

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Volodymyr Zelenskiy of Ukraine
September 1, 2021

President Biden. It's an honor and a pleasure to welcome President Zelenskiy to the White House, to the Oval Office. As we celebrate 30 years of Ukrainian independence, the partnership between our nations grows stronger, and it's going to even become stronger than it has been.

Ukraine and the United States have a similar value system and a strong commitment to the fulfillment of a promise that we hope all will come forward, and that is a Europe whole, free, and at peace. And the United States remains firmly committed to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity in the face of Russian aggression and—and—our support for Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic aspirations.

Today we're going to discuss how the U.S. can continue to support Ukraine as it advances its democratic reforms, agenda, and movement toward being completely integrated in Europe.

We're revitalizing the Strategic Partnership Commission between our nations. And we're also creating a new strategic defense framework and a new \$60 million security assistance package, as well as a new energy and climate dialogue to help Ukraine diversify its energy supplies while supporting our climate goals relating to global warming.

And of course, we'll talk about our ongoing fight against COVID-19. And the United States has donated 2.2 million vaccines to—through—to Ukraine through COVAX. And we're going to continue to work to provide more as well.

We have much to talk about. And I still remember the opportunity that I had to speak to the Rada years ago, and I look forward to being able to come back some day to see you.

Mr. President.

President Zelenskiy. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

First of all, I would like to greet you, ladies and gentlemen, as representatives of the journalist community. And I would like to thank President Biden for his invitation. In the difficult times for the world and for the United States, for Ukraine, still you found time for us, and we are very grateful for this indeed. And of course, the United States, our strategic partner and staunch supporter of our sovereignty and our territorial integrity.

And I would like to use this occasion to thank President Biden personally for following our conversation on the phone and dispatching the more than 2 million vaccines to save Ukrainian lives.

[At this point, President Zelenskiy spoke briefly in English as follows.]

More than 2 million.

Interpreter. Yes.

[President Zelenskiy continued in Ukrainian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.]

President Zelenskiy. And thank you for the \$60 million program for defense development in Ukraine until the end of this year. We appreciate this contribution.

And, Mr. President, accept my sincere condolences because of the tragic death of the heroes who were trying to save human lives in Afghanistan and sacrificed their own.

We are very compassionate, and we have the fellow feeling for such losses—such tragic loss—because for 8 years in a row, as you know, we've had this war in the Ukrainian Donbas, and we have lost 15,000 of our best people.

Well, I have a very big agenda for our relations—maybe not for this meeting, which is too short—to answer all the questions, but they are all of big importance for our both countries, I believe. But, at least, we have to focus very much now on the security issue, which is the most important on this agenda. And security in Donbas—the Ukrainian Donbas, in the Ukrainian Crimea—temporarily, as we believe, occupied by the Russian Federation; security in the Black Sea; and security in the Azov Sea region.

And of course, the security issue—energy security at this time, because we are very much concerned, as you are, with the commissioning of—possible commission on the Nord Stream 2.

And I would like to discuss with President Biden here his vision, his government's vision of Ukraine's chances to join NATO and the timeframe for this accession, if it is possible; and the role the United States can play being involved in a peaceful settlement in Donbas that we would like to reach.

And last, but not least, the economic bloc. Because we came to Ukraine—we came to office to transform Ukraine, so we called our program a "transformation program," and we would like to discuss the role that the United States would like to play in this transformation and economic revival of our country.

And finally, a very sensitive issue of this morning, Mr. President: We handed over to your representatives a list of prisoners, prisoners held in the temporarily occupied Donbas; in the temporarily occupied Crimea; in the Russian Federation—their territory, in Moscow. There are 450 people, maybe more, which are held there, and we would like to have your assistance in freeing them and bringing them back to their country.

Thank you very much.

President Biden. Thank you. We have much to talk about. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:05 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. President Zelenskiy spoke in Ukrainian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

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