

Oksana Dramaretska,
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
of Ukraine to the United States of Mexico (2020–25)

PROMOTING UKRAINE'S INTERESTS IN LATIN AMERICA

— Mexico condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine and accordingly voted for several resolutions at the UN General Assembly, yet it still mostly consistently adheres to a non-interference and neutrality policy. How does this affect Mexico's support for Ukraine? What are the main challenges in conveying Ukraine's position to the Mexican political establishment?

— From the start of the full-scale invasion, Mexico's government explicitly declared support for Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty on international platforms. Mexico strongly condemns any use or threat of force in settling interstate disputes and conflicts. Furthermore, the official Mexican representatives have many times harshly criticised the Russian aggressor's threats to use weapons of mass destruction and condemned the nuclear blackmail, in which the regime in the Kremlin tends to indulge. From this perspective, it is fair to describe the position of Mexican authorities, both previous and the ones that came to power as a result of the 2024 elections, as consistent and matching our interests. On the other hand, the Mexican government has not yet shown a willingness to go any further than sending political messages and supporting the 'Ukrainian resolutions' at international organisations. This is because of the foreign policy doctrine of non-interference and neutrality enshrined in the country's Constitution. Thus, the current Mexican government is unwilling to join political or economic sanctions against Russia, nor consider the option of supplying weapons to Ukraine. The current political establishment in Mexico wants to maintain friendly relations with all countries of the world, even though, in the current circumstances, such a position does not stand up to scrutiny. Unfortunately, a fairly high percentage of Mexican politicians and ordinary people harbour noticeable sympathy for the

former USSR and Russia as its successor, which has been traditionally rooted in the anti-American sentiment shared by most Mexicans. Russia has been viewed here as some kind of champion against the American global hegemony and Washington's imperialistic, colonial policy towards Mexico and the Latin American region in general. The Russian propaganda machine has spent decades and invested serious financial and human resources in promoting its narratives here. Let's keep in mind that currently, the Russian Federation maintains 20 diplomatic and consular missions across Latin America and the Caribbean. We are talking about profound political and diplomatic influence, which cannot help but leave a mark.

— *What are the most relevant aspects of the agenda for Mexican-Ukrainian relations?*

— Considering the above, we are equally interested in all areas of bilateral interaction with Mexico, including developing high-level political dialogue, economic cooperation, collaboration between Ukrainian and Mexican cities and regions, academic and technological projects, and, of course, our cooperation's cultural and humanitarian dimension. In recent years, we have managed to upgrade the level of our interparliamentary dialogue. I want to remind you that in 2024, Mexico received a working visit from the Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, Ruslan Stepanchuk, who represented our country at the inauguration of the new Mexican President, Claudia Sheinbaum. During that visit, he met with President Sheinbaum and the President of the Mexican Senate, Gerardo Fernández Noroña. Mexican deputies have visited Kyiv many times since the beginning of the invasion, especially in July 2022. In 2024, a delegation of Mexican deputies participated in the first interparliamentary conference Ukraine — Latin American and Caribbean Countries: cooperation for the future, which ran in Ukraine's capital from 29 November to 1 December 2024. The participants were greeted with a video address sent by Ricardo Monreal, President of the pro-presidential MORENA Party within the Congress of Mexico, who couldn't visit Ukraine personally. Mexico's participation in the Global Peace Summit, which took place on 15–16 June 2024 in Switzerland, was a substantial step forward for Ukraine's peacebuilding initiatives. I should note that Mexico's sending its foreign minister to that event was the highest level of political representation possible for the country at the time, considering that it had just had general elections and the new president had not yet taken office.

— *What impact does the russian war against Ukraine have on the countries of the region your mission covers?*

— Russia's aggression against Ukraine impacts the whole world. It has shown the fragility of the system of international relations built after World War II and its postulates: international law, the UN Charter, the inviolability of borders, and state sovereignty. Before the invasion, these principles were seen as inviolable and non-negotiable. The current situation is unacceptable for the Latin American states because to them, the destruction of rules — the basic, fundamental principles underpinning the relations between states — leads to chaos and a rapid surge of challenges. Many Latin American countries have experienced foreign interventions and foreign aggression, which is why they explicitly condemned the Russian invasion of Ukraine's territory. Let's just consider Mexico's history; between the 19th and 20th centuries, the country became a victim of multiple instances of foreign intervention: Spanish in 1829, French in 1838–39 and 1862–67, and American in 1846–48, 1914, and 1916. The US war against Mexico led to the latter losing more than half its territory. This is why the countries of Latin America cannot help but be concerned about Russia's destruction of the global order based on international law and strict rules that each country is supposed to follow.

