

Rostyslav TRONENKO,
*Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
of Ukraine to the Federative Republic of Brazil*

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION BETWEEN UKRAINE AND BRAZIL: ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROSPECTS

– *Mr Ambassador, considering your professional experience, how should state representatives prepare themselves for the stressful and unpredictable situations, which rather often arise in diplomats' careers?*

– I do not have any ready-made recipes for success, nor is there any limit to professional improvement. Our job requires us to be ready for change, to be able to listen carefully and tolerantly to other opinions, and always be open to finding compromises, of course, without surrendering national interests. I think that self-confidence, inner peace of mind, balance, family support, and understanding from like-minded colleagues can handle any unforeseen circumstances. It is also important to be optimistic and enthusiastic, whilst also seeing a way out even from difficult situations.

– *Has the coronavirus pandemic impacted cooperation between Ukraine and Brazil? What area of interaction has been most severely affected? Can we expect a revival of the dialogue at the highest level, particularly mutual visits, in the near future?*

– The restrictions on movement have predictably led to a reduction in transport services and a decrease of travel-related services in 2020. In addition, in the case of Brazil, this is a unique situation, as we have seen growth in all other areas. For instance, the trade turnover between the countries increased by 13.1 percent, and the volume of foreign trade in services almost doubled, growing by 95 percent.

Besides, the imposed restrictions prompted a search for new forms of diplomatic communication. In my opinion, the active application of latest technologies for holding bilateral contacts has also contributed to the development of political dialogue between the two countries. In particular, after the Tokyo meeting in October 2019, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine, and Jair Bolsonaro, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, held a telephone conversation in November 2020. The first ladies of both countries have communicated over the phone this year as well. On 23 August 2021, First Lady of Brazil Michelle Bolsonaro became one of the honorary guests joining the Kyiv Summit of First Ladies and Gentlemen online. She suggested her perspective on the development of the so-called soft power, shared her experience, and

underlined the importance and timeliness of the issues that were discussed within the Summit.

Foreign ministers, diplomatic advisors to presidents, deputy foreign ministers, co-chairs of the Ukrainian-Brazilian Intergovernmental Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation have also managed to get the relations back on track. There have been organised interministerial videoconferences on cooperation in the fields of space, military and technical cooperation, education, science and cybersecurity, to list a few.

On 15 October 2020, the first videoconference in recent years was held between the State Space Agency of Ukraine (SSAU) and the Brazilian Space Agency. The upshot of the meeting was an agreement on the creation of two working groups for the inventory of assets of the Alcântara Cyclone Space company and remote probe of the Earth.

Shortly after, during an online conference on 18 November 2020, Dmytro Kuleba, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, and Ernesto Araújo, Head of the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, had a substantial discussion on the content of a visit at the highest level and decided to hold a Ukrainian-Brazilian business forum for the mutual presentation of trade and investment opportunities.

The pandemic has not impeded contacts in areas constituting the pragmatic interests of the states and enterprises of both countries: Delegations including the representatives of the executive authorities and the military and industrial complex (MIC) producing enterprises paid visits to Ukraine at the end of 2020, followed by visits to Brazil this year.

In May 2021, Yevhenii Yenin, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, undertook a trip to Brazil to conduct bilateral political consultations. During his visit, the Memorandum of Understanding between the Rio Branco Institute at the Brazilian MFA and the Hennadii Udovenko Diplomatic Academy of Ukraine was renewed. The South American country was also visited by Volodymyr Taftai, Chairman of the SSAU.

The main priority for the development of political dialogue is, however, the organisation of an exchange of visits at the highest level.

– *In January 2021, Brazil became one of the first countries to start vaccinating its population against COVID-19. Please tell us about the progress of this process, particularly regarding the difficulties. Can it be called successful?*

– On 17 January this year, vaccination started in Brazil. The first 112 health workers in the state of São Paulo were vaccinated with the Chinese vaccine CoronaVac.

