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2022 ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL DIMENSION  
IMPLEMENTATION MEETING

Vienna, 15 November 2022

Opening Session

***Maria IONOVA***

*Member of the Parliament of Ukraine,  
Co-founder of the Ukrainian Women's Congress*

**KEY POINTS**

*(as prepared)*

Our meeting today is very important. The war in Ukraine has been going on for almost nine months, and every day brave men and women in the Armed Forces of Ukraine stand against the aggressor, fight relentlessly, and bring closer our victory.

We owe the current situation to the Armed Forces, which hold the blow and force the Russians to retreat. But at the same time, we are making all possible efforts on the international and diplomatic fronts. And these efforts are working - they also forced Russia to leave Kherson.

We are happy to share here with you the liberation of Kherson - the only regional center occupied by the Russians, their only trophy. Russia has not found any reason to stay in Ukrainian Kherson and is "losing" the territory it arbitrarily called its own. But we also remember the price of this victory, and we cannot repeat the same mistakes made since 2014 - we can no longer put the aggressor to sleep and look at the truth with eyes closed. Let's not waste time here!

Ukrainian men and women are changing other societies, because the strength and resilience that we have demonstrated since the first days of the full-scale war has impressed the whole world. Our women's role is special now!

**Ukrainian women are successfully holding different fronts in this war.** 30% of the Ukrainian army are women: 37,000 serve in military positions, about 5,000 of which are at the front line. This is one of the highest indicators among NATO member countries. I would like to mention –

- **women who perform combat tasks** like *Tetyana Chornovol*, the commander of anti-tank hand-held systems *Stugna*, who has been at the front for months destroying Russian tanks;
- **female paramedics**, in particular, Head of paramedics battalion and Member of the Parliament of Ukraine *Yana Zinkevych*, or a journalist in civilian life, and now a volunteer of the *Hospitaliers* battalion, *Iryna Tsybukh*,

who evacuates the wounded from the battlefield and provides medical care for many months in a row;

- **military women who survived Russian captivity**, such as *Yuliya "Taira" Paievska* or *Kateryna "Ptashka" Polishchuk*.

These cases are impressive and give us a clear example of women's leadership during wartime. But **Ukrainian women also hold the economic and humanitarian fronts**, relocating enterprises from dangerous territories and starting a business in the rear, coordinating humanitarian headquarters and launching social educational, psychological and rehabilitation projects. I cannot help but mention here the initiatives of *Olga Rudneva*, who has been coordinating the largest warehouse on the Polish-Ukrainian border that provides humanitarian aid and supports Ukrainian men and women in dangerous areas for many months in a row, *Iryna Nikorak*, who has initiated the sewing of women's military uniforms, or *Ksenia Voznitsyna*, the chief physician of the Center for Psychological Health and Rehabilitation for Veterans, who has helped dozens of women and men affected by the war.

**Women remain with their communities in the most difficult moments** - during shelling and occupation, after the liberation of territories by the Armed Forces of Ukraine and during the reconstruction of destroyed villages and cities. These are the cases of *Galyna Minayeva*, head of Chuguyev community in Kharkiv region, *Olena Volkova*, deputy mayor of Trostyanets community in Sumy region, or *Lyudmila Sirko*, deputy head of Ivano-Frankivsk military-civilian administration.

**Ukrainian women are our country's ambassadors to the world** and they deliver speeches on powerful international platforms, advocate in favor of supporting Ukraine, hold the cultural and informational fronts, as well as help with small efforts - starting a small business or organizing Ukrainian communities abroad - and they worthily represent our country in the world.

**The offensive on the diplomatic and international fronts is part of a joint effort to destroy Russia** on all fronts - military, humanitarian, economic. Keep going! After all, the inevitable process of self-determination of the peoples of Russia awaits us in future. Thus, the Northern territories of Japan are still illegally held by the Russian Federation, and Ichkeria people has the right to fight against the occupier. The delegitimization of Russia at the international level, in particular, the appeal of its role and place in the UN Security Council awaits us as well.

**The strategic goal of our victory is the victory of democracy and free world.** The victory of justice, when Russia will be properly punished for tens of

thousands of killed and tortured civilians. During 33 days of occupation of Bucha, more than 400 civilians have been killed and tortured and most of the civilian infrastructure has been destroyed. The real victory over an authoritarian regime, when not only the face of this regime will change, but it will be completely destroyed.

**And for such a victory, we need solidarity.** We know that you are solidary with us in the desire to return to a peaceful Ukraine. But we also need the solidarity in action. Solidarity is also the unification around the release from captivity: write and talk about it. We are fighting, but we can win together only.

And even then - in the first days of the war - we won. But **we cannot stop, because we still need weapons** - tanks and planes, so that the Ukrainian army continues to protect us, to minimize the losses of our people and to put a victory point on the battlefield. We need air defense systems to protect cities and villages from bombing. We need support in infrastructure, equipment and innovation to hold the energy front and survive this difficult winter.

We hold our fortresses - in Kyiv and Kharkiv, in Sumy region and in Dnipro, in Mykolaiv and in Kherson. We protect the borders of Europe. Be with us now. And be the winners of democracy over imperialism!