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## **‘OUR STRONG AND FRIENDLY RELATIONS ARE ROOTED IN A SHARED HISTORY, PRINCIPLES, AND PARTNERSHIP’**

*In tempore belli, amici cognoscuntur.* Tough times reveal true friends. Amidst russia’s disruption of the global order and genocide of Ukrainians, Norway stands shoulder to shoulder with Ukraine, resisting full-scale russian aggression. The small country makes global decisions by supporting Ukrainians in various ways: supplying weapons, contributing to the defence of the sky above Ukraine, training its soldiers, providing transportation and medical care for its wounded, offering its children the opportunity to receive free and safe education, enabling its athletes to train and participate in competitions, etc.

Amidst russia’s full-scale war against Ukraine, the diplomatic front and wartime diplomacy play an important role. Human resources and experience of work in the diplomatic sphere in many ways defined the Mission’s effectiveness across various tracks of enhancing bilateral and multilateral relations, including foreign policy, economics, information, and humanitarian efforts. The shifting global security landscape, the tasks of securing the flow of international allies’ humanitarian and military aid and countering russian propaganda, and the use of all public diplomacy tools despite harsh financial constraints and staff reductions presented challenges and opportunities that have defined the Embassy’s tireless and systematic work, requiring considerable patience, creativity, persistence, resilience, patriotism, professionalism, discretion, humanism, and, ultimately, personal development.

It has been a year since I assumed the role of Chargé d’Affaires ad interim of Ukraine to the Kingdom of Norway. This position complements my four-year tenure at the Ukrainian Embassy in Norway and the fifteen years of my overall career in Ukraine’s diplomatic service. I am proud to report the remarkable progress made in the partnership between our countries over the past year. That progress has resulted in relations grounded in trust and mutual understanding. This accomplishment owes much to the efforts of my colleagues in the diplomatic service and the fantastic volunteers and community. To me, this has been one of the most challenging, significant, and responsible periods. I vividly remember the initial days of the full-scale war. It was a time of quick and gut-based momentous decisions, as there was little chance for contemplation. We had to rely on our instincts and professionalism, often compelled to make unorthodox choices,



«Solidarity Rally» за участю всіх послів країн ЄС у Норвегії

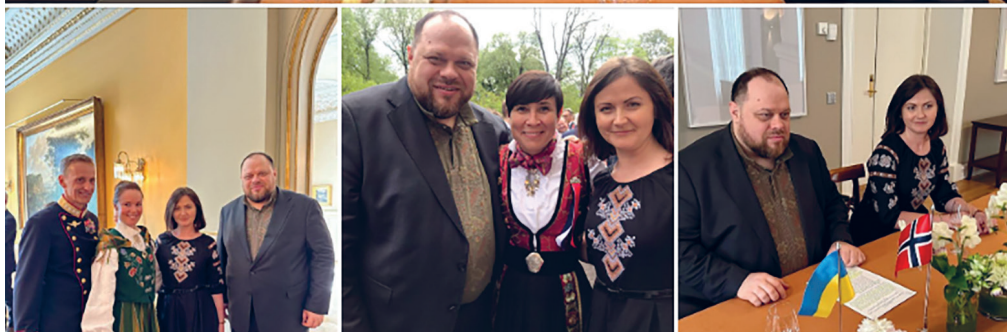
EU countries' ambassadors to Norway take part in the Solidarity Rally

