of growth, rising levels of trade, an increase in capital investment and deepening national reserves.

15. The government has created an important anti-corruption infrastructure and the parliament has finally agreed to an anticorruption court to deal more effectively with that corrosive problem. That court accords both with the Venice Commission and the Ukrainian constitution. Two hundred and eighty-two deputies voted for it and none opposed it. On the energy front, he noted that Naftogaz had long been a loss-making institution but is now operating in the black. An electronic government procurement system is now in place which makes government purchasing far more transparent and less liable to corruption. A new law on privatisation, following the English model, will require electronic auctions which should also enhance transparency. There is, however, a persistent problem prosecuting those who engage in corruption and the country needs to adopt a zero-tolerance position. The new court should help on this front.

16. Educational reform is also underway, and the idea is to give children more modern schools that will develop the technological and social skills required for an advanced economy. On the health care front, a telemedicine system is under development to bring health care to rural communities where roughly one third of the population lives. Decentralisation is also important in such a large and diverse country and 50% of public budget now goes to local governments.

17. Ukraine will substitute the current income tax system with an exit capital tax. This has been done in Latvia and should help some Ukrainian business move out of the shadows and into the formal economy. Currency liberalisation is also on the agenda for 2018 as 25 years of currency controls have had a deleterious impact on the national economy.

18. Cyber defence systems are also needed in Ukraine which has suffered attacks on critical infrastructure. In 2015 and 2016 electricity grids were attacked and this caused blackouts in Western Ukraine. The financial system and Treasury were also attacked as were oil and gas facilities, the Black Sea GPS system, the Kyiv Metro and the Odesa Airport.

19. Russia has engaged in a massive and sophisticated intelligence gathering operations in Ukraine and it has used this intelligence to exercise influence over various groups in Ukrainian society. Ukraine has responded by establishing cyber defence and working with civil society to counter the Russian message.

20. Lithuanian Ambassador **Marius JANUKONIS** noted that his embassy serves as the contact point for NATO in Ukraine and accordingly works very closely with NATO and with other Allied countries to support the reform process and promote NATO-Ukraine cooperation. He suggested that the 2019 Presidential and Parliamentary elections will be critical to the country's ongoing transformation. He said that his government is very optimistic about Ukraine's future. The country has achieved a great deal under trying conditions and is moving forward toward Euro-Atlantic integration. It has achieved an important degree of macroeconomic stabilisation and increased energy independence. Its armed forces are readier, and civil society is displaying an important degree of resilience while enjoying freedoms that some others in the region do not.

21. The situation is of course different in Eastern Ukraine where the Russian military has done everything to stymie the national project. It has created a frozen conflict and hundreds have been killed. The death toll in 2017 rose, and the conflict remains active and highly dangerous. It has displaced over a million people. Lithuania hopes that the truce concluded at the Minsk contact group

will endure. The war has exacted a high toll on the national infrastructure and it will cost billions of euros to repair what has been destroyed. This is the only active conflict in Europe and it merits more attention, the Ambassador said. He suggested that Russia perceives the success of Ukraine as an existential threat to itself and is actively engaged in undermining the reform effort. So far, however, Russia has failed to slow the process, and the conditions for an economic take off are being laid. The economy is once again growing, tourism and consumption are rising, a visa free regime with Europe is in place, and exports are soaring as Ukrainian companies discover the European market. Important energy market reforms are beginning to have a positive impact on the national economy as well.

22. The Ambassador said that it is high time for Ukraine to assert itself on matters pertaining to integration. Implementing an Association Agreement and a free trade accord should be a priority for the EU. Current members have a great deal of know-how to share with Ukraine to facilitate integration and prepare the country for membership. They need to do more to advance this process. At the same time, foreign investors and local business expect more improvement in the business climate. Tax and customs reforms are still required as is far better management of state enterprises and better energy management including unbundling of Naftogaz. While a slow pace of reform is at least tolerable, (and coming elections might well lead to such a slow-down) backsliding should not be, the Ambassador asserted. He added that the recent proposal by the President to anchor Euro-Atlantic integration into the constitution is worth considering.

23. Several points were made in the discussion it was noted that all political forces in the country now aspire to EU membership and support the goal of at least meeting the criteria for NATO membership. One challenge is that members of the political class were for too long immune from prosecution for corruption. The new court and legislation backing it up should help on this front. Politicians will soon have to declare all their assets, and parties will henceforward be financed through the state budget. Given the level of destruction in the East, the concept of a new Marshall Plan for that beleaguered region might eventually be required.

