

March 10, 2022

Briefing Note

Current Situation in Ukraine and the Work and Roles of Parliamentarians

Prepared by the Parliamentary Centre and the Agency for Legislative Initiatives under the Parliamentary Accountability for the Security Sector (PASS Ukraine) project, funded by the Peace and Stabilisation Operations Program of Global Affairs Canada.

The analysis included in this note is based on media reports and information obtained from the Verkhovna Rada and other legislative bodies. It is essential that Ukraine's democratically elected officials continue to perform their duties while enduring Russia's unprovoked, illegal and horrific invasion.

This note is for information only and is not meant to convey opinions regarding policy decisions in the Verkhovna Rada's sole purview. The contents of this note do not necessarily reflect the views of PASS partners or Global Affairs Canada.

This note may not necessarily reflect the up-to-date current state of affairs as the situation changes every hour. Every attempt is made to ensure the accuracy of all information, acknowledging the rapidly deteriorating humanitarian and security situation, the disruption of the flow of information and organized disinformation all present incredible challenges.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

International Women's Day

"Today, our dear Ukrainian women-defenders together with men are protecting our Ukraine. Everyone has their front. Some are at the forefront; others are blocking sites and TV channels of the occupant. Someone bakes delicious bread and cakes for the military. Someone is building barricades and weaving camouflage nets. And some are 24/7 on another, no less critical front - caring for children - the future generation of our indomitable nation."¹ These were the words of the Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada on the occasion of International Women's Day.

Danger of Nuclear Catastrophe

The Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada stated that Russia is creating a real danger of a global nuclear catastrophe by attacking the atomic facilities of Ukraine. To eliminate the threat of a nuclear disaster, he sent an appeal to the IAEA, the UN, NATO, the European Parliament, and the European Commission for help. Stepanchuk asked to apply to NATO member states to approve establishing a Deny Access/Prohibition Area (Zone A2 / AD) over Ukraine as soon as possible. He also appealed for assistance in regaining control of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant by the Ukrainian authorities and emphasized that the critical situation

¹ <https://www.rada.gov.ua/news/Top-novyna/220252.html>



at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant due to the actions of the Russian military threatens the security of Europe and the world.

Preventing Food Crisis

Ukraine is one of the most important food producers globally, one of the top 5 exporters of grain. Russia's war will significantly affect the agricultural sector (for example, sowing of grain crops is carried out in the spring). And the reduction in agricultural production will affect the food situation around the world. To counter this situation, on March 9, members of the Committee on Agrarian and Land Policy supported the Government's initiative to introduce the reservation of conscripts. The industry is that agricultural enterprises and food producers should submit to the Ministry of Agrarian Policy lists of critical workers who will be granted deferment of conscription during mobilization and wartime. To prevent a food crisis, members of the Verkhovna Rada Committee on Agrarian and Land Policy called for closing the skies over Ukraine².

Repeated Calls by Parliament to Close the Sky Over Ukraine

In the period March 04-09, various parliamentarians called for close the sky over Ukraine: Deputy Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada³, Committee on State Power and Local Self-Government⁴, Chairman of the Committee on Youth and Sports⁵, Committee on Economic Development⁶, Rules Committee⁷. The Committee on Social Policy addressed the UN in this regard⁸. The leadership of the Humanitarian Policy Committee called on European and American colleagues to provide Ukraine with aircraft and air defence equipment if it is not possible to close the skies⁹.

Russia has the advantage in the air force. The Ukrainian Air Force and Air Defense Forces oppose Russia, but their capabilities are limited. Russia uses its dominance in the sky to attack Ukrainian targets. This also applies to civilian facilities - residential buildings, schools, hospitals (while writing this note, there was information about an airstrike on a

² <https://www.rada.gov.ua/news/razom/220228.html>

³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iZv8qJi7M8c>

⁴ <https://www.rada.gov.ua/news/razom/220231.html>

⁵ <https://www.rada.gov.ua/news/razom/220229.html>

⁶ <https://www.rada.gov.ua/news/razom/220271.html>

⁷ <https://www.rada.gov.ua/news/razom/220264.html>

⁸ <https://www.rada.gov.ua/news/razom/220278.html>

⁹ <https://www.rada.gov.ua/news/razom/220221.html>

maternity hospital in Mariupol¹⁰¹¹). The information from Ukraine is that unguided aerial bombs are dropped on such targets.

Green Corridors

On March 6, the Committee on Humanitarian and Information Policy called on the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Philippe Grandi, and the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Peter Maurer, to immediately establish humanitarian corridors to evacuate children from hotspots¹².

A crucial humanitarian problem for Ukraine is the problem of green corridors. Some Ukrainian cities are currently surrounded by Russian troops or are under intense fighting and shelling. The population of these cities wants to evacuate to safe Ukrainian territories and needs food and medicine. This is primarily Sumy, Mariupol, Irpin, Bucha. To evacuate the population and deliver food and medicine to these cities, it is necessary to organize green corridors - safe areas with no shelling. The Ukrainian and Russian sides have agreed on such corridors several times, but Russian troops are reported to have repeatedly fired on them, disrupting evacuation efforts.

