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**Statement of the Association of United Ukrainian Canadians
on the continuing escalation of the war in Ukraine and the prospect for peace
April 5, 2023**

The National Committee of the Association of United Ukrainian Canadians, at its meeting of January 29, 2023, discussed the Russia - Ukraine war. It affirmed its position that the urgent need is to de-escalate the conflict as the means to enable a ceasefire and peace negotiations between Ukraine and Russia.

The National Committee deliberated on and passed the resolution of the Ottawa Branch of the AUUC first presented to the AUUC National Convention in October 2022 and referred to the first meeting of the National Committee for decision and action.

No matter how one characterizes the war, the imperative is to end it. More than twelve months of conflict and the destruction and death it has caused speak to this necessity.

This is critical for the peace, security and for the future of Ukraine; and to end the dangers posed by escalation to peace and security in Europe and the world.

To end the war is not the goal of all. Western nations, the 'collective west' as it is sometimes called, and others, look to prolong the war for their own ends. Thus, April 2022 saw the collapse of peace negotiations between Ukraine and Russia. The collapse of peace talks was welcomed by some who claim that the war must proceed in order to create conditions for peace by defeating Russia on Ukrainian battlefields. More than one year of escalating war has proven this false. The attainment of peace is no closer due the massive influx of military support to Ukraine.

The destruction of the war

The Russian – Ukraine war has brought massive destruction to the infrastructure of Ukraine and more generally to its population in the cities, towns and countryside. The Ukraine economy has been disrupted and severely damaged which further exacerbates the social and food security problems for its people. The war has severely disrupted agricultural production in Ukraine. It is estimated that agricultural production in grain and corn yields will drop 40% this year even if fighting were to stop immediately. The industrial heartland of Ukraine has borne the brunt of the conflict.

The war has impacted the global economy through soaring prices for energy and food and a breakdown of international bodies such as the G20.

What has the AUUC called for

Before the Russian invasion of February 24, 2022, the AUUC called for de-escalation and diplomacy to reduce the military tensions that were rising between Ukraine and Russia as a result of the conflict in east Ukraine. The AUUC's position was that ***war could be averted***.

The tensions were primarily fueled by the civil war in the Donbas. Long simmering tensions between Russia and the United States over security issues such as the expansion of NATO were a contributing factor. Reducing tensions, settling the crisis in the Donbas would have been in the interest of Ukraine. It would have provided Ukraine with immense international leverage against any continued Russian threat of military action. It would have provided Ukraine with stability to pursue internal economic, social and political reforms, not the least of which was Zelensky's promise to end to corruption and cronyism.

The position of the AUUC was not unique to it. In the period January/February 2022 the call for de-escalation and diplomacy was heard around the world as tensions mounted. Most significantly this was the desire of the people of Ukraine.

President Zelensky was elected on a platform of peace and stability in Ukraine with the promise to end the civil war in the Donbas. However, he was opposed in this by political forces in Ukraine which constituted themselves as the 'Non Capitulation Movement' and organized in the streets against settlement of the civil war on the basis of the Minsk Agreements.

The call for diplomacy and conflict resolution took a back seat to calls for confrontation and war. The Canadian government beat the drums for confrontation with Russia using Ukraine as the proxy. Sections of the Ukrainian diaspora supported this with vigor.

When wider war broke out on February 24 the AUUC called for ***ceasefire and negotiations to end the war***. The AUUC maintains this is the only the way to end the conflict on terms that will be acceptable to Ukraine.

The roots of the war

In Kyiv, in late 2013, mass protests began against the government headed by Viktor Yanukovich. In February 2014, following violent clashes in Kyiv, the government of President Yanukovich was replaced with an interim government. The removal of Yanukovich caused a rupture in Ukraine society along political, social, ethnic and regional lines and immediately triggered events that would lead to internal war. The regions of Donetsk and Luhansk rejected the interim government as representing a coup and "assumed responsibility for safeguarding the constitutional order, legality, citizens' rights, and their security on our territories." In Crimea, an autonomous republic with significant independence recognized by the Ukraine constitution, a similar break with the central government occurred.