Since then, 184.3 million doses of CoronaVac, Oxford/AstraZeneca, Pfizer, Janssen, and Moderna vaccines have been applied in the country.

According to official figures from the Brazilian Ministry of Health, more than 126.6 million people have already received the first dose of the COVID-19

vaccine, accounting for 59.99 percent of the Brazilian population. More than 57.7 million people have received the second dose, which is about 27.24 percent of the population.

Considering the population of Brazil (213 million) and its geographic scale, vaccination volumes are not sufficient to stop the pandemic yet and the pace lags behind those foreseen in the National Vaccination Plan.

At the same time, the Brazilian government believes that the entire population of the country will be vaccinated by the end of this year; however, observers note that Brazil will reach a high level of vaccinations only by mid-2022.

Brazil also plans to manufacture vaccines. By the end of 2021, the Fiocruz Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (Rio de Janeiro) intends to produce 200 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine, and the Butantan Institute (led by the São Paulo State Health Secretariat) aims to produce 100 million doses of the CoronaVac vaccine.

– In your opinion, what changes in the functioning of the countries' economies should we expect after the end of the pandemic? What will be the new reality of international trade and economic relations?

– It is known that every economic crisis is followed by economic growth. Thus, I think, we should expect the same after the COVID-19 pandemic is over.

Undoubtedly, international trade is undergoing significant changes. In my opinion, digital transformation has been the most notable among them. Those who were not ready to deal with numerous technological tools were forced to adapt in the shortest time period.

Regarding new trends, after the end of the pandemic, there will be a reduction in bureaucracy and the introduction of new technologies. The well-known terms 'home office' and 'videoconference' will be the solutions that the pandemic has brought about.

– In December 2020, Ukraine and Brazil initiated the first dialogue on cooperation in the defence sector. In particular, the Ministry of Strategic Industries of Ukraine and the Ministry of Defence of the Federative Republic of Brazil signed a Memorandum of Understanding providing new opportunities for trade and exports. Besides, during the official visit of the Brazilian delegation to Kyiv, the plan of common access to the markets of third countries was mentioned. Could you tell us more about these vectors?

– Ukraine became the sixth country worldwide with which Brazil started a Defence Industry Dialogue (along with the USA, Italy, France, India, and Portugal). It opens up new opportunities for filling Ukraine-Brazil strategic relations with specific projects.

It is important that the dialogue has made it possible to establish contacts at the level of defence companies of both countries and to involve them in identifying promising areas of bilateral cooperation. In other words, this is a very pragmatic

cooperation based on the interests of the MIC enterprises and the armed forces of each country.

The Memorandum of Understanding on scientific and technological cooperation envisages not only the supply of defence products but also their joint development and access to the markets of third countries. The areas of activities are extremely wide: from manufacturing cartridges and shells to aircraft and even tanks. The countries are currently defining specific projects of cooperation according to the capabilities of each party and existing technologies.

To this end, within the framework of the Defence Industry Dialogue, representatives of the world-renowned companies Embraer, Taurus Armas, Avibras, IMBEL, Condor, Kryptus, and others visited Ukraine in December last year, and in May this year, representatives of the Ukroboronprom State Concern, the State Enterprise 'Spetstechnoexport', and the State Enterprise 'State Kyiv Design Bureau Luch' paid a visit to Brazil. During the visit, the delegates acquainted themselves with the production facilities of the defence industry enterprises and held negotiations with the parties concerned.

– *On 10 March 2021, interagency consultations between Ukraine and Brazil in the field of cybersecurity were held for the first time in the history of bilateral relations. What are the results of this meeting?*

– The aforementioned consultations were held within the Defence Industry Dialogue.

The parties presented national security IT systems, exchanged information and experience on preventing cyber threats, responding to cyberattacks, and overcoming their consequences, as well as agreed to cooperate in countering cybercrime. Information was useful for both states, especially given Ukraine's experience in constant counteraction to cyberattacks from the Russian Federation, as well as the growth in the number of malware attacks from the territory of Russia on the public and private infrastructure of Brazil.