¹⁰ <https://www.reuters.com/world/mariupol-says-childrens-hospital-destroyed-by-russian-bombing-2022-03-09/>

¹¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sndGegz0Q7U>

¹² <https://www.rada.gov.ua/news/razom/220217.html>

Additional Information on Activities of the Rada Committees and Members

On March 4, Ruslan Stefanchuk, **Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada**, addressed the world's parliaments. He did it against the background of a residential building in Kyiv where a Russian missile hit. He stressed that "peace is needed not only in Ukraine but in the whole world. Therefore, I ask all the parliaments of the world: remove all bureaucratic procedures and make all the decisions that are necessary today for the security of the world and Ukraine because all this can happen in your countries."¹³

On March 5, the **Committee on State Power and Local Self-Government** called on the Ukrainian authorities to close their open data so that the enemy would not use it. The appeal concerns, first of all, town planning and land documentation.

On March 5, the **Committee on Humanitarian and Information Policy** addressed the President of Ukraine regarding the protection of cultural heritage in war conditions. The appeal stressed that during the attack on Kyiv, the aggressor destroyed the Ivankivka Museum of History and Local Lore, which houses works by prominent Ukrainian artist Maria Prymachenko. In Kharkiv, enemies damaged the Assumption Cathedral, which survived the Bolsheviks and World War II. Along with irreparable human losses, Ukraine suffers tragic losses of cultural heritage. The destruction of cultural heritage sites is a crime against Ukraine and its citizens before Ukrainian historical memory. In this regard, the Committee requested the President to improve the legal capacity to protect cultural property.

On March 5, the Chairman of the **Foreign Policy Committee** of the Verkhovna Rada had a telephone conversation with the Chairman of the Bundestag Committee on Foreign Affairs, Michael Roth. Michael Roth expressed support and solidarity between Germany and the German Parliament with Ukraine to fight against Russian aggression. Michael Roth voiced admiration for the courage of the Ukrainian people and President Zelensky at this challenging time. The Chairman of the Foreign Policy Committee of the Verkhovna Rada informed Mr. Roth about the current situation on the front and Russia's crimes against Ukraine. He asked to support the creation of a no-fly zone over Ukraine and promote a peacekeeping operation in Ukraine under the auspices of the United Nations. He noted that Germany, as Europe's moral, political and economic leader, must play an essential role in countering Russian aggression and protecting Ukraine from the crimes of the Putin regime.¹⁴

On March 6, the **Committee on Anti-Corruption Policy** addressed Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering (FATF) to include the Russian Federation in the list of high-risk countries and to exclude the Russian Federation from the FATF. The committee drew attention to Russia's criminal actions in shelling residential neighbourhoods and civilians seizing nuclear power plants. These actions are terrorism under Art. 2 of the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism. In this regard,

¹³ <https://www.rada.gov.ua/news/Top-novyna/220195.html>

¹⁴ <https://www.rada.gov.ua/news/razom/220207.html>

the Committee requests the FATF to 1. Immediately include the Russian Federation in the list of high-risk jurisdictions. 2. Exclude the Russian Federation from the FATF member states as soon as possible.¹⁵

On March 7, the **Committee on Finance, Tax and Customs Policy** called on foreign insurers to stop reinsuring risks to Russian insurers. The appeal was addressed to Lloyd's, Swiss Re Ltd., Munich Reinsurance Company, Gen Re, Hannover Re, SCOR SE, PartnerRe Ltd., Arch Re, AIG, Marsh, Willis:

On March 8, the **Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada congratulated women** on the world. In his greeting, he noted that "Today our dear Ukrainian women-defenders together with men are protecting our Ukraine. Everyone has their front. Some are at the forefront; others are blocking sites and TV channels of the occupant. Someone bakes delicious bread and cakes for the military. Someone is building barricades and weaving camouflage nets. And some are 24/7 on another, no less critical front - caring for children - the future generation of our indomitable nation."¹⁶.

On March 8, **Deputy Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada Olena Kondratyuk congratulated Ukrainian women** and girls on International Women's Day - the Day of Struggle for Women's Rights: " Thanks to all the women and girls who protect, treat, care for, carrying humanitarian aid, pack in warehouses, support, write and tell the truth, cook. And also to all who protect children and the elderly. These are challenging times that require difficult decisions, but strong women in Ukraine and their daily personal contribution bring us closer to our victory over the occupiers. "

On March 8, the **Open Letter of the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe** to the Head of the Ukrainian Delegation to the PACE - Maria Mezentseva was published. The letter is about the condemnation of the war started by Russia and the support of Ukrainian women by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

On March 8, the Chairwoman of the **Committee on Ukraine's Integration into the EU** took part in a media seminar and briefing dedicated to women's rights and International Women's Day at the European Parliament. The main theses of Ivanna Klymush-Tsintsadze:

- Ukrainian women would be happy to talk about equal rights at work, suffrage, women's representation in government and management, and how to implement new EU directives into Ukrainian law. But now, the lives of Ukrainian men and women, our cities and villages, are under bombardment and shelling by the Russian occupiers.
- More than 3.5 million people have been displaced during the 12 days of Russia's war against our peaceful country, which dreams of returning to its European family, which we believe we belong to. We cannot count the exact number of civilian casualties because there are cities such as Mariupol, Irpin near Kyiv, Volnovakha in the Donetsk region, and Kharkiv, where we still cannot count the exact number of civilian casualties.

