

Andrii Sybiha,
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine

FROM STRENGTH OF DIPLOMACY TO DIPLOMACY OF STRENGTH

Arguably, throughout 2025, Ukraine has not always been ‘diplomatic’ in the common sense of the word. We were often inconvenient, but always confident and strong.

At the start of it all, the world had to buckle its diplomatic seatbelts. Today, as autumn starts and we are entering a new political season, we can confidently claim that despite geopolitical turbulence, we have managed to defend all our core diplomatic positions.

We have earned diplomatic scars and survived extreme pressure and occasional blackmail, but we made it. We have preserved the aid and alliances.

A great many things have stemmed from Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s leadership and personal involvement across each essential track: just peace, weapons, retention of the continued assistance of our allies, maintenance of Ukraine’s resilience, and protection of our people.

‘No decisions about Ukraine without Ukraine. No decisions about Europe without Europe,’ President Zelenskyy said during the Munich Security Conference in February. This formula has become an axiom amongst ourselves and our European allies.

My former German counterpart, Annalena Baerbock, who has been elected to serve as president of the United Nations General Assembly for its 80th anniversary session, has said that ‘Ukraine reinvented diplomacy.’ I think this is a fair notion.

Today, our diplomacy is that of strength.

We know we are backed by the strength of truth and the strength of our people. First of all, it is the strength of our warriors, the brave men and women fighting to protect Europe.

It has been over 11 years of Ukraine fighting against the Russian invasion. Over three years of the full-scale invasion. We have made it

through three extremely tough winters, and we are currently preparing for the fourth. We know that Russia will not abandon terror. Yet we likewise know that Russia is incapable of breaking our people's spirits.

We stand proudly against the Russian aggression because we are not alone.

This year may yet play a truly decisive part in stopping Russian aggression. Ukraine seeks peace, and it deserves a just and equitable peace, which is precisely why we supported the US's proposal for a full, unconditional ceasefire in March.

In the six months that followed, we reached our biggest diplomatic achievement: a shared transatlantic vision, in which security is a cornerstone of lasting peace, and security guarantees are the main element of any diplomatic solution.

As always, the ball is in Russia's court. Our pressure, combined with our allies' pressure, can force the aggressor to pass that ball to the side of resilient peace in Europe. Moscow continues terrorising Ukraine's civilian population, plans new offensive operations, and in no way whatsoever does it intend to end the war.

War is in Russia's nature. Russia must stop killing. Putin must fully recognise that he cannot achieve his goals. Only strength can force him to accept this fact. Putin has already become the most prolific mass murderer of his people, yet he cares very little about that.

On the path towards just and resilient peace, we require three main components: the involvement and leadership of the US in peace efforts; the increase of the price Russia pays for continued aggression (new sanctions, confiscation of frozen assets, and increasing isolation); and the empowerment of Ukraine, which must come with a deterrence package to make Russia understand that any attempt to unleash a new war will cost it far more than whatever it may expect to gain from it.

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I would like to elaborate on the following three aspects: global security, the achievements of Ukraine's diplomacy of strength, and our priorities for the future.

First. Security.

2025 made it clear: the Russian threat is not exclusive to Ukraine. The consequences of the Russian war have already reached a global

scale. Russia is responsible for global turbulence and crises. Russia challenges the global freedom of navigation, undermines food security, and weaponizes energy. Russia empowers rogue regimes across the world. Russia is the only country in the world resorting to nuclear blackmail.

The Russian army is no longer the same as it was in 2022. Unfortunately, it has gained and continues to gain extensive warfare experience and is developing its military technology. Russia is a threat to global security.

This is about more than Europe. Consider what North Korea has gained in exchange for its military units' participation in the Russian aggression against Ukraine. First of all, we are talking about extra defence capabilities that generate a direct threat to Asia. Transatlantic and Indo-Pacific security are inextricably linked.

The good news is that the world has started to act more confidently. American President Donald Trump's harsh yet justified position has forced NATO member states to revise their national budgets. The agreed allocation of 5% from their GDPs for defence and the associated expenses will strengthen the Alliance. Ukraine's eventual membership will strengthen it even further.

We can feel the impact of Europe's new leadership — new European strength. Europe becomes increasingly aware of its responsibility for its own security and its need to be self-reliant in the defence industry. Our European allies increasingly often view their contributions to Ukraine not as aid but as investments in their own security.

Our security is indivisible.

We must cement this idea as the bedrock of global understanding. Ukraine already contributes to collective security and strength. Ukraine actively develops its own defence industry and possesses the unique experience of testing its designs in the field of battle, and this is why it will eventually become a global defence hub. This will be especially important in the world of tomorrow, in which the military industry will be a geopolitical asset.

