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**UCC Briefing Note to the Honourable Marc Garneau, PC, MP  
Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs**

**Russia's escalation of aggression against Ukraine  
and Canada's response**

**April 9, 2021**

## **UCC Policy Recommendations**

### **I. Recent escalation of Russian attacks and troop movements**

The UCC recommends that Canada and NATO allies:

1. Strengthen sectoral sanctions against Russia, including removal of Russia from the SWIFT international payments system and sanctions on Russia's sovereign debt;
2. Ensure that the Nord Stream II pipeline is not completed. As Russia is currently dependant on Ukrainian pipelines to export its natural gas into the EU, completion of this pipeline will remove a key deterrent to further Russian invasion;
3. Provide Ukraine with defensive weapons and increase Ukraine's air and naval defence capacities in the Black Sea and Azov Sea;
4. Work with NATO allies to increase air and naval presence and patrols in the Black Sea and Azov Sea;
5. Increase the provision of real-time satellite imagery and intelligence to Ukraine on Russian military movements and possible false flag operations designed to provoke or legitimize an invasion by Russia.

### **II. Ukraine's path to NATO membership**

The UCC recommends that Canada and NATO allies:

6. Continue to work through NATO-Ukraine Trust Funds and the Defence Reform Advisory Board to support Ukraine's reform efforts in the defence and security sectors;
7. Explore opportunities to accelerate a Membership Action Plan for Ukraine. Efforts should focus on supporting Ukraine's reform efforts, particularly with regard to civilian oversight and the fight against corruption;
8. Expand Operation UNIFIER, Canada's military training mission in Ukraine, and increase the scope of the mission to accelerate full interoperability between Ukrainian and NATO Armed Forces.

### **III. Russia and Canada's sanctions policy**

The UCC recommends that Canada:

9. Use the Magnitsky Act to directly target human rights abusers by instituting travel bans and asset freezes against them in order to hold Russian officials to account for human rights abuses against Ukrainian prisoners being held illegally in Russia and occupied Crimea, Donetsk and Luhansk, and against Russian officials responsible for persecuting the Ukrainian national minority in Russia.
10. Assign officials from the Canadian embassy in Russia to attend, observe and report on court proceedings targeting Ukrainian political prisoners and activists of Ukrainian organizations in Russia as a sign of solidarity.

#### **Recent escalation of Russian attacks and troop movements**

Recent weeks have seen a serious escalation of attacks at the frontlines by Russia. In February-March 2021, 20 Ukrainian soldiers were killed and 37 were wounded in action in 438 attacks by Russian and proxy forces, 81 of which involved use of heavy weapons.

In the last week alone (April 1- 8) six Ukrainian soldiers have been killed and five wounded in 77 attacks by Russian and proxy forces, 19 of which involved use of heavy weapons – mortars and artillery.

This increase in attacks has been coupled with significant Russian troop and materiel movements, which have raised grave concern among NATO and G7 allies about a possible Russian invasion.

The UCC welcomes statements of support for Ukraine, and condemnation of Russia's escalation from Prime Minister Trudeau, Minister Garneau, and NATO allies, particularly US President Biden and UK Prime Minister Johnson.

A strong response to this Russian escalation by Canada and allies will hopefully deter further Russian aggression.

***The UCC recommends that Canada and NATO allies:***

- 1. Strengthen sectoral sanctions against Russia, including removal of Russia from the SWIFT international payments system and sanctions on Russia's sovereign debt;***

2. ***Ensure that the Nord Stream II pipeline is not completed. As Russia is currently dependant on Ukrainian pipelines to export its natural gas into the EU, completion of this pipeline will remove a key deterrent to further Russian invasion;***
3. ***Provide Ukraine with defensive weapons and increase Ukraine's air and naval defence capacities in the Black Sea and Azov Sea;***
4. ***Work with NATO allies to increase air and naval presence and patrols in the Black Sea and Azov Sea;***
5. ***Increase the provision of real-time satellite imagery and intelligence to Ukraine on Russian military movements and possible false flag operations designed to provoke or legitimize an invasion by Russia.***

### **Ukraine's path to NATO membership**

Ukraine's strategic goal of NATO membership is enshrined in Ukraine's Constitution and in its National Security Strategy. In June 2020, Ukraine was recognized as a NATO Enhanced Opportunities Partner.