facing questions without answers. We faced despair, fear that our soldiers might not receive the urgently needed supplies and drones soon enough, fear that an hour wasted on unnecessary tasks would lead to even more lost lives and razed cities, delaying our victory by months. As challenges mounted, time only grew scarcer. I must note that when the full-scale invasion had just begun, the decisions – however quick, gut-based, and answerless – were carried out much more effectively than now since there were no bureaucratic delays. Of course, it takes time to overcome decades worth of entrenched bureaucratic systems. Nevertheless, the Embassy has played a prominent role in reshaping Norway's approach and perspective towards our country. We can see that procedures and decisions that would once take several months are now executed within days. During this period, one of our most vital priorities has been to enhance our cooperation with Norway in order to strengthen Ukraine's resilience and defence capabilities. That entailed increasing the supply of essential weapons and approving a five-year support package for Ukraine, totalling over 7 billion euros. Moreover, we successfully persuaded Norway to support and participate in the Core Group on the establishment of a special tribunal, the Tank Coalition, the Peace Formula, and the Grain from Ukraine initiative. We also garnered the official recognition of the Holodomor as genocide at the local and regional levels, etc. We organised exhibitions highlighting our countries' historical ties, established the Ukrainett network for research on Ukraine, and hosted almost a hundred events. Those included a high-profile International Conference under the name War against Ukraine – Accountability and Responses held in Bergen. It was attended by Jonas Gahr Store, the Prime Minister of Norway; Ihor Zhovkva, the Deputy Head of

the Office of the President of Ukraine; Jonas Gahr Støre, the Prime Minister of Norway; Oleksandra Romantsova, Nobel Laureate; prominent scholars, etc. Furthermore, we successfully engaged the entire Norwegian Government in commemorating one year since the start of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine. Our well-maintained relations with the Prime Minister's Office, the President of the Storting, the MFA, representatives of all political parties, and the Norwegian diplomatic corps enabled us to maximise the support for Ukraine within the Kingdom and international organisations, send countless amounts of military, medical, and evacuation equipment, and organise many different visits, events, and projects to support Ukraine. Behind the scenes, there were hundreds of sleepless nights, thousands of negotiations, online meetings, letters, hours of continuous communication, etc. In the past year alone, we gave more than 100 interviews and comments, sent out over 2,000 letters, and performed over 4,400 consular duties.

It is hard to overstate the symbolism and historical significance of the visit to Norway paid by Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine Ruslan Stefanchuk on 16 May 2023 (the day before the Constitution Day of Norway) and the visit to Ukraine by Prime Minister of Norway Jonas Gahr Støre done on 24 August 2023 (Independence Day of Ukraine). The two visits' respective invitations were extended by Masud Gharahkhani, President of the Storting, and Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine. Those visits yielded several important decisions regarding the provision of cutting-edge equipment: missile and air defence systems (including NASAMS), artillery, ammunition, armoured combat vehicles, tanks, and aircraft. Among the recent particularly important decisions, we have the F-16 fighter jets, which will be transferred to Ukraine in close cooperation with the partners, the IRIS-T air-to-air missiles, and mine clearance kits. Additionally, Norway approved the allocation of 1.5 billion Norwegian kroner (approximately equivalent to 150 million euros): nearly 865 million for repairing and maintaining critical electricity infrastructure and providing emergency power in areas affected by Russian attacks and almost 635 million for replenishing natural gas stocks.

Ruslan Stefanchuk received his first-ever invitation to join the celebration of the Constitution Day of Norway as the Chairman of a foreign Parliament. During his visit, he had an audience with Crown Prince Regent Haakon and Queen Sonja of Norway; joined the ceremonies together with the President of Storting Masud Gharahkhani; negotiated with the latter as well as with Anniken Scharring Huitfeldt, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway, and Håkon Glørstad, the Director of the Historical Museum; met with Eirik Kristoffersen, the Chief of the Norwegian Armed Forces, and Ine Eriksen Søreide, the Head of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence of the Storting; and also attended a working breakfast with the President of the Storting and the Ambassadors of Nordic countries. Furthermore, there was a series of protocol meetings involving officials from the Norwegian Government, representatives



Візит Голови Верховної Ради України Руслана Стефанчука 16–18 травня 2023 року на День Конституції Норвегії