Thus, it was agreed to hold the next round of cyber consultations with the participation of the Central Election Commission of Ukraine and the Superior Electoral Court of Brazil.

– *In 1999, the governments of Ukraine and Brazil signed a Framework Agreement on Cooperation in the Peaceful Use of Outer Space, and a few years ago, the countries initiated a dialogue on deepening bilateral cooperation in the field of the peaceful use of nuclear energy. What achievements in these areas bear mentioning?*

– The aerospace industries of Ukraine and Brazil are complementary; thus, there are significant prospects for cooperation. In this respect, the Brazilian partners are ready to consider Ukrainian proposals for relevant cooperation.

In addition, the experience of the joint implementation of the Alcântara Cyclone Space project provided an opportunity to create an atmosphere

of mutual trust and to obtain positive technological results in the development of the carrier rocket and the launch centre.

Now, space agencies are interested in the joint production of satellites and, as I have mentioned before, remote probing of the Earth.

Oles Honchar Dnipro National University has a successful experience of training ten Brazilian students at the Physical and Technical Faculty during 2011–2012. At the request of the Brazilian partners, they completed an internship at the leading enterprises of the rocket and space industry in Ukraine and received appropriate certificates. To date, all alumni work in the Brazilian space industry, most of them in the Brazilian Space Agency. The continuation of this cooperation has great prospects.

In 2016, the Ukrainian enterprise Radii Research and Production Corporation already installed a digital control and protection system for a nuclear reactor of the Nuclear and Energy Research Institute (IPEN) of Brazil. Therefore, in 2020, the company installed spare parts for the system mentioned. The parties constantly place great importance to the issue of expanding cooperation in this area. Meanwhile, the nuclear power industry is not dynamic, so this process is quite long.

– *What is the current state of bilateral scientific and technical cooperation between Ukraine and Brazil?*

– Prior to the outbreak of the pandemic and the imposition of travel restrictions, there was an active scientific exchange between Ukraine and Brazil. For instance, in April 2018, Roman Hreba, Deputy Minister of Education and Science, Olena Shapovalova, Director of the State Enterprise “Ukrainian State Centre for International Education”, and eight rectors of higher educational institutions of Dnipro Region and the city of Kyiv for the first time took part in large-scale educational exhibition events during a visit of a delegation of Ukrainian educators to Brazil.

In addition, members of the delegation took part in the FAUBAI 2018 International Education Conference to discuss the internationalisation of higher education, and in the educational exhibition ExpoPoss 2018 Recruit Higher Education Students from Brazil, which allowed decently presenting Ukraine’s educational opportunities for Brazilian students. During the visit, the delegates established direct contacts with leading universities in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and Curitiba. As a result of the visit, Svit Osvity LLC offered free training for five Brazilian students of Ukrainian origin in the higher educational institutions of Dnipro region with the possibility of learning the Ukrainian language free of charge.

In general, during 2019, nine scientists from Brazilian state-owned higher educational institutions paid visits to Ukraine to participate in conferences or deliver lectures. Among them there were professors from the Federal University of Bahia, the Federal University of Viçosa, the Federal University of Roraima,

the Fluminense Federal University, the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, the Federal University of Paraná, the Federal University of ABC.

Before the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020, thirty-three Brazilian students were studying in Ukraine.

In August 2020, representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Brazil, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, the Embassy of Brazil in Ukraine, and the Embassy of Ukraine in the Federal Republic of Brazil participated in a meeting in the video conference format to discuss the preparation of a meeting of the Working Group on Science and Technology within the Ukrainian-Brazilian Intergovernmental Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation. The parties identified the following promising areas of cooperation: biotechnology, nanotechnology, artificial intelligence, innovative entrepreneurship (start-ups), and nuclear energy.

