

# Cross Party Group on Ukraine

**Tuesday 5th December 2023 18:00 – 20:00 (hybrid)**

## Minutes

### Present

#### MSP Members

Colin Beattie MSP  
Miles Briggs MSP  
Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP

Paul O’Kane MSP  
Liam McArthur MSP  
Ben Macpherson MSP

#### Guests

Clare Adamson MSP  
Sharon Dowey MSP  
John Mason MSP  
Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice  
Yelyzaveta Yasko, Member of the Ukrainian Parliament  
Jack Hillmeyer, Consul General, U.S. Consulate General in Edinburgh  
Christiane Hullmann, Consul General, Consulate General of the Federal Republic of Germany Edinburgh  
Łukasz Lutostański, Consul General, Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in Edinburgh  
Andrii Kuslii, Consul, Consulate of Ukraine in Edinburgh  
Valeriya Golovina  
Ann Ostapko  
Bohdan Tierokhin  
Stefan Tymkewycz  
Mike Picken  
Peter Cooper  
Jennifer Carr  
Nadiia Karpenko  
Linda Allison

#### Non-MSP Group Members

Consulate of Ukraine in Edinburgh  
Sabir Zazai  
Hannah Beaton-Hawryluk  
Maria Jemicz  
Yevgen Gorash  
Anna Kulish  
Michael Ostapko  
Yulianna Shalenyk  
Viktor Radchenko  
Bohdan Kruk  
Kvitka Perehinets  
Anastasia Klimash  
Hanna Tekliuk  
Illia Malanchuk  
Peter David Kormylo  
Zhenya Dove

Vasyl Kren  
John Hawryluk  
Steven Carr  
Maryan Pokhylyy  
Anne Yarney  
Doug Allan  
Oleksandra Wierzbicka  
Alina Ostapenko  
Oleksandr Chernykh  
Oleksandra Novatska  
Peter David Kormylo  
Derek Edwards  
Anna Merchuk  
Olha Maksymiak  
Kseniia Smyrnova

#### Apologies

Christine Grahame MSP  
Donald Cameron MSP  
Katy Clark MSP  
Tetiana Balanova

Kateryna Campbell  
Olena Litvinova-Kutsai  
Dmytro Syrota  
Olena Yuzkova

### 1. Welcome from the Convenor

Colin Beattie MSP (CB MSP) opens the meeting and highlights the invaluable experiences of members representing displaced people from Ukraine within the CPG, reiterating Scotland's commitment to welcoming them.

## **2. Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice**

Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP (SAS CS) says that Scotland's dedication to democracy, human rights, and the rule of law remains unwavering, both at home and internationally. This commitment underpins ongoing support for Ukraine's fight for sovereignty, democracy, independence, and territorial integrity. SAS CS expresses immense pride in Scotland's exceptional response to the humanitarian crisis triggered by the war, emphasizing the nation's open homes and hearts to those displaced from Ukraine. Highlighting the substantial support provided, SAS CS notes that since the onset of Russia's unlawful invasion, nearly 26,200 individuals have found sponsorship in the UK, with over 20,000 facilitated by the Scottish Government's super sponsor scheme as of November 2023.

The issue of visa uncertainties for displaced Ukrainians is identified as a strategic priority in the Warm Scots Future policy paper. SAS CS emphasizes Scotland's advocacy for transparent and supportive immigration policies to aid displaced Ukrainians, showcasing Scotland's commitment to a warm and inclusive future.

## **3. Vice Convenors**

### **Paul O'Kane MSP**

Paul O'Kane MSP (POK MSP) mentions his admiration for the group's dedication and the Scottish Parliament's unified desire to support the initiative, emphasizing the collective effort to welcome those displaced by the war against Ukraine. POK MSP concludes by emphasizing the Cross-Party Group's member-driven nature, urging continued solidarity and expressing hope for a future where the group can celebrate peace and joy in Ukraine.

