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AUSTRIA STANDS WITH UKRAINE: support, partnership, prospects

— Your Excellency, you have assumed your duties as Ambassador of the Republic of Austria to Ukraine during a particularly challenging time in our country's history. What are your main diplomatic priorities, and how do you envision Austria's role in supporting Ukraine in the current context?

— Indeed, Ukraine, but also Europe as a whole, are facing an extremely challenging — even existential — threat caused by the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and the neo-imperialist and confrontational attitude prevailing in Moscow. This unjustified and illegal war seriously undermines the entire international security order and puts our fundamental values like peace, democracy, rule of law, respect for human rights and effective multilateral cooperation at risk. Austria took a very clear stance against this aggression and will continue to stand with Ukraine — as long as it takes. It is my task — and I am very honoured to be in this position — to work for a further improvement of the friendship and cooperation between Austria and Ukraine in all areas: political, humanitarian, economic, cultural and people-to-people. For me, it is very important to operate as part of an international coalition of countries that actively support Ukraine and its people. Maintaining a united and comprehensive approach within the EU and beyond to the different threats emanating from Russia is essential. At the same time, we must continue our global outreach to counter the Russian narrative on a worldwide scale. In its capacity as the seat of many international organisations (UN, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, etc.), Austria plays a particularly active and important role in this regard. Keeping up the political and economic pressure on Russia and its supporters in the war — inter alia via sanctions — is very important too, as is the continued



Austrian support for Ukrainian EU accession. In this context, I salute the ongoing ambitious reform efforts of our Ukrainian partners despite very difficult circumstances. Strengthening the rule of law and tackling corruption will remain important aspects in the EU accession process. Besides humanitarian assistance, human rights and accountability are additional areas where Austria stands at the forefront among the supporters of Ukraine.

— *How would you assess the current state of Austria–Ukraine bilateral relations, both politically and economically? In your view, what areas offer the greatest potential for further development and cooperation? Austria has a strong track record in sustainable development, energy efficiency, and healthcare. Are Austrian companies or institutions already involved in Ukraine’s reconstruction efforts, or planning to be?*

— Bilateral relations between our two countries are excellent. Since March 2025, Austria has had a new, broadly-based coalition government with a new Foreign Minister, Beate Meinl-Reisinger, who has visited Ukraine three times since taking over her functions. Continued support for Ukraine is very prominent in the government programme. A new governmental coordinator for the reconstruction of Ukraine was recently appointed. At the Ukraine Recovery Conference (URC) in Rome in early July 2025, Austria sent an impressive business delegation representing around 20 leading

enterprises active, in particular, in the areas of energy, infrastructure, technology and financial services. Austria is Ukraine's 6th biggest foreign investor, with 200 representations within the country. Austria has also flagged its readiness to host the URC in 2027. Austrian enterprises are particularly active in banking, insurance, agrobusiness, energy, production of paper/cardboard and sports equipment — just to name a few sectors. In the context of EU accession, it is also important that Ukraine offers a positive environment for foreign investment. There is a huge potential for sustainable development, transportation infrastructure and energy efficiency. These areas were particularly emphasised during the joint visit of around 40 Austrian companies to Ukraine in early April. For instance, RAG Austria and Wien Energie are active in the Ukrainian energy sector. Austria supports the continued energy availability inside Ukraine, for example, via the World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and the Energy Support Fund, which is headquartered in Vienna. Nevertheless, there is always potential for even closer cooperation. I was very glad to participate in President Zelenskyy's visit to Austria on 16 June shortly after assuming my duties in Ukraine. This visit saw the signing of several new bilateral agreements, e.g., on closer cooperation in the political sphere, agriculture, economy, security/return of children, closer collaboration between cities/municipalities, and supporting Ukraine studies. It is now up to both sides to implement these agreements.