Therefore, in December 2020, a coordination meeting was held in the web format, during which the parties agreed to determine common projects to be implemented after 2022 within the framework of the Agreement on Scientific and Technological Cooperation.

Since 2013, two Ukrainian professors from Oles Honchar Dnipro National University have worked in the campus of the Federal University of Brasilia at the Faculty of Aerospace Sciences.

– In 2020, the Ukrainian population in Brazil was estimated to be over 600,000 people. How does the embassy cooperate with the diaspora? Are there any joint activities foreseen to be held?

– One of the largest foreign communities in Brazil is the Ukrainian one numbering from 600,000 to 1,000,000 people. It plays an important role in the development of bilateral relations, which is also noted by the Brazilian government. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ukrainian diaspora continues vigorously organising cultural events in cooperation with the embassy, particularly online. The Embassy of Ukraine in the Federative Republic of Brazil traditionally maintains close ties with the Ukrainian community and informs it about events in Ukraine.

Jointly with the Ukrainian diaspora, the embassy regularly celebrates solemn dates in Ukraine, holds folklore festivals, and organises events dedicated to the Holodomor anniversary. In 2020, with the assistance of the Embassy of Ukraine in Brazil, the Barvinok Ukrainian folklore group repeated online a unique requiem concert in order to commemorate victims of the Holodomor.

Among other cultural events in 2020, it bears mentioning the online celebration of the centenary of the birth of Clarice Lispector, an outstanding Brazilian writer of Ukrainian origin, as well as the holding of the 27th National Festival of Ukrainian Dance.

– *In 2021, the 130th anniversary since the beginning of Ukrainian immigration to Brazil will be celebrated. What events does the embassy plan to hold?*

– Unfortunately, the pandemic situation in Brazil has made serious adjustments to our plans because it is impossible to hold events involving large social gatherings. Members of the Ukrainian community in Brazil planned to travel to Ukraine, in particular, to visit Kyiv, Ternopil, Lviv, Yaremche, and Bukovel. We hope that the next year will give them an opportunity to do it.

In January this year, on the occasion of the 130th anniversary since the start of Ukrainian immigration to Brazil and in order to deepen the cooperation of the Embassy of Ukraine in the Republic of Brazil with the community, four sessions of the Roots of Community forum were held online, whose primary purpose was to discuss and plan future activities of Ukrainian community organisations in Brazil, their folklore groups, and efficient interaction with the embassy.

On 9 March 2021, on the occasion of the 207th anniversary since the birth of Taras Shevchenko, an online meeting of Taras Kremin, State Language Protection Commissioner, and Vasyl Bodnar, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, with the leadership of the Ukrainian-Brazilian Central Representation took place. The participants discussed the issues of distance learning of the native language by young people of Ukrainian origin, joint scientific and linguistic projects between the leading universities of both countries, summer language camps, and other prospects that are of interest to the Ukrainian diaspora.

At the invitation of the Parish Council of the Ukrainian Holy Trinity Church, on 23 May 2021, my wife and I took part in the Divine Liturgy dedicated to the establishment of the Parish of the Holy Trinity in the village of Marcelino, São José dos Pinhais Municipality, devoted to the 130th anniversary since the beginning of Ukrainian immigration.

On 26 May, as part of the celebration of the aforementioned anniversary, Marcelo Belinati, Mayor of Londrina, handed over a decree he had signed regarding a plot of 7,000 sq m, which was titled ‘Helena Kolody Square’ in honour of the outstanding Brazilian writer and poetess of Ukrainian origin.

On 27 May, my meeting with Edson Scabor, Deputy Mayor of Maringa, took place, at which negotiations were held on the completion of the process of transferring two land plots to the Ukrainian community for the construction of a cultural centre and Ukraine Square.