24. **Petro KANANA**, an official from the Ministry of Defence, told participants that Ukraine has suffered significant human and infrastructure losses as a result of the war and the situation in the eastern regions of the country remain very tense. Russia is building up its military in the region. The level of violence has risen and there is a genuine possibility of a full-scale attack. Russian supported forces continue to violate the cease fire while Ukraine adheres to the Minsk agreement. Ukraine wants the withdrawal of all illegal occupying units and a peacekeeping mission to establish control of the conflict zone. Ukraine rules out the idea of Russian participation in this mission. It wants a UN presence in the Donbas.

25. He noted that Ukraine has been consistently implementing military reforms in the midst of this conflict and maintains several goals including the establishment of a single command and control system, the introduction of effective defence planning, the establishment of an operational capability to rebuff the military aggression and the establishment of effective reserves. He noted that the legal framework for military governance has improved. Parliamentary participation in discussions regarding reform and defence spending is essential but there is room to improve the dialogue. The Defence Ministry looks forward to deeper interaction with partners and allied advisors to reach strategic goals laid out in 2017.

26. Training and retaining highly capable forces is a top priority and new efforts have been made to train up reservists. The Ministry has sought to increase the housing stock for military families and is looking at other ways to raise morale and motivation. Defence planning courses for military officers have been introduced and the military is moving to meet Allied standards on everything from defence structures, logistics and medical directives. By end of 2018, the Ministry will create a united logistics command and a Services and operational command. NATO equipment, training, operational and strategic planning and clothing standards are all being adopted. Seventy Allied advisors are now working with the Ministry of Defence as well as six high-level strategic advisors.

27. The speaker mentioned that the military has acquired a range of modern equipment and that new capability-based planning is shaping national procurement methodologies. A new logistics command has been formed and an effort is underway to upgrade medical personnel training systems.

28. **Ihor VORONCHENKO**, Commander of the Ukrainian Navy began by saying that Ukraine is a maritime country and that the sea is critical to the movement of Ukrainian goods and energy. National security demands the defence of the waters of Ukrainian shores. There are also important energy resources off Ukraine's coast lines and these too must be defended.

29. It is important to recognise that Russia exploited its naval power to seize Crimea in 2014 which, the speaker said, had been a national tragedy. He noted that Russia's imperial vision has always been premised, at least in part, on control of the Black Sea and this remains a top priority for the Kremlin. Russia has done much to subvert the security order of the region and it is futile to sign agreements with Russia as they are, he said, not worth the paper on which they are signed. Russia has engaged in a massive build-up of forces on the Crimean Peninsula and is developing a capacity to block international trade routes in the region. Their aggression and growing naval presence has also hindered the development of Ukraine's gas industry. Russia is now considering the construction of a bridge across the Kerch Strait which would hinder Ukrainian trade through those waters and the expectation is that Russia will seek to seize more territory in the region.

30. Ukraine is working with NATO on a range of naval matters and is working to restore the national navy. Ukraine sees NATO as a key player in the Black Sea and as a deterrent to Russian aggression in those waters. Ukraine is working the United Kingdom, Norway, the United States and Sweden to develop a national naval strategy that will shape force development. There is a disparity between Russian and Ukrainian naval power and Ukraine is developing asymmetric responses and situational awareness as one set of responses and it is procuring a range of vessels and high precision weaponry as part of its deterrent posture. It expects to procure more counter-mining vessels as well as corvette class ships. Ukraine will also establish an academy to train naval air forces. Although Ukraine has a developed ship building industry, it needs to collaborate with Western firms to introduce state-of-the-art technologies. A number of Allied based companies are working with Ukraine on this front.

31. **Iryna FRYZ**, Head of the Ukrainian Delegation to the NATO PA, moderated a panel discussion on the *Militarisation of Crimea and Violations of the Human Rights*. She appealed to members not to recognise elections in Crimea as free elections on that occupied peninsula are not possible in current circumstances. She pointed to the persistent violation of the rights of the indigenous community of Crimean Tatars and a range of other human rights violations that have occurred since Russia occupied the peninsula.

