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ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF INDONESIAN-UKRAINIAN RELATIONS

— *Indonesia has consistently supported Ukraine's territorial integrity, and President Joko Widodo was the first Asian leader to visit Kyiv after the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion. Mr Ambassador, please describe the current state of bilateral relations and prospects for their improvement.*

— First of all, I would like to express my hope that our readers are wise and knowledgeable, capable of reading between the lines, as there are many things I cannot say for certain reasons. For instance, there are my personal thoughts, there is the official position, and there is information for official use that I cannot share with the general public. I'm sure that clever readers will figure out what I mean.

President Joko Widodo was not just the first Asian leader — he was the first leader not from Europe or North America, meaning that no one from Africa, Latin America, Oceania or Asia had visited Ukraine at this level before him. In other words, he was the first leader from the 'collective South' to visit Ukraine since the beginning of full-scale Russian aggression. Moreover, he came with his wife and, upon our courteous suggestion, chose to visit Kyiv first, even though the original programme might have featured the Moscow–Kyiv route. The visit was short yet very challenging, and it was not easy for us to go through all the planned points. Nevertheless, it was a courageous act. Interestingly, that was perhaps the only day through days of war when not a single missile or drone fell on Ukraine. And it was on that very day that the President of Indonesia visited us.

It is also important to consider that in any endeavour, such as running a race — whether a sprint or a marathon — the start is important, but the crucial point is how we finish. If you stop at 99 meters in a 100-meter race, even if you were in the lead, the fastest and the most powerful, you have not completed the race. Thus, we have the first step — the first step and, perhaps, nothing else. The leader of Indonesia took extremely important steps: he visited Kyiv and invited President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Ukraine in general to participate in G20 events. It was very positive and promising.

However, it did not progress beyond that initial step. For example, no coordination mechanisms or working groups were established, and no dialogue took place on this problem. In fact, it was not raised in Indonesia's politics. All they talked about was labelled as something in Ukraine: the conflict in Ukraine, the situation

in Ukraine, the situation around Ukraine, tensions, escalation in Ukraine. The aggressor was neither condemned nor mentioned. However, we hoped that the first step would be followed by the next, especially given that Indonesia has outstanding experience and practice in resolving international conflicts. For example, in Cambodia, active shuttle diplomacy worked, and the issue was settled.

The current situation, in my opinion, resembles a reset because the ten-year term of the presidency of Mr Widodo, who was in Ukraine and chaired the famous G20 summit, is coming to an end. The new President is already known, but that will be a new chapter. Now, we are patiently waiting for this day, as due to the peculiarities of the presidential and parliamentary elections in Indonesia, the voting took place on 14 February 2024, and the inauguration is scheduled for October. Currently, the country is undergoing a transitional period, reformatting the Cabinet and preparing for further work. Accordingly, diplomatic activities have somewhat slowed.

With the outbreak of the October events in the Middle East, the ‘Ukrainian issue’ disappeared from the agenda of the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Since then, Ukraine has not been mentioned in official speeches or statements¹.

At the UN, Indonesia supports most resolutions on Ukraine, though there have been instances of abstentions in voting on resolutions concerning human rights in the occupied Crimea. Indonesia usually supports Ukraine in international organisations, and, in particular, thanks to Indonesia’s vote, Russia was expelled from a couple of organisations. In some cases, this happened for the first time in history.

Describing the current state of bilateral relations and prospects, I would say one word: positivity. We have great hopes but must work hard in this direction. And it does not depend solely on the Ambassador or the Embassy. Ukraine has to work not only on the military frontline but also on the diplomatic track all over the globe; otherwise, we will lose the support from other countries. For our part, we are doing everything we can to ensure that Ukraine’s flag firmly stands on the map of Indonesia. This is a complex and diverse country; here, you engage with several communities instead of a single government entity. Each community is unique, with its own hopes and expectations.

— *In 2023, the newly elected President of Indonesia, Prabowo Subianto, proposed his ‘peace plan’ in the Russian-Ukrainian war: a ceasefire, withdrawal of forces and the creation of a demilitarised zone with a subsequent referendum in the occupied territories, which is an unacceptable scenario for our country. What was the basis for this proposal? How would you envision the dynamics of relations between Ukraine and Indonesia after Mr Prabowo’s inauguration?*

¹ On 11 July, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia published a tweet (X) condemning the Russian attack on civilian facilities in Ukraine, including a children hospital.