— *In light of the active russian disinformation affecting the countries of Latin America, especially across Spanish-language media, what is your assessment of the Mexican information space? How does the Embassy debunk myths and spread the truth about the war and Ukraine?*

— You are absolutely right that Russian propaganda in Latin America is very aggressive. The Spanish-language channel of *Russia Today*, the *Sputnik* propaganda agency, and other media outlets of the aggressor state poison the conscience of Latin Americans daily, while hundreds of Russian bot farms back left-wing radicals and populists in these countries and attack pro-Ukrainian politicians and journalists. Fending them off in this area is difficult, but we're trying to keep up. Besides, I must note that in Mexico, for example, local media generally cover the Russian aggression objectively. Several Mexican journalists from the country's major media outlets have been to Ukraine and personally seen what is happening there. In the last three years, we have organised several media tours to Ukraine for Latin American journalists, including Mexicans. When the local media cover events in Ukraine, they usually cite respected international news agencies, such as CNN,

Bloomberg, or Spanish newspapers and channels. As for us, we try to look out for any newsbreak we can use to convey our messages to the local public. Since the start of 2025, I have given more than thirty interviews and commentaries to various media across Mexico, Panama, Costa Rica, and Guatemala. We do outreach work with local politicians, deputies, and business representatives daily. I talk about the situation in Ukraine every time I give a public speech, whether I attend celebrations of the Mexican Cinema Day or address participants of business forums. I try to pay special attention to students, often giving lectures at Mexican universities and meeting with representatives of scientific and academic circles. We have opened a discussion platform called Café Kyiv at the Embassy, where we often invite Mexican political scientists, journalists, and students to discuss topics important to us. Video address of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to the Congress of the United States of Mexico on 20 April 2023, which we managed to organise thanks to the support from the head of the Mexican parliament and members of the Mexico–Ukraine friendship group, stirred quite a resonance in the Mexican society. All of the country's top media outlets broadcast the address live. In November of the same year, the Embassy organised an online meeting with the President of Ukraine and the students and faculty of several leading Mexican universities: the Monterrey Institute of Technology, the Ibero-American University, and the Anahuac University. The number of students who participated in the event in-person reached 2,500 people, and about 2,000 more joined it online. Events like these help us debunk the narratives of Russian propaganda and spread the truth about the events in Ukraine.

— *What role could the countries of Latin America, and Mexico specifically, play in facilitating Ukraine's victory and the onset of a lasting, just peace?*

— We value every country's support, including that of Latin American and Caribbean countries. Russia must know that its aggression is condemned and its actions are correctly judged. Thus, when it comes to voting for the resolutions at the UN General Assembly or other international institutions, the provisions of which call out the Russian aggression and the crimes committed against the Ukrainian people in no uncertain terms, every country's voice is critical for us. We fight for Belize's support for our resolutions on international platforms just as hard as we fight for Germany's or Japan's support. As of now, several countries of the region, including Costa Rica and Guatemala, which

lie in my sphere of responsibility, have joined the Core Group on the Establishment of the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Russian Aggression against Ukraine, the International Crimea Platform, and the circle of countries that participate in the work of the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children abducted by Russia. Why is this important? It's important because it means the Russian Federation can no longer claim that Ukraine is only supported by its Western partners, as if the rest of the world has a different perspective on the matter. But no, that is untrue; there are countries in Latin America, Asia, and Africa that share our values and our viewpoint on what's right and what's true. Let me give another example of the importance of the support Ukraine receives even from small countries. Costa Rica chairs the 2025 Ministerial Council Meeting of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. This small Central American country chose to promote the issue of Ukraine's accession to OECD membership as one of its priorities during its chairmanship. Membership in this organisation is just as important for us as EU and NATO integration. Therefore, amidst our fight against Russian aggression, effectively our battle for Ukraine's very survival, it's imperative that we develop our relations with each country in Latin America and the Caribbean, from the largest, Brazil, to the smallest, St Kitts and Nevis, and build long-term mutually beneficial partnerships with them.

— *Your Excellency, in 2024, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine adopted the Strategy for the Development of Relations between Ukraine and Latin America and the Caribbean and the Communication Strategy Ukraine — Latin America and the Caribbean. How does the Embassy implement the objectives outlined in these documents?*

— I should mention that the strategy for the development of relations adopted in 2024 was our first-ever strategy for the LAC countries. Unfortunately, for over thirty years since the restoration of our independence, we haven't paid sufficient attention to the region, all while Russia actively tried to set up a strong political and diplomatic presence, advancing its political, economic, and humanitarian interests. We are now trying to rectify this situation. Our government plans to increase the number of Ukraine's diplomatic missions in the region, which will allow us to strengthen our direct dialogue with political and economic elites. Our Embassy systematically works on restoring economic interactions and boosting trade turnover with our partners, which noticeably fell because of the war and the temporary occupation

of a share of our territories by Russia. For several years in a row before the war, Mexico was Ukraine's second-largest partner in the Western Hemisphere, followed by the USA, in terms of the volume of our exports. What we need to do today is regain our position in the Mexican market and substitute the goods (namely metals and fertilisers) we can no longer supply there because of the war with other exports, such as pharmaceuticals and IT products. In April 2025, for the first time since the invasion, Ukraine participated in the FAMEX aerospace fair, traditionally held in Mexico. We are working on launching scientific cooperation with the countries with which we are accredited. For example, we have established a direct dialogue between the National Antarctic Scientific Center of Ukraine and the respective institutions in Mexico and Guatemala. Our Mexican and Guatemalan partners are interested in cooperating with the Center on joint Antarctic research projects, including those focused on the use of the capacities of the Vernadsky Research Base. Joint research like this is rather essential to overcoming the consequences of climate change and opening brand new horizons for Ukraine's positioning in the LAC region.