Second. Achievements of our diplomacy of strength.

Our main diplomatic achievement has been reaching a single vision between Ukraine, the US, Europe, and other allies on security being a precondition for peace. We all agree that security guarantees are a cornerstone of resilient peace. These guarantees must be legally binding. We must be able to defend ourselves if we are to avoid being

forced to actually do that. We must get clear answers as to who will counter Russia should it attempt another aggression, and how.

We have achieved important results in a year of work. More than 50 countries have announced new military aid packages. Our military industry complex is experiencing a surge in foreign investment. The Danish model is becoming a gold standard. Ukraine must become as self-reliant as possible to secure the needs of its military industry and army.

The UN General Assembly resolution on 'Advancing a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine', adopted during its 11th Emergency Special Session in February 2025, was a landmark achievement of Ukrainian diplomacy and a significant proof of continued wide international support for our country. Despite the turbulence in the international environment, we managed to raise a powerful coalition of states that had confirmed their dedication to the principles of the UN Charter and Ukraine's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity. The resolution's adoption was an unambiguous signal of the international community's unity around fundamental rules and values and yet another step in the continuous efforts to protect the rule-based international legal order.

We and our partners share a belief in a world driven by the power of law, not the power of force. We must make this belief a reality. We must ensure justice. Every war criminal must be brought to answer for their crimes: a Russian soldier, for raping a Ukrainian woman; the Russian leadership, for raping international law.

We made an important stride towards that end when we signed the agreement with the Council of Europe to establish the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression Against Ukraine. I appreciate that we launched the political part of this process in Lviv. That marked the reclamation of Ukraine's role in international criminal law. This needs to be the basis for our international work: restoring our credibility in places where it was unfairly forgotten or treacherously stolen.

Ukraine is also determined to draw on its own bitter experience of war to fill the existing gaps in international humanitarian law.

The inevitability of punishment is the only way to force Russia and other potential transgressors to comply with international humanitarian law.

The international community needs to return to strict adherence to the rules and principles of international humanitarian law. Failure

to comply with it should be grounds for automatic sanctions. We also have to discuss preventive action.

The above is the very reason why this year, on the 76th anniversary of the signing of the Geneva Conventions, we came forward with the initiative to establish the International Humanitarian Law Progressive Development Platform. We must identify existing gaps and ultimately fill them.

When working with legal and contractual frameworks, we are guided by the simple principle of our strategic interests. We must work on the things that make us stronger. We must do away with the things that weaken us.

Following this principle, we made a difficult but necessary political decision to stop the implementation of irrelevant obligations under the Ottawa Convention. We are convinced that this step is both necessary and proportionate to the level of threats, as it concerns the survival and preservation of Ukraine as a sovereign, independent, and free state.

Our strength is more than our military. Amidst the full-scale war, we have managed to retain our status as a guarantor of global food security. Despite the constant Russian terror targeting Odesa, the city remains an important world port, and our Black Sea transport corridor remains a vital artery. President Zelenskyy's Grain From Ukraine initiative, which has been funded by our partners, allows Ukraine to maintain free grain supplies for the countries that require them the most.

We are developing a new infrastructure for interacting with our partners. Ukraine occupies an appropriate place in the work of institutional multilateral formats, such as Weimar+ or the Nordic-Baltic Eight, as well as the Ukraine — Southeast Europe Summit and Ukraine — Nordic Summit. Not only are we joining existing formats, we are also creating new ones. We continue developing the Lublin Triangle. Our new format with Moldova and Romania has been titled Odesa Triangle. An alliance named after a Ukrainian placename is an important sign of our subjectivity and the strength of Ukrainian diplomacy. We have also founded the Ukraine + Benelux cooperation format. We are deepening and refining cooperation with our strategic partners. For example, we have signed a historic One Hundred Year Partnership Agreement between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Ukraine.

We are expanding Ukraine's global presence. Throughout the last 18 months, we opened 10 embassies: in Botswana, the DRC, Ghana, the Ivory Coast, Mauritania, Mozambique, the Republic of the Philippines, Rwanda, the Sultanate of Oman, and Tanzania. We have opened the General Consulate in Mumbai. We plan to open four more embassies before the end of 2025 — in the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Panama, and the Oriental Republic of Uruguay — and more than 10 new consular missions, including in Germany, Iraq, Italy, Romania, Slovakia, and two in Poland and France each. We are planning to upgrade the level of existing Ukrainian consulates in Antalya and Gdańsk to consulates general. We are reducing our presence in Cuba, and we plan to use those resources to improve our presence elsewhere in the region.