32. **Refat CHUBAROV**, People's Deputy of Ukraine and Chairman of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People told participants that Russia is dedicated to turning Crimea into a powerful military outpost and that this now poses a threat to the entire region. The Tatar people have been singled out for persecution because they have never accepted Russia's occupation although a range of other Crimean dissidents loyal to the Ukrainian state have also been subject to Russian oppression, he added. He pointed out that Russian authorities are now engaged in a campaign of systematic oppression to encourage these dissidents to leave Russian citizenship has essentially been imposed on residents as they had very little time to respond to register their opposition to automatic citizenship extended to those residing in Crimea at the time of the occupation.

33. Blackmail and intimidation is now systematically used against dissidents and their lawyers, Mr Chubarov asserted. The right of privacy is frequently violated with households routinely searched and arrests arbitrarily made. The rule of law has been replaced by the indiscriminate assertion of control. The authorities are purposefully cultivating a sense of fear to squelch any potential opposition. There is also a compulsory military draft which is a violation of international law in an occupied territory. The freedom of movement is also denied. Lists of those who left Crimea after the

occupation are kept and if these people return, they are automatically arrested. There is no independent media operating in Crimea and Russian authorities strictly control the press.

34. He warned that Western governments are frequently confronted with a temptation to write off Crimea as a lost case or at least to placing the question down the priority list. He said that doing so was a mistake as it would only encourage President Putin to pursue further aggression and greater oppression. Russian authorities will only be encouraged if they confront no resistance, and the idea of liberating Crimea should animate Western thinking. What has happened, he said, is a grotesque crime and it should never be accommodated. He also warned against congratulating President Putin after his victory in what will be an orchestrated and undemocratic election.

35. **Evhenia ANDREUK**, Deputy Head of Crimea SOS discussed her organisation's role in documenting human rights abuses in Crimea. She too discussed the massive military build-up on the Peninsula and the policy of intimidation and even kidnapping the regime is employing to sow fear and discourage opposition. Hundreds of military vehicles now cover the region and military manoeuvres are commonplace. This has upset the rhythm of life in the region and is emblematic of the occupation. Heritage sites like the Khan's Palace in Bakhchisaray have been desecrated and art collections looted.

36. In the discussion, speakers suggested that it was a mistake to delink sanctions from crimes in Crimea from those relative to events in Eastern Ukraine. These should be combined, one speaker said, as Russian policies in both regions are part of an integrated strategy.

37. **Svitlana NIEZHNOVA**, Head of the national joint stock company Chornomornaftogaz discussed the problem of Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea for Ukraine's gas industry. She said that Russia is now stealing Ukrainian gas and denying Ukraine access to several of its maritime gas fields. She said that Russia has akin to 7.2 billion cubic meters of Ukrainian gas. It has also sought to change the registers and names on ownership titles, but this effort has failed. The rigs and fields Russia claims are registered in Odesa and are Ukrainian. Two international courts are looking into this problem and Ukraine has submitted documentation to one of the courts which will require Russia to respond by November. In a second case, a Swedish court of arbitration has ordered Gazprom to pay Ukraine's energy firm Naftogaz roughly USD2.5 billion in a long-running dispute over fees. The greater problem is that investors confront great uncertainty investing in the Ukrainian gas industry due to the high level of Russian military activity in the region.

38. **Mykhailo GONCHAR**, President of the Centre for Global Studies *Strategy XXI* opened his remarks by noting that Russian military and energy policies need to be as one and the same. It sees the Black Sea as a highly strategic region and one with great hydrocarbon potential. There is a great deal of exploration underway in the broader Black Sea region for both gas and to a lesser extent for oil. Most of these resources are concentrated in the northern reaches of the sea bed.

39. The government of Ukraine has signed a number of production sharing arrangements, but several of these have been put on hold due to Russian occupation of Crimea and ongoing fighting in Eastern Ukraine—events which have unsettled investors. The government's goal has been to triple gas production and transform from a net gas importer to a net exporter. This posed a serious threat to Russia and so it has sought to unsettle markets through its military efforts. This has worked insofar as several foreign energy companies have essentially abandoned the region, leaving an open field for Rosneft and Gazprom.