The Ukraine army was dispatched to Donetsk and Luhansk in what was termed an anti-terrorist operation. The civil war that followed was a profound tragedy for Ukraine. It resulted in more than 14,000 dead and more than 1 million people displaced into other regions of Ukraine or to Russia. There were shortages of food and destruction of civilian structures such as homes, schools, hospitals, civic buildings and churches. There were many reasons for that conflict and it is not the scope of this statement to speak to those.

There was, however, a diplomatic solution to end the war in the Donbas and, had it been realized, then the current war would have been averted. That solution rested in the Minsk Agreements jointly signed by Ukraine and the representatives of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions (Donbas). France, Germany and Russia were the guarantors of the terms of the Minsk Agreements tasked with ensuring the parties would act in good faith. The Minsk Agreements were supported internationally and were officially adopted, unanimously, by the United Nations Security Council.

<https://press.un.org/en/2015/sc11785.doc.htm>

Escalation of the War

The urgent requirement is for a ceasefire and negotiations not the false premise that more war will bring peace.

Jens Stoltenberg, the head of North Atlantic Treaty Organization, speaking to the Conference of the Norwegian Confederation of Enterprises on January 5, 2023 said: "Weapons are – in fact – the way to peace".

https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_210447.htm?selectedLocale=en#:~:text=NATO%20Secretary%20General%20Jens%20Stoltenberg,to%20peace%E2%80%9D%2C%20said%20Mr.

This position of continuing and escalating the war is widespread amongst western countries. It is the foundation of Canada's Ukraine policy at this time. Canada and the majority of NATO countries have responded with over \$60 billion in military assistance to Ukraine. At over \$1.5 billion in military assistance Canada is the fifth largest contributor – a ranking that places it ahead of most European Union countries.

<https://www.statista.com/chart/27278/military-aid-to-ukraine-by-country/htm>

<https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/heres-everything-canada-has-sent-to-ukraine-since-russia-invaded>

On the first anniversary of the February 24 invasion by Russia Canada increased its commitments to military support as opposed to finding a path to negotiations and peace. The head of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress endorsed the Canadian government's position a move which is keeping with the UCC's position on the war in Ukraine and how to end it.

While the Canadian government, NATO, the U.S., the European Union and a section of the Ukrainian community in Canada and internationally see continuation of the war as the preferred option, it is one that is pursued on the backs of the Ukrainian people and the future of Ukraine. The developing situation

in Ukraine is reminiscent of the destruction of Yugoslavia in a war that bears striking parallels to the conflict in Ukraine.

The prospect for peace

In the first weeks of the war Turkey spearheaded efforts to bring Ukraine and Russia to a ceasefire and peace negotiations. In April 2022 it is now widely acknowledged that peace negotiations between Russia and Ukraine were scuttled by Western powers. <https://news.cgtn.com/news/2023-02-06/Israeli-ex-PM-says-the-West-interrupted-Russia-Ukraine-peace-talks-1hcUB6GDDXO/index.html>

The failure to broker peace in April 2022 resulted in 11 months of war, and in fact, escalating war. Each action by NATO countries to provide more military support has been met with a response by Russia to expand its military action. Each action and counter action has resulted in greater devastation for Ukraine and greater loss of life.

Now there are new initiatives internationally. On February 24, the one-year anniversary of the start of this conflict, China issued a 12-point peace plan. <https://news.antiwar.com/2023/02/26/china-releases-12-point-peace-for-ukraine/>

Brazil is also preparing a peace initiative. <https://efolket.eu/kosmopolitiskt/2-3-lula-moves-forward-with-his-ukraine-peace-proposal/htm>

Canada, however, remains dismissive of actionable peace initiatives. Foreign Minister Joly stated China's initiative was not genuine and before peace negotiations can be considered Ukraine must shape the battlefield suitable to its interests. It should be of great concern to all Canadians that the Canadian government is not supportive of the peace process that is developing internationally. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/canada-joly-support-ukraine-peace-talks-1.6760987>.

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