Ruslan Sefanchuk, Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, visiting Norway on 16–18 May 2023 on the occasion of Norway's Constitution Day

of political and cultural circles and Ukrainian and Norwegian non-governmental organisations. Ambassador of the EU to Norway also held a protocol meeting with the Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine and Ambassadors of EU states. Naturally, its focus was on the issues of the enhancement of Ukraine–Norway military and security cooperation, the development of inter-parliamentary dialogue, the furtherance of defence, financial, and humanitarian support, and engagement within NATO. The discussions also covered the possibility of accelerating Ukraine's accession to the North Atlantic Alliance in the aftermath of the war, the security guarantees for Ukraine, the implementation of previous agreements – particularly those negotiated during the Nordic-Ukrainian Summit held on 3 May 2023 – and also the post-war recovery of Ukraine, establishment of a friendship group, recognition of the Holodomor as a genocide against the Ukrainian people, etc. The Memorandum of Understanding between the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine and the Storting of the Kingdom of Norway represented a commitment to support parliamentary democracy, championing and strengthening its role in asserting and safeguarding freedom, independence, and democratic principles of our country.



Виступ Тимчасової повіреної з нагоди Дня Незалежності України

Chargé d'Affaires' speech on the occasion of the Independence Day of Ukraine

the marriage of Harald III Hardrada and Elizabeth (Scandinavian name: *Elisiv*), Yaroslav the Wise's daughter. The Embassy, the Mayor's office, and the Ukrainian community have long been working on installing a monument in Oslo to honour that prominent Ukrainian woman.

In my view, public and cultural diplomacy plays an extremely important role in communicating Ukraine's position across all international platforms. Therefore, alongside its diplomatic, political, military, and economic efforts, the Embassy has been implementing the Ukrainian Bookshelf project initiated by Ukraine's First Lady. Likewise, we are introducing audio guides in the Ukrainian language in Oslo, Kristiansand, Lyngdal, Lærdal, Arendal – even as far north as the Svalbard archipelago – etc. The Embassy participates in various fundraising events, including those within sports diplomacy.

I cannot but mention other important events in which I actively participated: the Nobel Week in Oslo with the 2022 Nobel Peace Prize laureate Oleksandra Matviichuk; the War against Ukraine International Conference we held with the University of Bergen one year after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine (attended by the Prime Minister of Norway, representatives of the Office of the President of Ukraine, representatives of political and diplomatic circles, and renowned researchers); a UN international conference under the name Protecting Children in Armed Conflict – Our Common Future (attended by

Our strong and friendly relations are rooted in shared history. This year, we celebrated the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of restoring diplomatic ties between Ukraine and Norway. I was honoured to inaugurate an exhibition on the historical connections between Rus and the Old Kingdom of Norway alongside the President of the Storting. Notably, the President of the Storting had just returned from the Crimea Platform Parliamentary Summit, having received the Order of Prince Yaroslav the Wise from Ukraine. That further underscores our millennium-old history, where Norwegian Vikings actively participated in the political, economic, and cultural scene of Rus (known as *Garðaríki* in Norwegian). One of the most legendary chapters in the history of Kyiv–Oslo relations was

representatives from the Office of the President of Ukraine, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, and the Office of the Prosecutor General); the Oslo Freedom Forum; a European Union Ambassadors' conference in Norway initiated by the Spanish presidency, etc. It is worth mentioning the Arendalsuka annual political festival for debates on the most pressing issues of modern society. I had the opportunity to exchange ideas with political party leaders, government officials, journalists, and scientists during the panel discussions. We addressed the issues of the feasibility of Putin's arrest, the meaning of justice, security challenges, cooperation among the Nordic countries, the significance of providing F-16s to Ukraine, the country's recovery, the role of art and culture in times of war, energy policy, etc. The festival serves as a kind of unique socio-political arena, bringing everyone together in one place. I dream of creating something similar in Ukraine.