Ukraine has committed to a series of reforms in both the defence and security sectors, and in democratic governance, as part of its path to attaining NATO membership.

Ukraine's membership in NATO would not only strengthen Ukraine's security; NATO membership for Ukraine would strengthen European security and would deter Russian aggression against EU states.

Canada, together with the US, UK, Baltic States and Poland have been strong advocates for Ukraine's increasing integration with NATO.

#### ***The UCC recommends that Canada and NATO allies:***

6. ***Continue to work through NATO-Ukraine Trust Funds and the Defence Reform Advisory Board to support Ukraine's reform efforts in the defence and security sectors;***
7. ***Explore opportunities to accelerate a Membership Action Plan for Ukraine. Efforts should focus on supporting Ukraine's reform efforts, particularly with regard to civilian oversight and the fight against corruption;***
8. ***Expand Operation UNIFIER, Canada's military training mission in Ukraine, and increase the scope of the mission to accelerate full interoperability between Ukrainian and NATO Armed Forces.***

## Russia and Canada's sanctions policy

No significant Canadian sanctions against Russia have been implemented since March 2019, when 114 individuals and 15 entities were sanctioned for aggressive actions against Ukraine.

Two minor sanctions announcements followed in January 2020 and March 2021, wherein 6 individuals, and 2 individuals and 4 entities, respectively, were sanctioned.

In the intervening two years since March 2019, both the United States and the European Union have expanded sanctions against Russian officials and entities much more broadly than has Canada.

Russia is illegally detaining over 100 political prisoners who are Ukrainian citizens, many from occupied Crimea. While Canada has the authority to sanction the perpetrators of these human rights violations under the Magnitsky Act, the Government of Canada has chosen thus far not to exercise this authority.

A similarly grave human rights situation exists in Russian-occupied parts of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, where Ukrainian captives of Russian and proxy forces are targets of systemic human rights violations and torture.

The US State Department 2020 Country Report on Human Rights, published on March 30, 2021, stated the following about prisoners illegally detained in the Russian-occupied parts of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, "The vast majority reported being subjected to some form of mistreatment, including beatings; electric shocks; sexual violence; asphyxiation; removal of teeth and nails; mock execution; deprivation of water, food, sleep or sanitation facilities; and threats of violence against family members. Victims of abuses committed by Russia-led forces in the "DPR" and "LPR" had no legal recourse to attain justice."<sup>1</sup>

As with Crimea, the Government of Canada has not used the Magnitsky Act to sanction any Russian and occupation officials responsible for these violations.

At the end of February 2021, the UCC provided the Government of Canada with a briefing note regarding three prominent cases of the abuse of internationally recognized human rights of Ukrainian citizens in Russian-occupied Crimea.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/ukraine/>

<sup>2</sup> *UCC Brief – Human Rights Violations in Russian-occupied Crimea and Canada's sanctions policy*  
<https://www.ucc.ca/2021/03/03/ucc-brief-human-rights-violations-in-russian-occupied-crimea-and-canadas-sanctions-policy/>

Coupled with its systemic and egregious violations of the human rights of Ukrainian citizens living under Russian occupation, the Russian government has carried out a campaign of intimidation and pressure against the Ukrainian national minority that lives in Russia. Ukrainian institutions have been closed or banned, Ukrainian activists who are citizens of Russia have been targeted with repression.

The Ukrainian World Congress (UWC) has been banned from operating on Russian territory as an “undesirable organization.” The UWC has attempted to seek redress before the Russian courts which has resulted in the persecution of the UWC’s nominal plaintiff by Russian authorities.

***The UCC recommends that Canada:***

- 9. Use the Magnitsky Act to directly target human rights abusers by instituting travel bans and asset freezes against them in order to hold Russian officials to account for human rights abuses against Ukrainian prisoners being held illegally in Russia and occupied Crimea, Donetsk and Luhansk, and against Russian officials responsible for persecuting the Ukrainian national minority in Russia.***
- 10. Assign officials from the Canadian embassy in Russia to attend, observe and report on court proceedings targeting Ukrainian political prisoners and activists of Ukrainian organizations in Russia as a sign of solidarity.***