## Joint Declaration of the Friends of Ukraine group

Ukraine's reform efforts are unparalleled in the country's post-Soviet history. This is a remarkable feat considering that Russia's government continues to occupy Crimea as well as foment aggression in Donbas. Ultimately, a democratic, prosperous Ukraine on the path towards Euro-Atlantic integration will be a factor of stability in a turbulent Europe and the best response against Putin's authoritarian rule.

For this to happen, however, Ukraine urgently needs stronger Western support – to thwart Moscow's continued obstructionism on implementing the Minsk agreements and to deter further Russian aggression against Ukraine and others. This is why we call on US and European leaders to significantly bolster stability in the region by increasing their support for Ukraine while simultaneously strengthening their resolve towards the Russian government.

Three years ago, the Ukrainians made a choice to join the West, preferring democracy to authoritarianism and rule of law as opposed to its Soviet legacy. In response, the Russian government chose to throw away the international rulebook: its illegal annexation of Crimea and its undeclared war in Donbas have claimed more than 10,000 lives to date while leading to almost two million people internally displaced. The Crimean Tatars face repression not seen since Stalin's forced deportation during World War II.

Despite these immense humanitarian and security challenges, Ukraine has embarked on an ambitious effort towards more reforms over the past two years than in the preceding twenty-three years of its independence. It has made enormous strides in cleaning up its gas transit system – critical for supplying several EU countries and historically a major source of corruption. One of the world's most transparent public procurement systems has been launched, already saving millions of Euros in public funds. Reforms are being implemented broadly and across many sectors - justice, public administration as well as decentralization.

New institutions to fight corruption are being put in place. An e-declaration system, once fully operational, has the potential to provide increasing transparency about the incomes of more than 300,000 Ukrainian officials. Ukraine has also met an array of tough conditions to qualify for a visa-free regime with the EU.

The Ukrainian military, which struggled to fend off direct incursions by Russian armed forces just two years ago, is becoming more effective. With continuous support from donor countries, Ukraine can become an important partner in defending Europe's extended flank. Reforming its intelligence capabilities, Ukraine can also help NATO increase its strategic awareness in the Black Sea region.

Naturally, there are many areas where Ukraine must do better, starting with privatization and the fight against corruption. We will remain vigilant in ensuring that Kyiv follows through on its commitments. Yet overall, the country is moving in the right direction, notwithstanding relentless efforts by the Russian government to destabilize the country politically and economically.

The picture is much more bleak with respect to Russia however. Once seen as a strategic partner, Moscow has now become Europe's main strategic challenge. From its illegal presence and support for its proxies in eastern Ukraine to its support for the Assad regime in Syria; from its provocative no-notice "snap" exercises to its meddling in domestic politics of Western democracies, the Russian government has made a clear choice to disrupt international security and to undermine the rules-based system we have tried to put in place – together with Russia – since the end of the Cold War.

Moreover, the Minsk process has stalled, as the Russian government and its proxies continue to violate the ceasefire and impede the work of OSCE monitors. Ukraine cannot be expected to deliver on its political commitments under Minsk without an end to the daily killing of its soldiers. Conditions must first be created that would permit holding elections in Donbas under Ukrainian law and with credible international supervision. The efforts under the Normandy format have led to the Minsk agreement, followed by significantly improved levels of dialogue between the conflicting parties. However, in the sense of further

positive steps towards finding a solution to the conflict, the negotiations need to be upgraded by involving all relevant players, including the United States. But until the Russian government mends its ways, the Europeans need to stay firm, including by tightening the sanctions on Russia.

Hoping for cooperation with those who disagree on fundamental principles and values is naïve; not supporting those trying to reform is short-sighted, and, ultimately, self-defeating. By boosting assistance to Ukraine's transformation and staying firm on Russia, Europe and the United States can start mending the broken pieces of the European security order.

## Recommendations

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requirements without delay.

☐ Western aid to Ukraine should be conditional on further reform progress and concrete results – but it needs to be flexible and more assistance should be offered when Kyiv delivers.

☐ Increased military aid, including adequate defensive systems, should be considered if Russia continues to violate the ceasefire and supply advanced weapons to its separatist proxies, building on but going

☐ The EU and its Member States should acknowledge the progress made by Ukraine by lifting the visa

new military escalation with Russian in the east, it would help deter it.

☐ The US and the EU need to invest more into getting their worldwide partners to join the sanctions regime and discourage those who try to circumvent it.

beyond NATO's Comprehensive Assistance Package and bilateral programs. Rather than producing

## On sanctions

- □ The term of the already existing EU measures should be extended for another twelve months instead of six. This would demonstrate Europe's resolve and align the sanctions with those imposed by the US.
- Additional Russian officials could be placed on a travel ban for undermining Ukraine's sovereignty; those involved in human rights violations committed under Russia's occupation regime in Ukraine's Crimea should be further sanctioned.

## On the conflict in the Donbas

- □ To solve the conflict in eastern Ukraine, we should involve all relevant players, including Ukraine, Russia, the European Union and the US.
- In parallel, Ukraine should launch an inclusive process to develop a strategy for the reintegration of Donbas: such a plan will need to go beyond political questions and focus on addressing the needs of the population on both sides of the conflict line.

Carl Bildt, Sweden Foreign Minister 2006-2014 Prime Minister 1991-1994

Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, Poland Foreign Minister 2001-2005 Prime Minister 1996-1997

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**Toomas Hendrik Ilves,** Estonia President 2006 – 2016 **Hans-Gert Pöttering**, Germany President of the European Parliament 2007-2009

> Anders Fogh Rasmussen, Denmark Secretary General of NATO 2009-2014 Prime Minister 2001-2009

> > Sir Malcolm Rifkind, UK Foreign Secretary 1995-1997 Defence Secretary 1992-1995