— My Indonesian friends, politicians and foreign diplomats have been asking me this question since June 2023. It is extremely important to understand that Ukraine is not on the agenda of the Indonesian Government, and Prabowo Subianto was the only politician of this scale and level, the only member of the current Government, who raised this important topic at all at the international level. But it did not look like an instruction or a ready-made plan. It was not a plan. A plan is when a team under the leadership of our President develops a Peace Formula for months: every word, every wording, the state of implementation, relevance, etc.

Prabowo Subianto then voiced a number of ideas and his own thoughts on the matter. It is important that he started a debate, offered a certain alternative platform for discussing this problem. And it was brave, especially given the specifics of the Southeast Asia. This region is complex, and not everyone here perceives Russia as an aggressor. The idea was to start a discussion. If he had not been actively criticised, this idea could have turned into a platform where Indonesia would have played an active, positive and constructive role. It could have been, for example, an ASEAN platform.

I believe at that time there was a chance to further the dialogue. We may not agree on ideas, but we can definitely debate. Of course, not every idea has to be implemented, but Prabowo's proposals definitely contained constructive elements and the potential for discussion, both in public and in private.

Another important point: delving deeper into his military background helps us understand why, for him, a military man, any election anywhere in the context of the presence of peacekeepers looks much better than the same election under the guns of Russian invaders. We oppose the so-called elections in the occupied territories conducted at gunpoint because they are illegal, non-transparent and undemocratic. And if we imagine there were blue helmets and UN observers there? This was one of the ideas and it has the right to exist.

What are my expectations? I anticipate nothing but positive outcomes, although the manner we start our interaction and cooperation with the new President, Government and Parliament will be crucial. Prabowo Subianto is an extremely interesting, independent person with extraordinary thinking and vast experience. He is a military man. A political leader. We are well aware of what we need to do to demonstrate that we are true friends and reliable partners. Let us see how it will work on a national scale. My expectations are positive, my plans are clear and ambitious. And in many areas, we literally have to start from scratch.

— *Due to the Russian full-scale invasion, the trade turnover between Ukraine and Indonesia decreased by almost four times in 2022 compared to 2021. How would you describe the current state of trade and economic relations between the two countries? Is the mutual interest of business circles growing? Which areas are the most promising?*

— To begin with, let me note that the trade turnover stood at approximately \$1.3 billion. For a country like Indonesia, this is a relatively modest figure. In fact, Indonesia is capable of consuming everything we produce and even more. Thus, the trade turnover was not big enough. And most importantly, there were only two commodities: our wheat and their palm oil, which comprised 95% of the total turnover. It is not good when two products make up the entire trade flow.

Firstly, the outbreak of the war disrupted trade routes, and because of that, along with the blockade of the Black Sea, our trade turnover dropped to a significant low. Secondly, given our geographical distance and limited commodities range, it is crucial that we enhance communication and participate actively in joint exhibitions, trade fairs, and other commercial events. Understandably, for obvious reasons, Ukraine cannot do this regularly at the moment. Indonesian businesspeople are mostly wary of travelling to Ukraine. We are currently in a wait-and-see position, but there are great bilateral proposals and expectations.

We actively collaborate with the Indonesian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Indonesian Employers' Association, and regional bodies. Recently, I met with representatives from the Bandung city administration, a city of five million inhabitants, discussing potential cooperations with Kharkiv, exploring ways to establish joint business initiatives, and more. I also have an upcoming meeting at the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, for which we are preparing a presentation covering large-scale privatisation, a conference on Ukraine's recovery, and individual Ukrainian business projects. There is substantial interest, and it will persist.

One of the reasons our business interactions with Indonesia are limited is that there are very few people-to-people exchanges, very few students, Indonesians living in Ukraine, and Ukrainians living in Indonesia. This contrasts with Vietnam, where we see far more interpersonal interactions, just as with China, India, Pakistan, but Indonesia has fallen off the list. And this is one of the reasons why we need to start active concurrent cooperation in education, culture, people-to-people exchanges, exhibitions, forums, conferences, etc., not online but in person. In fact, the interest is enormous. It does not disappear, and we are interested in Indonesia's resources as much as it is interested in our resources and products. Ukraine is still not very well known here, but we are working on this track. My colleague, Ambassador to Ukraine Arief Muhammad Basalamah, is also working on this. He is actively moving forward in the practical sphere, and it is very encouraging.

