

**Speech by President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko at the session of the
National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine with participation of
NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg**

22 September 2015

Distinguished Mr. Secretary General!

Dear members of the National Security and Defense Council!

Ladies and Gentlemen!

Today's session of the National Security and Defense Council has a historic character – for the first time, a great friend of Ukraine, Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization is taking part in it. I am pleased to welcome you, Mr. Stoltenberg. Yesterday, we had a very interesting trip and watched the training of rescue services from 34 countries, in which more than 1100 people took part. This is the first such NATO training in our country.

It is very important and symbolic that our efficient cooperation with NATO has begun with this training on saving human lives.

We talked about the ways to make NATO-Ukraine cooperation more efficient and I am confident that the involvement of NSDC members in this dialogue will be extremely useful.

Let me outline specific tactical and strategic tasks and define clear plans on our further cooperation.

First of all, we must remember that our session is held in the midst of the Russian armed aggression against Ukraine, which has been implemented through the armed annexation of Crimea and aggression in the east of our state. Thus, against the backdrop of this aggression, NATO-Ukraine cooperation is not a secondary, but strategic issue for Ukraine, NATO and global security.

I emphasize once again – it goes far beyond national and regional character, because unprecedented violation of regulations and principles of the international law by Russia makes Ukraine-NATO cooperation an exclusively strategic issue for both parties.

Even several NATO member-states, which joined the Alliance recently, have found themselves in the risk zone from the perspective of Russian aggressive plans. There are people in Moscow who are eager to challenge NATO's strength and determination. I am confident that these attempts to test NATO's capability of defending peace and stability in local, to their mind, conflict in Ukraine and challenge the effect of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty are adventurous, provocative and extremely dangerous.

Ukraine is not a NATO member now. Unfortunately, we are not allies de jure. Yet, de facto we are more than just partners. Efficient cooperation between Ukraine and NATO has enormous prospects.

Ukraine is the eastern outpost of Euro-Atlantic civilization, which is now defending not only sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of our country. Ukraine is currently fighting for freedom and democracy in the region and the world. It is fighting for the right of the Ukrainian people to choose its civilizational path. We will not let anyone from outside the country try to influence this process. It is solely the right of the Ukrainian people and the Ukrainian government and we have made a choice towards European values and European civilizational development during the Revolution of dignity.

I have no doubt that the security sector of Ukraine reformed on the basis of NATO standards will become not only a substantial factor of national security of our state, but also a precondition for reinforced European security and stability.

For today, only common security space and collective guarantees can secure the state from external encroachment and pathological revanchist-imperial ambitions of irresponsible international actors. The absence of responsibility is demonstrated not only by the actions on the Ukrainian theater of operations, but also by the participation of Russia in the military conflict in Syria and other regions.

Unfortunately, we have to confront these ambitions that started in the form of annexation of Crimea and defiant aggression in February 2014.

Today, in the course of the closed part of the session, we will demonstrate convincing and irrefutable evidence of participation of Russian regular troops in the aggression against Ukraine in the east.

Tragic developments that killed about 8000 Ukrainians – both civilians and Ukrainian heroes who defended their Homeland, unfortunately, showed new security realities. These realities mean that the UN Charter is no more effective and the post-war security system that has been acting for almost 70 years, has been ruined by irresponsible actions of the Russian aggressor. The Budapest Memorandum, which was signed in 1994, in the course of the voluntary nuclear disarmament by Ukraine, doesn't impose any obligations and the decision on the policy of non-alignment made by the previous government was simply criminal in relation to security and strategic interests of our state, when the armed forces were destroyed and the entire security and defense sector was put at the mercy of the occupants.

This dreadful mistake was corrected: one of the first decisions of the newly elected Parliament was the abolition of the non-alignment status. The Verkhovna Rada endorsed my respective initiative.

Euro-Atlantic integration course has already been enshrined in the National Security Strategy adopted by you, dear members of the National Security and Defense Council, and the Military Doctrine, adopted at the previous NSDC session. Respective provisions will also be included in other strategic documents that are currently being drafted. Euro-Atlantic choice with

prospect of NATO membership is being increasingly supported by the Ukrainian society. It is very important. I would like to remind you, dear Mr. Secretary General, that two years ago 16% of Ukrainians supported the Euro-Atlantic integration course. A year ago, this figure equaled almost 50%. Now, over 60% of Ukrainians support Euro-Atlantic integration. It means that the Ukrainian nation supports the Euro-Atlantic choice. When we ensure all conditions for the compliance of Ukraine with NATO membership criteria through the reformation of the country, I will initiate a national referendum and, thus, the will of the Ukrainian people will be fixed.

It is a great pleasure that the lack of public support is no longer an obstacle for the prospect of membership.

I remember that several years ago there were discussions in the world about reconsideration of NATO's role. Fortunately, nobody recalls these discussions today. It is Russia who proved the usefulness of NATO and the necessity of Alliance's further strengthening and broadening with its aggressive actions. NATO turned out to be the only international organization that provided an immediate response to the threat of regional and international security. Dear Mr. Secretary General, I am grateful that NATO was the first to offer assistance to Ukraine and we accepted this assistance gratefully.

It is shameful to remember the Ukrainian army a little bit over a year ago. Today, the Ukrainian Armed Forces are among the strongest on the continent after the reform, reinforcement and acquisition of combat experience.

Our nearest goal is to make the Ukrainian army more efficient and combat ready due to cooperation with NATO. Because the threat of Russian invasion hasn't disappeared. Unfortunately, we will have to live with it for many years. Neither Ukraine, nor European states, especially from the former socialist group, will have calm years in the nearest future.

Thus, rapid and efficient enhancement of defense capability of Ukraine today is a guarantee of security both for our country and the entire Euro-Atlantic area.

Supporting Ukraine, NATO strengthens its positions on the eastern border. Investing in Ukraine, in its security sector, they do not spend money for the assistance to other countries, but invest in their security sector. It is extremely important that citizens of NATO member-states understand that very well.

For today, task №1 for Ukraine in interaction with NATO is to achieve full interoperability of the AFU with NATO forces. The achievement of criteria necessary for membership in the EU and NATO are the top priority for the Ukrainian authorities, let alone 99% of them are similar.

The given work has already been started. Ukraine conducts intensive reforms of all sectors, including national security and defense. NATO standards are the landmark of these transformations for us.

It is very important that NATO countries are directly involved in this process. Over the years of our partnership we didn't have such a level of interaction, trust, common responsibility and determination to achieve the result.

At the last year's NATO Summit in Wales we outlined priority areas of our cooperation, and I am extremely pleased that they are implemented. As a result of their implementation, I can say that Ukraine and NATO have never been as close as today. In difficult times, NATO has shown itself as a reliable partner for Ukraine. Perhaps it was the realization that all NATO members with all their potential and experience support us that inspired Ukraine to achieve such progress in ensuring the defense capacity.

I am sure that at the next NATO Summit to be held in July 2016 in Warsaw, we will discuss the results of these changes with leaders of NATO member-states during the session of Ukraine-NATO Commission at the highest level. And we will determine the strategy of our rapprochement for the coming years.

Today, we will also discuss the issues of strategic communication, confronting Russian aggressive propaganda not only in Ukraine, but also in all NATO member-states, development of efficient cooperation in military-technical sphere, exchange of intelligence data with NATO and other issues that will increase the defense capacity of both Ukraine and NATO.

At this point I would like to conclude my opening remarks and invite Mr. Secretary General to the microphone.

Then, I suggest proceeding to the more substantive discussion of current topical issues.