— *Which of Ukraine's foreign policy projects and diplomatic platforms, including the initiatives of First Lady Olena Zelenska, do the countries you are accredited to join?*

— It is good that you mentioned the projects and initiatives of the First Lady of Ukraine, which we have been trying to promote in the countries of our competence. We have achieved a lot. First of all, I'm pleased to mention that the first ladies from countries of my competence, namely Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Belize, have repeatedly participated in the events of the global platform Summit of First Ladies and Gentlemen. In 2021, the then first lady of Costa Rica had already joined the first such summit online. Since 2022, Ms Rossana Briceño, the spouse of the prime minister of Belize, has been a constant participant in those events. Last year, Ms Briceño and the first lady of Guatemala, Lucrecia Peinado, personally visited Kyiv to join the Summit. Coincidentally, their visits to Ukraine's capital became the first ever visit of such a high level that our country received from these countries. Notably, a few months after the Summit, in late November, a delegation of Belizean senators led by the President of the Belizean Senate, Ms Carolyn Trench-Sandiford, visited Kyiv. I'm bringing up this visit because it resulted from Ms Briceño's trip to Kyiv. When I talked to her after she had returned home, she said, 'If I could visit Kyiv despite the

war, I see no reason why other politicians from my country cannot.' Next, Belizean senators came to Ukraine, visited Kyiv and Lviv, and had several talks there. This is an example of the importance of contacts between first ladies, as such interaction brings concrete and at times, political results.

One of Ms Olena Zelenska's projects, which we are successfully implementing in the region, is concerned with promoting Ukrainian culture by opening 'Ukrainian bookshelves' at key libraries. We are proud that in 2023, we officially opened the first Ukrainian bookshelf in the LAC region at the public library of Guadalajara (Mexico) under the patronage of First Lady Olena Zelenska. In 2024, we opened another bookshelf at the San Jose National Library in the capital of Costa Rica, and in 2025, a Ukrainian bookshelf appeared in Panama. The Embassy has joined another project of our first lady: on 5 October 2024, under Olena Zelenska's initiative, we officially launched the Ukrainian-language audio guide for the Capital Bus tourist routes in Mexico. In April 2024, with the Embassy's assistance, the Mexican company GRUMA joined the Superhero School project (schools set up in hospitals for critically ill children) under the auspices of the Olena Zelenska Foundation. It funded establishing one of these schools at a hospital in the Chernihiv region.

— Ukraine and the countries you are accredited to are located on different continents and are not always fully aware of the scope of each other's problems. The cultural, mental, and even information gaps between our peoples are serious, especially considering the war and how much Ukraine needs deeper understanding by the international community. How does the Embassy overcome this distance between our people and sway the local political, academic, and public circles to Ukraine's side?

— Popularising Ukraine's culture and traditions is one of our key tasks in the region. Helping Mexicans, Guatemalans, or Panamanians understand that Ukrainians are a nation distinct from Russians and that we have our own history, culture, and traditions is essential to promoting our national interests. For a long time, the people of Latin America viewed Ukraine and its people as something closely tied to Russia and its culture. Now, this perception is changing, not least thanks to the efforts of our diplomatic institutions. It makes me proud that since 2022, Ukraine has regularly participated in the annual International Book Fair in Guadalajara, the largest of its kind in the Hispanosphere. It's one of Mexico's most important cultural events. Notably, in 2023,

Ukraine was represented at the Fair through a stand we shared with the European Union. We also arranged for the Ukrainian first lady's video address to the Fair's participants on the day of its inauguration. The programme of Ukraine's participation in the 2024 Fair was also quite busy. The Embassy organised the presentation of the book *Ukraine. Food and History*, released by the Īzhak publishing house. The presentation attracted special attention and featured the book's author and publisher, Olena Braichenko, and her co-author, famous Ukrainian chef Vitalii Huralevych. A special feature of the event was the tasting of traditional Ukrainian meals prepared by Vitalii Huralevych based on the recipes from the book. Ukrainian gastronomic symbols — borscht and chicken Kyiv — were included in the regular menu of the Casa Yarin restaurant in Mazamitla, Jalisco, which also hosted a different presentation of Ukrainian cuisine. These are just some examples of the way we promote Ukrainian culture. Overall, throughout 2024, we held over 40 different cultural and educational events across Mexico, Panama, Guatemala, Costa Rica, and Belize — the countries of our mission's accreditation. All of this helps us promote our country's interests in the region and lay the foundation for future interaction, closing the gap between our peoples.

Interview dated 14 July 2025