— *Ukraine seeks to ensure the broadest possible involvement of the international community in its foreign policy initiatives, including the Peace Formula, the Crimea Platform, the Bring Kids Back UA programme, and the Grain from Ukraine initiative. What measures are being taken by the Ukrainian diplomacy and the Embassy, in particular, to garner Indonesia's support in this context?*

— In Indonesia, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs holds a crucial and definitive role in sanctioning any foreign interaction. This includes humanitarian and political programmes, forums and conferences — in general, any activity related to cultural, humanitarian, economic or political diplomacy. All such endeavours must pass through the MFA, which serves as the ultimate checkpoint and filter. I have already mentioned that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has just not seen us for the last few months. And if we look back to the beginning of the full-scale war, we see that there was not a single statement made by either the Foreign Minister or the MFA condemning Russia, its aggression, missile attacks on civilian objects and the population, not a single word of sympathy or solidarity for the people who are dying, including children and women².

We have been fighting the full-scale war for over 800 days. During this time, nothing has been said in public. However, let us not forget that since the full-scale war, our presidents have met twice: in Hiroshima and Kyiv. In addition, there were two telephone conversations between the defence ministers, several personal meetings between the foreign ministers, and so on. In other words, communication was constant. I met with government officials, politicians, MPs, active human rights activists, and public figures. Still, there was a problem: post-COVID Indonesia was trying to get out of the challenging situation, and then the war broke out when the country was still trying to cope with that. Then in 2024, Indonesia held elections (which means six months of campaigning), and now we are waiting for the inauguration for six months, so all processes have slowed down and plans have been suspended for a year, in fact.

Given that pro-Russian sentiment has traditionally been very strong among the local population, politicians are very cautious about speaking out in support of Ukraine in order not to trigger a negative reaction from the public during the election preparations. There is hope that after the inauguration, humanitarian issues such as prisoner exchange, return of children, etc., will be put on the agenda after the inauguration.

— *Indonesia has provided humanitarian aid to Ukraine, including medication and medical equipment, and has allocated \$5 million to rebuild hospitals. Is Indonesia interested in supporting Ukraine's post-war recovery and overcoming the humanitarian consequences of russian aggression?*

— Indonesia has indeed provided assistance. We received it in December 2023. This is \$5 million allocated through the World Bank system. Back in June 2022, the President promised that such assistance would come, and the money was subsequently allocated. This is very important for us.

Now, regarding the post-war recovery of Ukraine. Indonesia is a rapidly

² On 11 July, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia published a tweet (X) condemning the Russian attack on civilian facilities in Ukraine, including a children hospital.

developing country that has lots of funds to invest. However, the problem is that there are many construction projects in Indonesia that you can invest endlessly in. Therefore, investing money here in the region is safer, more accessible, more profitable, and more efficient for local businesses.

We are talking about the fact that the Government has allocated \$5 million through the World Bank system, but in addition to that, we have raised more than \$500,000 from people. These were donations from the Catholic and Chinese communities and business people through charity events and auctions. We donated all the money we raised to foundations, such as Olena Zelenska Foundation, to help children of war. Our sponsors have been and are helping us a lot: if not with money, then with informa-



Пан Посол під час благодійного заходу «Let Them Smile»

Mr Ambassador at the *Let Them Smile* charity event

tion and content tailored to our wishes. Despite the fact that Russia is very active in the information space, we are trying to win this information war.

— *Given Indonesia's important role in Southeast Asia, Russia is putting considerable effort into spreading its propaganda in this country. Your Excellency, how widespread are pro-Russian sentiments in Indonesian society and how does the Embassy tackle them?*

— How important is Russia in Indonesia? Before the war, our trade turnover was \$1.3 billion, compared to Russia's \$3 billion — only twice our volume. In comparison, China's trade turnover with Russia is 15 (!) times higher than with us. Proportionally, Russia had the same trade turnover with Indonesia as we do, which is a miserable figure.