There were many more conferences, briefings, and meetings. On 29–30 August, the Embassy organised a Solidarity and Partnership with Ukraine conference with the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities and the Support to the People of Ukraine non-governmental organisation. The event featured the participation of Nobel Peace Prize laureate Oleksandra Matviichuk, Norwegian Government officials, parliamentarians, ambassadors, mayors, business representatives, historians, scholars, and journalists. The Conference's opening day focused primarily on Ukraine's recovery, the role of local self-government, and the promotion of partnerships between Norwegian and Ukrainian regions. On the second day, the Conference addressed the importance of recognising the Holodomor of 1932–33 as a genocide against the Ukrainian people. Given Norway's scepticism towards national-level patronage of individual Ukrainian towns or regions that stems from its wishes to avoid contributing to the uneven development of Ukraine's regions, Norwegian cities began active participation in the process at the local level. In less than a year, we successfully established active partnerships between the cities of Kyiv and Oslo, Kryvyi Rih and Lyngdal, Mykolaiv and Kristiansand, Bucha and Sandnes, Melitopol and Trondheim, Rivne and Fredrikstad, etc. Moreover, small towns have done incredible things. On 15 December 2022, as if anticipating my birthday, the Councils of two Norwegian cities at once – Lyngdal and Farsund – almost unanimously voted



З нобелівською лауреаткою та очільницею Комітету в закордонних справах Стортингу під час вручення Нобелівської премії миру

With Nobel laureate and Chairwoman of the Storting Foreign Affairs Committee at the Nobel Peace Prize award ceremony

to recognise the Holodomor of 1932–33 in Ukraine as a genocide against the Ukrainian people following my visit on 3 December 2022.

The Embassy operates at various levels, assisting the army on the battlefield, acquiring international backing through the Leopard and fighter jet coalitions, and facilitating negotiations on weaponry, equipment, medical supplies, and humanitarian aid. Never before has Norway supplied equipment to the areas where military operations are taking place, but within our cooperation, it became possible to provide Ukraine with 8 Leopard tanks; materiel; NASAMS missile launchers, AMRAAM missiles; thousands of Black Hornet drones; tens of thousands of artillery shells, anti-tank weapons, M109 howitzers, Hellfire missiles, and much more. In addition to an unprecedented support package for Ukraine and more than 7 billion euros for Ukraine's military and humanitarian needs, the Embassy facilitated the dispatch of approximately 700 humanitarian shipments from Norway to Ukraine, addressing the needs of military units, cities, regions, and internally displaced persons. The shipments largely consisted of food products, medicines, medical equipment, technical devices for soldiers, military attire and gear, approximately 20 ambulances, 15 ultrasound machines, 9 anaesthesia machines, 65 fire trucks, 76 cars, 70 tonnes of foam extinguishing agent, over 5,000 units of tactical and technical equipment, including thermal imagers, drones, helmets, armoured plates, computer hardware, and approximately 700 heaters and 1,315 generators.

It makes me proud that Norway is among our closest allies. I am confident that the friendly partnership between Ukraine and Norway will endure even after the war. Any war is bound to reach its end, but a just end is attainable only through the implementation of the Peace Formula. The Norwegian Support Programme for Ukraine was deliberately named after Fridtjof Nansen, the League of Nations High Commissioner for Prisoners of War. One crucial approach to bringing our women and men back home could involve increasing international pressure (with Norway, Nansen's homeland, involved) on Russia to secure the release of political prisoners and prisoners of war.

The rapid development of Ukraine–Norway bilateral relations lays a solid foundation for sustaining such robust dynamics, focusing on maintaining military, political, and economic cooperation; implementing a set of projects to help make the Norwegian society more aware of Ukraine's rich history, culture, and economic potential; reaching the recognition of the Holodomor as a genocide against the Ukrainian people nationally, locally, and regionally; garnering Norway's commitment to the establishment of an international Special Tribunal; installing a monument honouring Holodomor victims and the fallen Ukrainian soldiers who liberated Northern Norway. Our priority is to continue asserting the need to expedite Ukraine's armament to protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity while proving the alignment of those efforts with NATO's interests.