— *Austria has provided substantial humanitarian assistance to Ukraine since the beginning of the full-scale russian invasion, including numerous projects through the Nachbar in Not initiative. Which aspects of this support do you consider most impactful so far, and how do you envisage its continuation or expansion during your tenure as Ambassador?*

— In addition to our support via the EU, bilateral humanitarian assistance has focused on areas such as housing, energy, health, food security and humanitarian demining. Providing shelter for schools and kindergartens is becoming more prominent as a new focus. Most of our support is being channelled via trusted partners such as the UN, the OSCE, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and Austrian NGOs. Over the past few weeks, I have had the opportunity to visit some of the projects that are being implemented with Austrian financial support. It is important to touch base with the agencies responsible for project management, but even more so

with the local population benefiting from these projects. The feedback I have received from our Ukrainian friends and partners so far has been extremely positive. I am planning to pursue these visits.

— *Austria is currently hosting around 100,000 displaced Ukrainians. How has their presence influenced Austrian society, and what policies or programmes have been introduced to support their integration or eventual return?*

— Austria is still hosting more than 80,000 people displaced from Ukraine. In general, Ukrainians are integrating very well into the Austrian society. Their presence enables us to deepen the direct people-to-people dimension and to learn from each other. We certainly also understand that it is very important for Ukrainians to maintain their links to Ukraine, since they should play an active role in the future of the country. We have put in place a very generous support programme for students and junior researchers from Ukraine. For example, we regularly organise training programmes for young Ukrainian public officials and female leaders at the Diplomatic Academy in Vienna. Of course, this should not lead to a brain drain from Ukraine, but to create a win-win situation. Austria offers excellent services that enable Ukrainian children to pursue studying in Ukrainian while at the same time learning/improving their German. Furthermore, most of the Austrian provinces offer summer camps for schoolchildren from Ukraine. They can help to develop individual lifelong bonds between our two countries.

— *Could you kindly elaborate on the current role of cultural diplomacy in Austria's engagement with Ukraine and outline any forthcoming events or initiatives the Embassy intends to support in this domain?*

— As a result of our own history, we have a strong understanding of the role of cultural diplomacy. We have agreed with the Ukrainian partners to use our worldwide network of cultural forums to organise events showcasing Ukrainian culture and identity. Some projects have already been delivered. We also work closely with the Ukrainian Institute in this respect. During President Zelenskyy's visit to Austria, it was agreed that we would increase our funding in this area. These activities are also important for tackling the persistent negative and cynical Russian narrative that we can still observe in many countries. The Austrian Embassy in Kyiv plans to continue pursuing existing cultural activities, focusing on music, literature, and cinema.

— Your Excellency, during your recent visits to Ukrainian cities such as Lviv, you have engaged with local authorities and discussed various initiatives, including the National Rehabilitation Centre project. How do these regional engagements influence Austria's diplomatic strategy in Ukraine, and what role do you see for local partnerships in strengthening bilateral relations?

— As a federal country, we also cooperate closely with regions, cities and municipalities. There are several partnerships already in place. The province of Upper Austria and the Odesa region signed a cooperation agreement in June 2025. At the recent summit of cities organised in Kyiv, the biggest foreign delegation came from Austria. On this occasion, two of our municipalities received awards from the Ukrainian President for their exceptional contributions to supporting Ukraine. Ukrainian projects, such as the National Rehabilitation Centre and the Superhumans Centre, an initiative founded by Andrij Stavnitsker — Austria's Honorary Consul in Odesa — are likewise extremely important in helping to cope with the negative impact of war.

— Your Excellency, your visit to the Walnut House Foundation in Lviv highlights Austria's commitment to supporting women in crisis. Could you elaborate on Austria's broader strategy for promoting gender equality and assisting vulnerable groups in Ukraine, and how the Embassy plans to further these efforts?

— For many years, Austria has been focusing very strongly on gender equality. Therefore, we support several projects in this respect via UN agencies, including UN Women, United Nations Industrial Development Organization, and United Nations Population Fund, as well as other entities. We support victims of domestic violence, such as is the case for the Walnut House Foundation in Lviv and a shelter for women in Odesa, assist women to cope with post-traumatic stress disorder, and improve facilities for water, sanitation and hygiene. In the context of the international support for Ukraine's reconstruction, Austria has formally joined the Alliance for Gender-Responsive and Inclusive Recovery at the URC 2025 in Rome. In addition, we offer broader support to strengthen the role of women in administration, employment and entrepreneurship. This is also part of our national strategy to implement UNSC Resolution 1325 on 'Women, Peace and Security' globally.

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