And what about the sentiment that they cultivated? If you invest billions every year for decades, starting back in the late 1940s, the fruits grow. And nothing can overturn that in the short term. Because people who grew up in those times knew that Russia was a brother and a good friend, and they always helped Indonesians out. We know that it was the Ukrainian delegation, particularly Dmytro Manuïlskyi, who raised the issue of Indonesia's place as an equal among equals at the UN in 1946. On the streets of Indonesia in 1946, barefoot children and adults carried posters with the words: 'Thank you, Ukraine! Thank you, Manuïlskyi!'

Then Russia did everything it could to be actively present in Indonesia, and we probably did not do enough. Russia is investing a lot of money in developing

an army of bots and supporting TikTok creators who produce relevant content about Russia as a friend of Muslims, Russia as an enemy of imperialism, and so on. They come here, they work here, they are well funded.

We should not forget that for decades, since the Soviet era, a group of Indonesian most successful students has been travelling to Russia to study on scholarships every year. Annually, journalists, bloggers, influencers, and influential people travel to Russia for free to visit the Peterhof Museum, the Tretyakov Gallery, and the Golden Ring of Russia. What do you think they say when they arrive? They are awestruck.

If we spend 1% of what Russia spends on its propaganda, I will completely wipe out their propaganda here. Lies will never win over the truth. We can generate a huge amount of content because we don't need instructions from the centre on how and what to talk about. We can expose their lies every day because they lie every day, and we don't need anything but money to generate content on social media. Then, we can defeat them because people will consume this content. We tried to start advertising posts on Instagram and we see the impact: several tens of thousands of people, numerous comments, including negative ones (when I wrote about the murdered Ukrainian children). However, when we posted about Ukrainian Muslims who were religious figures and then became soldiers, there were 99% positive responses.

Over the past two years, we have been working quite effectively and have almost completely knocked Russia out at the level of public media. They have one well-funded YouTube channel that reports a lot of information about the war in the way they see it. But we periodically react to that as well. Fighting is feasible, and we are doing so effectively, but everything rests on money.

— *The Embassy of Ukraine carries out a wide range of activities to expand the dialogue with Indonesia by means of cultural diplomacy. Mr Ambassador, how do you assess the prospects for promoting Ukrainian cultural products in Indonesian society? Could you please share the diplomatic mission's experience in implementing public diplomacy projects?*

— Unfortunately, the problem of money comes up again. Since cultural diplomacy is always very expensive, in our case, it always trails behind. Organising a visit or political consultation does not demand as much financial resource as it does bright minds. But to bring the Pavlo Virskyi Ensemble to Indonesia, you need money. I have observed how other countries promote their cultural content here: sponsors fund everything, and there are very few purely commercial projects.

The perception of, for example, folk crafts, folk art and music (and this is a very musically talented nation) is fantastic. Against this backdrop, we could organise anything: exhibitions, *vyshyvanka* (embroidered shirt) and fashion shows, etc. In this sense, Ukrainian content is welcomed very positively because we draw

parallels between writers. For example, we compare Taras Shevchenko to a famous Indonesian poet and translate his poems into Ukrainian. On the other hand, we recently held an event where we presented ‘Zapovit’ (‘My Testament’) by Taras Shevchenko translated into eight languages of Indonesia. We organised this project jointly with the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, Research, and Technology at the National Gallery. Such content is paying off.

When the Indonesians held a celebration in honour of their outstanding poet Chairil Anwar, akin to Vasyl Symonenko or Vasyl Stus, where ambassadors read his poems in own languages, and one of his poems was translated into Ukrainian. Subsequently, I presented them with a framed calendar for the current year featuring a translated poem by this poet, along with a book containing his translated biography. And for the next week, all the media covered this topic: ‘A book and poems by a prominent Indonesian poet have been translated into Ukrainian.’ However, the translation was done exclusively on a voluntary basis, although it shouldn’t be that way. Books and films need to be translated. People need to get paid for it, then they will keep doing it.

We have created a gallery of Indonesian heroes in Ukrainian and present these calendars as gifts, often moving recipients to tears because they had not anticipated recognition of their heroes abroad. We also found a scanned book by a British scholar addressing the Indonesian question in the UN Security Council over the period of 1946–49. We printed it in several copies and always draw people’s attention to the section that mentions Ukraine, Manuilskyi, and it again provokes tears of emotion. Steady funding is essential to enhance these efforts, and we know how to execute these projects effectively; they are not complex.