### **Miles Briggs MSP**

Miles Briggs MSP (MB MSP) highlights the unity within the Scottish Parliament on the matter of Ukraine, a rare occurrence given the usual divisions, with a special mention of the Ukrainian flag flown outside the Parliament as a symbol of unwavering support. MB MSP also notes the significance of the new foreign secretary's visit to Ukraine as a demonstration of the UK government's commitment, expressing confidence that support for Ukraine will continue regardless of political changes in the UK.

### **Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP**

Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP (ACH MSP) begins by sharing his personal involvement with the Homes for Ukraine scheme, hosting a Ukrainian family for nine months, and mentions his own sanction by the Kremlin.

ACH MSP reflects on the profound impact of the war initiated by Putin in February 2022, marking a significant shift in European security dynamics. He highlights the tragic loss of over 300,000 Russian servicemen due to Putin's miscalculations and the valor of Ukrainian defenders.

ACH MSP stresses that Ukraine's battle is not only for its sovereignty but also for the principles of free democracies worldwide.

## **4. Yelyzaveta Yasko, Member of the Ukrainian Parliament**

Yelyzaveta Yasko MP (YS MP) extends gratitude for the heartfelt support and commitment to Ukraine and acknowledges the tangible assistance provided by the people of Scotland during Ukraine's challenging times and the political support that accompanies it.

Welcoming the idea of the Cross-Party Group, the YS MP stresses the potential for a broad partnership between Scotland and Ukraine, looking forward to exploring future cooperation steps.

Military and humanitarian support are identified as priorities for Ukraine, with a desire to strengthen defence and security, including aspirations to align closely with NATO for a secure future. YS MP frames Ukraine's struggle as a fight for existential freedom and a testament to universal values that should never be taken for granted.

For reconstruction and recovery, YS MP advocates for increased bilateral cooperation at all levels, suggesting partnerships between cities, schools, universities, and businesses as vital.

## **5. Guest Speakers**

### **Jack Hillmeyer, Consul General, U.S. Consulate General in Edinburgh**

Jack Hillmeyer (JH) reflects on the war as not just a threat to Ukraine but to European security as a whole, and reaffirms the US's commitment alongside European allies, including Scotland and the UK, in support of Ukraine.

As the full-scale invasion of Ukraine nears its second anniversary, JH calls for unity in defending freedoms and striving for a peace that respects Ukraine's sovereignty.

JH concludes by affirming the US's dedication to aiding Ukraine's defense, recovery, and rebuilding, highlighting the group's role and the power of collective action against aggression.

### **Christiane Hullmann, Consul General, Consulate General of the Federal Republic of Germany Edinburgh**

Christiane Hullmann (CH) reflects on Ukraine's European aspirations, recalling the Euro Mайдan demonstrations a decade ago, which were a call for freedom, dignity, and self-determination. CH remarks on the subsequent challenges faced by Ukraine, including Russia's sabotage of the EU Association Agreement, the illegal annexation of Crimea, and the ongoing war, emphasizing that despite these obstacles, Ukraine's EU integration efforts continue to progress as the EU Commission recommended opening accession towards with Ukraine.

CH underscores the EU's recognition of Ukraine's impressive reform efforts and its rightful place within the EU. CH details Germany's substantial support for Ukraine, including recent military aid packages, doubling military support by Germany for 2024, and acknowledges the hospitality shown by Germany and Scotland towards displaced people from Ukraine, praising the solidarity and kindness extended to them.

### **Lukasz Lutostański, Consul General, Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in Edinburgh**

LL mentions Poland's immediate response in opening its borders and homes to displaced people from Ukraine, initiating jet and tank coalitions, and advocating for Ukraine's candidate status in the European Union with the aim of full membership.

Drawing from Poland's experience with migration to Scotland after joining the EU, LL suggests that the Cross-Party Group on Ukraine could serve as a forum to discuss both short-term and long-term cooperation, emphasizing the importance of encouraging young Ukrainians to return to their country to maintain its security and integrity.

To achieve this, LL proposes the harmonization and standardization of educational certificates and the preservation of the Ukrainian language among children abroad.