¹⁵ <https://www.rada.gov.ua/news/razom/220224.html>

¹⁶ <https://www.rada.gov.ua/news/Top-novyina/220252.html>

We know for sure that more than two thousand people have already been killed. Thirty-eight children died in this war, 72 children were wounded.

- Occupiers shoot entire families trying to evacuate. They are firing on humanitarian corridors, dropping banned clusters and vacuum bombs on civilians. Their goals are kindergartens, schools, and hospitals. Since the beginning of the war, the Russian army has damaged or destroyed 202 schools, 34 hospitals, more than 1,500 residential buildings in Ukraine, including apartment buildings.
- People in overcrowded trains are trying to escape. Sometimes, they have to go in terrible conditions for a day or two without basic hygiene; this happens in the 21st century.
- Ukrainian women fight the Russian occupiers on an equal footing with men and volunteers, helping to provide humanitarian needs and defending their land with weapons in hand. More than a hundred thousand people have signed up for territorial defence; women join the army and territorial defence units.
- On behalf of all Ukrainian women and women politicians, Ivanna Klymush-Tsintsadze called on the European Parliament to act: "Close the skies over Ukraine, give us protection in the air, provide us with solid military support, fuel, ammunition for our soldiers. All those who share our values, respect human rights, and respect the fundamental rights that must be available to everyone must mobilize work with their governments with their authorities so that this assistance is provided to Ukraine.
- European governments need to impose really tough sanctions. Because so far, only 15% of Russian banks have been disconnected from SWIFT. While at least one Russian bank has access to the system, the sanctions do not work. Introduce personal sanctions against State Duma deputies, their security forces, oligarchs, and their families. Impose an embargo on the purchase of oil and gas from Russia. I know it's painful, but if you don't want Russia to wage war on you - just as unreasonably, just as for no reason - act! You will save the lives not only of Ukrainians but also of people around the world 17

On March 8, the **Committee on Environmental Policy** decided to appeal to international organizations on the following issues: violation of nuclear and environmental safety, threats to ecosystem integrity, violation of Ukraine's rights by Russia in international organizations and Russia's responsibility for these violations until its exclusion from international organizations, imposing an embargo on Russian timber exports, closing the airspace over Ukraine from civilian airstrikes, providing humanitarian assistance and providing "green" evacuation corridors for the population.

Members of the **Nation's Health Committee** continue to provide humanitarian assistance. Committee member Oles Dovhy and his partners purchased a mobile surgery station¹⁸. Committee Chairman

¹⁷ <https://www.rada.gov.ua/news/razom/220254.html>

¹⁸ <https://www.rada.gov.ua/news/razom/220234.html>

Mykhailo Radutsky Opens Humanitarian Aid Distribution Center for people who can't buy food independently.

On March 9, the **Chairman of The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, Ruslan Stefanchuk, Talked to the Speaker of the US House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi**. The main appeals of the Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada:

- to join the introduction of the North Atlantic Alliance's no-fly zone over Ukraine;
- to add additional means of defeating the enemy. In particular, it was about the need to provide our Armed Forces with fighters: F-15, MiG and Su;
- to draw attention to the need to supply Ukraine with means of air, anti-tank, anti-ship defence, strike drones, more "Stingers" and "Javelins";
- to remain steadfast in increasing sanctions pressure on Russia.

On March 9, the **Humanitarian Policy Committee** addressed its colleagues from the European Union. The main appeal is to the ICC Prosecutor's Office to immediately investigate the new circumstances of the crimes under the Rome Statute and transfer the proceedings to the Pre-Trial Chamber. The Committee looks forward to an effective investigation, expedited issuance of arrest warrants and the inevitable punishment of all Russian and Belarusian officials involved in crimes in Ukraine, beginning on 24 February. Ukraine will cooperate as fully as possible with the ISS Prosecutor's Office and provide it with all documented and collected by the Ukrainian authorities evidence of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes of Russia and Belarus committed in Ukraine during the new round of their armed aggression.

On March 9, the **Committee on Youth and Sports** addressed the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Executive Director of the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF and the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross) with a request to take urgent measures to protect the right to life of Ukrainian children.

On March 9, the Verkhovna Rada registered a **bill № 7129¹⁹ on holding remote sittings**. Detailed information about it will be in a separate note.

¹⁹ <https://itd.rada.gov.ua/billInfo/Bills/Card/39176>