We have recently organised reciprocal visits of civil society figures, again at the expense of sponsors, and we have very positive results. Firstly, this is media coverage, and secondly, one of the fruits of this is the book *History of Islam in Ukraine*, published in Indonesian for the first time. It is not large (150 pages), but we have presented the book and are distributing it. Yuddy Chrisnandi, Ambassador of Indonesia to Ukraine (2017–21), is already publishing his third book about Ukraine in Indonesian. I am going to buy a part of the edition and give it as a souvenir.

— *In 2024, the Ukrainian Institute visited Jakarta, where our delegation had dozens of meetings, negotiations and presentations with Indonesian representatives from various areas. What achievements would you highlight as a result of such an intense trip?*

— I am very happy this event took place. It was a very fruitful trip, featuring meetings with representatives of artistic, religious, and university circles. A noteworthy achievement was signing of Memorandum of Understanding with the Art Council — a foundational document that paves the way for collaborative initiatives scheduled for the autumn.

In the theatre and artistic sphere, we can organise film screenings, exhibitions, and virtual museum tours. As for universities, we are working on several interesting projects. I hope Indonesians will come to us, and we will come to them. After all, this work needs to be done, as there are agents of pro-Russian forces in many universities who obstruct our efforts in every possible way and fund the study of Russian.

The Ukrainian Institute is just getting started with this trend, and we have to clearly realise this simple thing. While institutions like the British Council, Erasmus, the Goethe Institute, and various French, American, Spanish, Japanese, and Russian centres have established global presences, why hasn't the Ukrainian Institute? Where in the world does the Ukrainian Institute have offices so that people can come, access a library, or look at something? I have not heard about this. Again, we are returning to this trivial and uncomfortable topic. Nevertheless, funding for art, culture, and the humanities pays off a hundredfold. This capacious area requires a lot of money.

That is where we need to develop. The prospects are good because we are all growing. I think that it will be reasonable to develop interaction between business, fashion, crafts, and music. All of this will yield fantastic results.

— *Your Excellency, you actively cooperate with universities and students in Indonesia. What are the prospects for implementing joint academic programmes and student exchanges between our countries?*

— There are two sides of the same coin. One is state-related, meaning that it would be reasonable to have an agreement between our governments on mutual recognition of diplomas and academic degrees. The Ukrainian side should initiate this, but currently, it is not quite relevant due to the war. The second area is inter-university cooperation when higher education institutions sign an agreement and start exchanging students. Indonesia needs to improve its teachers' professional skills, and we can meet this need as we have a high-quality education system.

Before the war, approximately 30,000 Indian students were studying in Ukraine, and only a few from Indonesia. They have competent neighbouring countries where they go to study. These are Australia, China, Korea, New Zealand, Singapore, and Japan. Education in these countries is good but expensive. That is why they often study on scholarships. Compared to the cost of education in other countries, education in Ukraine is still affordable for the majority. We are running a campaign to provide online education, as Ukraine has probably become number one in the world in this area after two years of pandemic and two years of war. Firstly, the level of education was already high; secondly, we are technologically advanced; and thirdly, education is still going on even in such a challenging situation. We already have dozens of universities with whom we are talking about this.

One of the biggest challenges is language because English is not widely spoken in Indonesia. It is very important that not only diplomats but also other people go to higher education institutions with brochures from Ukrainian universities translated into Indonesian. It would be good if university websites were translated into Indonesian and there was a campaign about the advantages of Ukrainian education. Representatives of our universities should also attend educational fairs in Indonesia to promote themselves, advertise, and tell everything that might interest future students. The Embassy does not have such a physical resource. I know for sure that universities are interested in students because higher education institutions lack funds. We need to make this work systematic, particularly at the level of Ukrainian higher education institutions.

In addition, recruitment centres, which should campaign, hold exhibitions, invite university representatives and diplomats, are not well developed here. Some countries, such as Australia, the UK, New Zealand, and Japan, are very active in advertising their education. For example, the Australian Embassy has an entire department that deals exclusively with education. However, in our Embassy, only one person is responsible for all educational, cultural, information and press activities.