Highlighting the ongoing security challenges faced by Poland and the broader region due to the war, LL underscores the need for continuous support for Ukraine to prevent further aggression.

## **6. Andrii Kuslii, Consul, Consulate of Ukraine in Edinburgh**

AK highlights Russia's readiness for a protracted war of attrition, using its resources, war fatigue, and nuclear blackmail. AK states Russia's war against Ukraine is one of the most consequential events of our time with the potential to escalate rapidly beyond the borders of Ukraine. The importance of the Ukrainian army's efforts in fighting Russian forces is stressed. Ukraine's advancement is complicated by mine lanes and Russia's dominance in the sky. Ukrainian troops' successes, including control over several bridgeheads on the Dnipro River and achievements in the battle for the Black Sea, are mentioned.

AK details the increasing use of guided aerial bombs by Russian forces and the significant damage caused, underscoring Ukraine's urgent need for means to counter these attacks. The production of attack drones in Russia with Iran's assistance and the G7's urging of Iran to cease supporting Russia's military aggression are condemned.

Criticism is directed towards the Lukashenko regime in Belarus for acting as Kremlin's proxy and the stationing of non-strategic nuclear weapons in Belarus as a threat to Ukraine and Europe. The devastation caused by Russia was estimated at USD 411 billion, with Ukraine's rapid recovery needs for 2023 at up to USD 15 billion.

Deep appreciation is expressed to the people of Scotland for their support and hospitality towards Ukrainians in Scotland during this distressing time.

The Secretary of the CPG is introduced.

The Convenor takes a question from the audience and Clare Adamson MSP (CA MSP) mentions recent participation in the UK-EU Parliamentary Partnership Assembly, where she served as an observer and notes Ukraine continues to be in the forethoughts of many elected parliamentarians, emphasizing Ukraine's prominent place in their deliberations. She also mentions an upcoming committee session, where Emma Roddick MSP, the Minister responsible for the matters of displaced Ukrainians within Scotland, is set to provide evidence.

## **7. Introduction of Members**

### **Sabir Zazai, CEO, Scottish Refugee Council**

Sabir Zazai (SZ) shares a personal connection to displacement, recounting an experience from 40 years ago related to a Russian invasion, not of Ukraine but of Afghanistan.

The Scottish Refugee Council's commitment to supporting the Ukrainian community for as long as needed, including post-war rebuilding efforts, is affirmed. Inspiration is drawn from the resilience of the Ukrainian people, as observed during the welcoming of families at the Glasgow airport, where the immediate inquiries were about work opportunities and community contributions rather than basic needs.

The collaborative efforts of the Scottish Government, civil service, third-sector organizations, local authorities, the Ukrainian community in Scotland and the Ukrainian Collective as a particular example, are praised for their role in employing lived experiences to inform the work of the Stakeholder Reference Group (SRG) SZ is proud to chair alongside Minister Emma Roddick and Councillor Chalmers. SRG focuses on various aspects: housing, education, culture, language, and the vital issue of legal status and visas for Ukrainians, emphasizing the importance of clarity for their long-term plans in Scotland.

### **Hannah Beaton-Hawryluk, Holova (Chair), AUGB Edinburgh Branch**

Hannah Beaton-Hawryluk (HBH) highlights the critical role of Ukrainians in ensuring Europe's freedom and safety and underscores the historical ties between the Ukrainian community and Scotland, dating back to 1890. The publication "Scotland's Ukrainians" by Dr. Peter David Kormylo is mentioned as a document that outlines the contributions of four waves of Ukrainians to Scottish society with the newly arrived Ukrainians writing the next, fifth chapter.

HBH describes the Ukrainian community center in Edinburgh as a pivotal hub for Ukrainian culture and support, especially in response to the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, facilitating significant aid deliveries with the help of local partnerships, including NatWest, City of Edinburgh Council, EVOC, Volunteer Edinburgh.

The employment of staff at the community center is highlighted as a significant step in expanding services, including in mental health, youth work, and educational programs. Plans to establish a Ukrainian school with government support are also mentioned.

