By Reuters

Ukraine's Poroshenko plans referendum on NATO membership: German media
Німецькі ЗМІ: Президент України Порошенко планує провести референдум щодо вступу країни в НАТО
За даними німецького видання Funke Mediengruppe Президент України виступає за проведення всенародного референдуму стосовно питання вступу України до Північноатлантичного Альянсу. Видання наводить дані, згідно яких наразі 54 відсотки українців висловлюють свою згоду на членство України в НАТО.
http://thehimalayantimes.com/world/ukraines-petro-poroshenko-plans-referendum-nato-membership-german-media/

BERLIN: Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko plans a referendum on whether Ukraine should join the NATO alliance given polls that show 54 percent of Ukrainians now favour such a move, Germany's Funke Mediengruppe newspaper chain reported Thursday.

Ukraine and NATO accuse Russia of providing troops and weapons to support separatist rebels in eastern Ukraine in a conflict that seen 10,000 people killed since April 2014. Moscow denies the charges.

"Four years ago, only 16 percent (of the Ukrainian people) favoured Ukraine's entry into NATO. Now it's 54 percent," the media group quoted Poroshenko as saying in an interview. "As president, I am guided by the views of my people, and I will hold a referendum on the issue of NATO membership."

He vowed to "do all I can to achieve membership in the transatlantic alliance" if the people voted in favour.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on Wednesday called for Russia to use its "considerable influence" with the rebels to end the fighting in eastern Ukraine after a renewed surge in violence there.

NATO and Ukraine have had a close relationship since the early 1990s, and their ties are one of the "most substantial" of NATO's partnerships, according to the alliance's website.

However, any move by NATO to admit Ukraine would spark tensions with Russia, which says NATO already violated earlier promises by admitting Poland and other eastern European countries in the 1990s.

Poroshenko also predicted it would not take too long until Ukraine fulfilled the entry criteria to join the European Union. He said Kiev had reduced its budget deficit and inflation, and had taken important steps to reduce corruption.

"Europe should realise that it would be more secure, reliable and happier with Ukraine," he told the paper.

The EU last year spelled out limits to a landmark cooperation agreement with Ukraine to address Dutch concerns, but said the deal did not make Ukraine a candidate for EU membership.