We are introducing the office of the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ukraine to UNESCO. Our cultural heritage is also a source of our strength.

For the first time in history, we invited the honorary consuls of Ukraine and foreign honorary consuls in Ukraine to participate in this year's meeting of ambassadors and general consuls. We are working on opening 32 honorary consulates worldwide, and we will start using this unique diplomacy tool more extensively.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' building on Saint Michael's Square is known as 'the building with a view of the whole world'. But in this world, we are not observers.

Our diplomacy of strength proves this every day.

Third. Priorities.

We outlined seven priorities during our July meetings with ambassadors and general consuls.

The first priority of diplomacy of strength is obvious: reinforcing our defences. This is about bolstering our capabilities on the front to strengthen our bargaining power in negotiations. Instead of our allies sending us weapons from their warehouses or ordering them from their defence industry companies, we need to finally shift to a model under which they will invest in our defence industry and localise their production facilities for co-production in Ukraine.

The second priority is to increase pressure on Russia and its accomplices. Every new sanction package is undeniably a success. Yet with every air attack, we can see that those sanctions are not enough. Unfortunately, Russia still manages to circumvent the sanctions. It

still enjoys access to raw materials, critical components, equipment, and software.

It is imperative to coordinate and synchronise Ukraine's sanctions with those of its partners; expand the sanctions to target strategic areas of Russia's industry; reduce the price ceiling for Russian oil; ban all maritime services concerning oil exports; enhance export controls and the measures to counter the circumvention of sanctions; strengthen the sanctions against the 'shadow fleet'; block critical imports; prohibit exports of cutting-edge technologies; introduce sanctions against the Roskosmos and Rosatom; cut off the remaining Russian banks from SWIFT; stop the activities of foreign companies in Russia; implement secondary sanctions.

The third priority is the restoration of justice. It also stands for prosecuting war criminals and bringing our people back home.

Our objective is to ensure that as many countries as possible join the Enlarged Partial Agreement on the Management Committee of the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine. The Committee must begin its work as soon as possible. Russia's leadership must know that they have no immunity to consequences.

Our utmost attention is on bringing back the children stolen from Ukraine. The results we seek to achieve must match the scale of the crime of deportation. President Zelenskyy's Bring Kids Back initiative and the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children are viable tools to that end.

We are working on setting in motion the process of confiscating the frozen assets. Europe must not be a reliable banking institution for war criminals. Russian state funds ought to be diverted to Ukraine's defence and recovery.

The fourth priority concerns resources for recovery and development. Recovery is not a task for tomorrow; it's a process that is already underway.

Ukraine's recovery is also a major business project with high profit potential. We are already developing specific content for this project.

Meanwhile, we are communicating the message that we are not only someone to be helped, but also a profitable trading partner. Investments in Ukraine are investments in a future EU member state.

The fifth priority is the EU and NATO. Ukraine is not a passive candidate idling in the queue but a leading co-author of a common security architecture and a defender of the very values that define Europe.

It's unacceptable when a single country — Hungary — obstructs the whole expansion process. In doing so, it abuses its status as an EU and NATO member state.

Together with our partners, we are looking for a way to overcome the Hungarian veto. It is important to assert the non-separability of Ukraine's and Moldova's European path.

When it comes to NATO cooperation, our tactical objective is to bolster our defences. It is important to develop the Alliance's new initiative: Prioritised Ukraine Requirements List. This multibillion-dollar programme allows European allies to buy weapons for Ukraine from the US.

The sixth priority is public diplomacy and communication.

There can be no exhaustion from Ukraine. We will involve more people in our support — not just experts but representatives of the local show business, athletes, and other public opinion leaders. And not just those who will say the things we wish to hear, but mainly those whose voices are heard in their countries. Ukraine's voice must be heard.

The seventh priority is protecting and supporting millions of Ukrainians abroad. We must not merely expand our presence, but also increase its quality. We are already improving access to consular services through the e-Consul system.

Our fellow citizens abroad are our strength, which we must sustain and use well. We will keep working on simplifying access to consular services and ensuring that the law on multiple citizenships is implemented wisely and effectively.

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I restate what I wrote at the beginning: perhaps today's Ukraine is not always 'diplomatic' in the common sense of the word. However, I can proudly say that Ukrainian diplomacy is held in high esteem across the world today. We do our job with professionalism and dedication.

We are not a 'diplomatic front'. We have but one actual front, and the people who fight on it do not wear two-piece suits.

We are, however, a diplomacy team, and we act to get the job done.

Our job is clear-cut: to reach a comprehensive, just, and sustainable peace.

We will be sure to deliver it.