HBH acknowledges the vital contributions of over 25 funders and 100 weekly volunteers to the AUGB Edinburgh's efforts, along with partnerships with local and national entities that have enabled their work.

HBH announces upcoming national projects aimed at promoting Ukrainian culture across Scotland, in collaboration with Glasgow Council for Voluntary Services and EVOC, intending to unite the Ukrainian community through cultural events.

Finally, HBH thanks CB MSP for highlighting the Holodomor genocide in the Scottish Parliament.

### **Maria Jemicz, Acting Chair, AUGB Dundee Branch**

Maria Jemicz (MJ) introduces AUGB Dundee as a new branch established this year, highlighting the long history of Ukrainians in Dundee, dating back to post-World War II, including her own father. The Dundee club, formed in 1947 by Ukrainian agricultural volunteers, aimed at integrating Ukrainians into Scottish society while retaining their cultural identity. Currently, Dundee hosts nearly 400 Ukrainians, with efforts focusing on transitioning them from temporary to more integrated accommodations. The newly named Unity Club offers various classes and activities to foster community spirit and cultural preservation.

MJ details a busy summer of bus trips across Scotland, aimed at bonding and integration for the mainly female Ukrainian newcomers.

### **Yevgen Gorash, Chair, AUGB Glasgow Branch**

Yevgen Gorash (YG) stresses the significance of the current day, which marks an International Volunteer Day, highlighting the indispensable role of volunteers to the Glasgow branch. YG notes that next year will mark its 10th anniversary. The branch began with a group of economic immigrants, including YG, who came to Scotland for work opportunities. YG is proud to mention the revitalization of community engagement by their branch, noting it as the first in many years to reverse a trend of decline.

On the topic of achievements, YG expresses gratitude towards the Scottish Government for funding a community coordinator position and shares excitement about moving into new premises.

YG mentions the progress in establishing agreements between universities and organizations, viewing these efforts as vital to strengthening Ukraine's global position.

Lastly, YG announces a forthcoming twinning agreement between Glasgow and Mykolaiv, highlighting this as a significant achievement of their branch. This effort, years in the making, is a testament to the hard work and dedication of everyone involved.

## **8. Discuss topics for future meetings**

CB MSP acknowledges the dedication and passion of all speakers towards supporting Ukraine, expressing optimism for the future contributions of the Cross-Party Group. Emphasizing the potential for achieving significant outcomes, CB MSP notes the responsibility of each member to ensure the group's success as a positive force.

Following preliminary conversations, a diverse array of themes for future meetings has been pinpointed, encompassing Education, Culture, Politics, Employment, Health and Wellbeing, Resettlement, Special Events and Anniversaries, and Business Engagement. Given the limited time available, an in-depth exploration of these topics is deferred, with the CB MSPs recommendation to establish working groups aimed at streamlining the focus on particular matters for more effective oversight.

CB MSP proposes that these working groups will allow for focused attention on individual projects and will report back to the main group, enhancing participation and solution-oriented activities among members. The intention is to further develop these topics and present more concrete proposals in the next meeting.

## **AOB**

During the Any Other Business (AOB) segment, the Convenor provided the Consul of the Ukrainian Consulate in Edinburgh with the floor to present a certificate of appreciation to Steven Carr, Chairman of Dnipro Appeal. Steven Carr has dedicated 18 years to enhancing the lives of orphaned children in Ukraine, leading the Dnipro Kids charity. The onset of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 heightened concerns for their safety and Steven Carr undertook a courageous journey into the war zone, executing an evacuation plan to bring 50 children to safety in Scotland. In recognition of his extraordinary service and support for Ukraine amidst the challenging times, the Consul was honored to present Steven Carr with a certificate of appreciation under the signature of the Ambassador of Ukraine to the UK, acknowledging his exceptional contributions and steadfast support.

## **Closing**

CB MSP concludes the meeting with expressions of gratitude to all attendees, both in person and virtually, with special thanks extended to the evening's speakers. The anticipation for the next meeting was highlighted, focusing on the commitment to undertake substantial work to support the Ukrainian cause.