40. Russia's policy in Syria can be seen in the same light, Mr Gonchar argued. Its military presence in Syria provides it with enormous leverage to block the flow of gas from Iran and Qatar through to Europe, allowing it to remain the dominant energy exporter to Europe. Russia also worries about the prospect of Turkey importing gas from Turkmenistan. He noted that the Turkish Stream Pipelines project is not in fact Turkish although Turkey has agreed to this project. Between Nord Stream and Turkish Stream as well as military deployments in Ukraine and Syria, Russia is essentially sealing off European access to other energy sources. President Putin has said that a monopoly is only good

if it is your monopoly and that is clearly what the aim of Russian policy appears to be. Mr. Gonchar noted that Russia's aggressive military posture is funded by its energy revenues and it has explicitly linked the two in a recent energy strategy document. In effect, he argued, Russia has weaponised its energy resources. Russia has reinforced its position by using cyberattacks to disrupt rival energy projects. Russia is also opposed to China's One Belt One Road policy as this too can be understood as a threat to its energy and security aspirations. This could be one reason that it seeks to destabilise the South Caucasus.

41. The speaker concluded by suggesting that there are mechanisms available for countries to counter Russian efforts. He suggested that Turkey could open up a Southern Caucasian gas route to counter the negative impact of Turkish Stream. A Turkish member noted that Trans-Caspian and Trans-Anatolian projects would help achieve this end. The further development of the Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) industry including the building of new ports would provide alternative sources of gas to Europe. He also suggested that it might make sense for European countries to boycott the football World Cup as the event is designed to lend legitimacy to a regime which is bent on destabilising the continent.

42. **Vadym CHERNYSH**, the Minister of Temporarily Occupied Territories and Internally Displaced Persons of Ukraine cited Yevgeny Maksimovich Primakov a Russian politician and diplomat who served as Prime Minister of Russia from 1998 to 1999. Primakov had developed a doctrine while serving under Yeltsin that fully opposed the enlargement of NATO in the East, and called for the establishment of a multipolar world with a particularly prominent role played by Moscow and Beijing. Mr Chernysh noted that Russia has sought to foster instability to achieve these ends and has exploited fissures in Western societies. These fissures include cultural, religious, economic, national, historic and linguistic elements which can be exploited from outside through propaganda. Doing so lowers societal resilience and generates frustration and tension. Russia has also reached out to Russian nationals in several countries and exploited these ties for the same ends. It finances pro-Russian NGO's and has used these to wage cultural wars. These efforts are coordinated with various state institutions as well as the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The Gerasimov doctrine now envisions a complex application of military force, asymmetric actions, economic information and Russian supported political and civil movements to further Russian interests. He suggested that even mass migration has been seen as useful insofar as it has sparked tensions in Europe and fostered support for radical movements.

43. **Iryna GERASHCHENKO**, the First Vice-Chairperson of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine and President's Envoy for Conflict Settlement in Donetsk and Lugansk Regions discussed the situation in Eastern Ukraine. She said that the recent ceasefire was violated within three hours of its implementation and that the conflict continues to take a heavy toll on human life. An estimated 10,000 people have been killed in Donbas, but the numbers are not precise as organisations like the Red Cross and the OSCE are denied access to many areas and cannot, for example, visit prisons where human rights violations are systematic. Mines are another problem and some 7,000 km² of the region is now considered dangerous due to mines. The environmental situation has also substantially deteriorated, and a number of coal mines have been flooded and factories destroyed. This has leached dangerous chemicals into the ground water. In Crimea many people have been summarily arrested and are now held in Russia. One student was kidnapped in Belarus. Because Russia has imposed citizenship on these people, Ukraine's right to demand an accounting is not recognised.

44. In the discussion it was suggested that a UN Peacekeeping mission should be deployed to the entire region and that no Russians should be included in this force. Russia strongly opposes this proposal. Russia's motivations for its actions in Ukraine are largely directed at a domestic audience. Russia is not a global power, but it does have the capacity to destabilise and this is what it is doing to lay a claim to great power status.

45. Participants also met with NGOs, faculty representatives and students of the Odesa I.I. Mechnikov National University. The Rector of the University **Igor KOVAL**, told participants that the school was founded in 1865, engages about 3,000 employees, receives some support from the EU and has 120 cooperative agreements with other universities. For example, it is working with a Swedish university to establish a centre for the study of nuclear weapons and non-proliferation. He also mentioned the strategic challenges in the Black Sea where the situation appears to be worsening as Russia seeks to reassert a kind of imperial hegemony over these waters. That ambition is highly destabilising, Dr. Koval suggested and the other states of the region as well as their partners and Allies in NATO will need to deter Russia's imperial ambitions in the region.