Indonesian education is very different from Ukrainian education. It's hard to say what areas students might choose. Perhaps international relations, medicine, engineering. There is a peculiar education system here, with many Muslim universities, a lot of Christian ones, and numerous private higher education institutions. I was surprised that universities of such a level as our Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv teach only one Slavic language — Russian — and literally four or five foreign languages in addition, meaning that the practical teaching experience is very different from ours.

However, we still can pursue joint programmes and exchanges; the main thing on the part of the Government is to initiate a bilateral document and expand the legal framework. Moreover, our universities interested in attracting students to study there should do a lot of practical work.

— *Most of Indonesians are Muslims, and their country experienced decolonisation and the struggle for independence. Mr Ambassador, can raising these issues contribute to a better understanding of the oppression of Crimean Tatars on the peninsula occupied by Russia, as well as to building cultural bridges between our countries?*

— Regarding Muslim topics in Indonesia, we started building bridges right away. We have organised online conferences with Muslim organisations, I have personally spoken at Muslim universities on several occasions, the most recent humanitarian delegation of Ukrainian civil society representatives to Indonesia involved Mufti Murat Suleymanov, and before that, Mufti of Crimea Ayder Rustemov attended the conference. Communication is quite positive and ongoing.



Інтерв'ю індонезійському англомовному телеканалу новин «SEA Today»

Interview to the SEA Today Indonesian English-language news channel

The main problem remains the presence of Russia and its decades-long efforts to convince everyone that this country and Putin are friends of Muslims. But how can Russia justify the killing of hundreds of thousands of Muslim children and women in Chechnya, or outlawing the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People, imprisoning hundreds of Muslim activists in Crimea, and expelling the people from its lands? This is a very painful issue for me.

The issues of Crimean Tatars and Muslims are very actively perceived in social media, with many views and positive feedback. One of the most popular videos on TikTok, which has garnered millions of views, shows our former Mufti Said Ismagilov, who is now at war, sitting on the ruins of a house in pixelated military uniform, reading the Quran, and praying... On all Muslim holidays, I always record public greetings and attend events organised by Muslim communities.

— *As we know, Ukraine seeks to deepen its relations with ASEAN. Moreover, our country has joined the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia. As the Representative of Ukraine to the ASEAN with concurrent accreditation, could you please elaborate on the opportunities for developing relations between our country and the Association?*

— The prospects here are the most positive and direct because ASEAN is an organisation that serves as a development engine for the region and a model for many parts of the world. It is an association of countries which are remarkably diverse in size, population, and level of development. Yet, they have been

working together for many decades, developing, undertaking projects, launching and implementing initiatives that foster growth in each member state.

Ukraine acceded to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) in 2022, became an observer in the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly a year earlier, and now, we are paving the way for sectoral partnerships together. In other words, when our country becomes a sectoral partner of ASEAN, we will be able to engage fully in all processes. Since Ukraine does not have a partner status, we do not receive invitations to events, and this somewhat distances us from the mainstream.



Інтерв'ю індонезійському ЗМІ «Pikiran Rakyat»

Interview to the Indonesian media Pikiran Rakyat

As you know, an experienced diplomat and ambassador, Ihor Polikha, has recently been appointed Special Representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine for ASEAN. We also established the Centre for ASEAN Studies at the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv. This is not the first time we have organised an online event with the ASEAN Secretariat in the field of IT, offering our projects and solutions for ASEAN countries. We made a comprehensive presentation of our vision for developing Ukraine's cooperation with ASEAN and presented it at all levels, starting with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

It is important that we show where we can bring benefits to each of the ASEAN states. If we succeed, Ukraine will soon become a partner, which means access to projects and programmes. We will be able to achieve a great deal by offering valuable projects, technologies, and solutions. If Ukraine establishes a presence there, the influence of Russia, which has long been integrated in ASEAN, will automatically decrease. We can cooperate in areas such as regional food security, demining, cybersecurity, and education.

By the way, despite not having partner status yet, we are already working with many countries within the areas we have proposed for ASEAN. However, under the auspices of ASEAN, we will be able to involve all members of the Association in truly multilateral projects. The dynamics in ASEAN are very noticeable, and there is hope that we will soon achieve partner status and move forward.

I believe that over time, our society will clearly understand what ASEAN is and how to work with it in a practical way.

Interview dated 16 May 2024