In 2021, despite the obstacles caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the embassy managed to hold a number of large-scale events dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the regaining of Ukraine’s independence. Considering current realities, we decided to focus on the online format, which attracts attention of a large audience without the need for gathering people.

In particular, we created a video¹, which was broadcast on the Facebook page of the embassy. In this video, the Ukrainian folklore groups in Brazil, namely Poltava (Curitiba) and Veselka (Prudentópolis), performed the anthems of Ukraine and Brazil. The video included greetings from me an His Beatitude Sviatoslav, Major Archbishop of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church; Archbishop Jeremias Ferens, Bishop of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Brazil and South America; and Mukhailo Ratushnyi, Head of the Ukrainian World Coordinating Council.

At the end of our video, viewed by over 100,000 people and shared by more than 600 users, Father Cristiano Lobas Silva, Order of Saint Basil the Great, administrator of the parish of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the city of Guarapuava, state of Paraná, performed the Spiritual Anthem of Ukraine titled 'Prayer for Ukraine'.

Eight years in a row, the Embassy of Ukraine in Brazil, in conjunction with the Archdiocese of Rio de Janeiro, lit Christ the Redeemer monument, one of the new seven wonders of the world, with the colours of the national flag of Ukraine². At the request of the embassy, Ukrainian colours shone at the Crystal Palace of the Botanical Garden and Iguazu Palace, site of the Government of the Paraná State in Curitiba, the state capital, where more than 600 thousand descendants of the Ukrainians dwell³.

In addition to the celebrations and greetings on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the resumption of Ukraine's independence, the embassy, together with the Federation of Industries of the State of São Paulo, created the projection of our flag and national symbols at the façade of the Federation's imposing and grand building, which is a decisive hallmark of the city. Each and every one of us was touched watching Ukrainian national symbols and colours in the Paulista Avenue in the very heart of the megacity with the population of 20 million people⁴.

On 24 August 2021, the whole world and, in particular Brazil congratulated Ukraine, and on 25 August 2021, the Defence and Foreign Affairs Committee of the Chamber of Deputies of the Brazilian National Congress approved the statement of congratulations on the occasion of Independence Day of Ukraine.

Prior to the Independence Day, the influential Brazilian *Gazeta do Povo* periodical published my article titled *30 years of Ukraine's Independence and the Crimean Platform*⁵, featuring the initiatives of the Government of Ukraine – the Crimean Platform and the Kyiv Summit of First Ladies and Gentlemen.

¹ See: <https://fb.watch/7Aesgki9ZZ/>

² See.: <https://fb.watch/7ByGqllUyx/>

³ See.: <https://fb.watch/7ByKNBIMOO/>

⁴ See.: <https://fb.watch/7ByX3XqZlu/>

⁵ Tronenko, R. (2021). 'Os 30 anos da independência da Ucrânia e a Plataforma da Crimeia', *Gazeta Do Povo*, 23 August [online]. Available at: <https://www.gazetadopovo.com.br/opiniao/artigos/os-30-anos-da-independencia-da-ucrania-e-a-plataforma-da-crimea> [in Portuguese].

– *Brazil is renowned as a country of tourism. In your opinion, how does the country attract foreign tourists? What would you recommend visiting above all?*

– Even considering a rather rapid rate of vaccination against COVID-19, the pandemic situation in Brazil remains tense. Therefore, above all, we advise following the messages of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs while planning trips abroad as well as registering in the DRUH system (Voluntary Registration of Ukrainian Citizens Travelling Abroad). Besides, we strongly recommend that you familiarise yourself with the security situation in the country and take out health insurance before travelling.

Brazil is an extremely large and diverse country of a continental scale, so seeing everything during one short trip is impossible. If to choose, for example, two most interesting places, then, in my opinion, Ukrainian tourists should visit the city of Rio de Janeiro with its incredible landscapes, the Christ the Redeemer monument, numerous museums, picturesque beaches, and a cascade of waterfalls on the Iguazu River in the state of Paraná.