46. **Prof. Dr Olga BRUSYLOVSKA**, Head of the Department of International Relations, said that since gaining its independence Ukraine had worked for peace and had signed the Budapest Memorandum to give up its nuclear stock hold for the sake of regional stability. Its great problem, she noted, was that Russia has shown itself willing to upset peaceful relations in the region to further its strategic ambitions. She said that President Putin wants Ukraine to collapse from the inside and that it sees this as a superior alternative to Ukraine joining NATO. The greatest threat to Putin's regime, she added, was a successful Ukraine.

47. **Volodymyr DUBOVYK**, an Associate Professor in the Department of International Relations and Director, Center for International Studies, said that since the Orange Revolution Ukraine has maintained high expectations about its eventual Euro-Atlantic integration. Unfortunately, it has not always done its homework, he added, and this has made accession to the Euro-Atlantic community all the more challenging. He said that Russia has now imposed a high degree of instability and uncertainty over the Black Sea region. Ukrainians today understand the degree to which Russia has become a hostile neighbour and the number of those holding pro-Russian outlooks has declined precipitously. This has altered politics in the country. He suggested that despite the conflict in the East, it was essential that Ukraine maintain a strong focus on democratic transition. Furthering human rights and democracy must remain a top priority for the country. He also said neutrality between NATO and Russia is not an option for Ukraine as there are no powers that will ensure this neutrality. The Russian government floats this idea with some frequency precisely because they know it is untenable.

48. Professor Dubovyk said that Ukraine sees a compelling enemy outside of the country, but it must confront the enemy within: corruption. Failing to address this insidious problem will totally undermine the country's aspirations to join the Euro-Atlantic community. Failure to modernise Ukrainian politics and to build a political system characterised by openness and transparency is akin to losing the war. The current party system in Ukraine is failing and change is essential. He also suggested that the West will need to consider bringing Ukraine into its institutions even if the Crimea problem remains unresolved. NATO will also need to focus more on the Black Sea as this is where Russian aggression is most apparent and its ambitions most obvious.

49. **Anastasiia GERASYMCHUK**, Assistant to the Editor-in-Chief of *Ukraine Analytica*, said that Ukraine is contested space and is not sufficiently strong to advance its agenda internationally. It needs support. It does have values, however, and those values are aligned with those of the West, she said. The relationship with the United States is accordingly essential. The United States, in turn has global interests and it wants to see a stable Europe with developed democracies. Russia is contesting the United States despite its lack of power. But it can leverage its proximity and capacity to create problems and it is indeed actively destabilising Ukraine and other countries in the region. This is the only viable way for Russia to exercise influence given its domestic political orientation. The Trump Administration is a cause of some concern, but its pro-Russian rhetoric has not matched its actions which remain hostile to President's Putin's ambitions for the region. President Trump does not make policy alone and there are other forces in American politics, including the Congress, which seems prepared to stoutly resist Russia.

50. It is telling that US military support for Ukraine has increased and this is apparent in the decision to provide Ukraine with Javelin missiles. This infuriated President Putin. It is also telling that Kurt Volker is leading the US effort to deal with the conflict in Ukraine. The new US National Security Strategy is also clear in its illustration of the challenges Russia poses and states that Russia has shown a willingness to violate the sovereignty of neighbouring countries, undermine their unity and weaken their institutions. Ukrainians welcome US support and see that support as critical to resisting the efforts of President Putin to weaken Ukraine. Ukrainian society does not have a problem with Russia as such, but it does have a problem with President Putin and his regime. This is reflected in public opinion polls which increasingly demonstrate that the public sees President Putin's regime as a problem.

51. Ukraine will have to demonstrate patience. There is no apparent military solution to its dilemma and it must play defence. It must also continue to insist to its Western partners that the fate of Ukraine matters for the West, including the United States. Russia insists that Ukraine is its backyard and that it has a sovereign right to exercise some degree of control over its neighbour. Ukraine rejects this logic and is committed to defend against it. But it also needs support. Fortunately, there are many in the United States who remain dedicated to supporting an independent and Western-oriented Ukraine.
