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Petro Poroshenko (President of Ukraine)

Nothing can stand between Ukraine and its European ambitions

The price of Russian aggression must be seen to be high

*Ніщо не може встати між Україною та її європейськими амбіціями*

*Вартість російської агресії повинна бути високою*

*Переговори американського і російського лідера Дональда Трампа і Володимира Путіна в Гельсінкі стануть черговим підтвердженням того, що Україна знаходиться на вістрі європейської та світової політики, – пише в статті для газети Financial Times Президент України Петро Порошенко. Виклики, з якими зіткнулася Україна, величезні, але час для полегшення тиску на Росію ще не настав. «Це було б визнанням слабкості. Замість цього нам слід чітко заявити, що цінності і принципи вільного миру не будуть скомпрометовані. Я продовжу захищати цю справу і інтереси України, наполягаючи на необхідності повернути окуповані Росією території», - пише Порошенко. «Виходячи з нашого узгодженого підходу не робити нічого, що стосується України, без України, я бажаю Трампу успіхів в його спробах повернути Путіна на шлях істинний. Знаючи російського президента, я впевнений, що він жадає нашої поразки. Але це не наш варіант, і цього ніколи не станеться», - підкреслив лідер України.*

<https://www.ft.com/content/d8e2cafa-835c-11e8-9199-c2a4754b5a0e>



*Ukrainian and US troops on exercise. Ukraine will this week announce an increased contribution to Nato's Resolute Support peacekeeping mission in Afghanistan © Getty*

This is a significant week for Ukraine as it faces substantial challenges to its security and stability. It started with Monday's Ukraine-EU summit in Brussels, followed by the Nato summit, in which Ukraine will also participate. And the meeting next week in Helsinki between Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin will confirm that Ukraine is on the frontline of European and transatlantic politics.

That meeting between presidents Trump and Putin will take place on the 28th anniversary of the Ukrainian parliament's declaration of state sovereignty, a move that began Ukraine's journey towards independence. At the time, I was a recent graduate in international relations. I made it my life's work to fulfil Ukraine's destiny as a member of the European family.

The challenges the country faces are immense, but this is not the time to ease up the pressure on Russia. To do so would be a confession of weakness. Instead, we should make it clear that the values and principles of the free world will not be compromised. I will continue to defend this cause and Ukraine's interests, insisting that territories occupied by Russia must be returned.

In Brussels this week we shall make it clear that the price for Russia of its aggression will keep rising until the Minsk agreements are implemented and the occupation of Crimea and the Donbass region is ended. The time for concrete action has come.

Whether on the streets of English towns such as Salisbury, in the email servers of western political parties, or via Moscow-controlled propaganda outlets across the west, Russia is seeking to sow division, confusion and fear by taking advantage of our open societies.

My experience is that there is nothing the Kremlin fears more than our unity and resolve. The complete integration of Ukraine into the European and transatlantic systems is the biggest threat to Russian aggression. My ambition, therefore, is to translate Ukraine's European aspirations into deeper alliances with the EU, starting with the digital market, customs co-operation and energy solidarity, and including a commitment from European capitals to take part in the restoration of cities in the Donbass. Anything less would not compensate Ukraine for its sacrifices or recognise its commitment to the promotion of democracy and European values.

Over the past four years, we have gone further with economic and other reforms than at any time since independence. And that has been done in the face of foreign aggression. Any western government reforming on the scale and at the pace we have done would see its popularity plunge. But my government will not be diverted from the path we have taken. The reforms are irreversible.

In security policy, I will continue to call for the strengthening of Ukraine's ties with Nato. This is our sovereign choice, and no other country should have a veto on our ambitions. Thus far, Ukraine has contributed more in terms of global security than it has received in return. Take its participation in Nato-led peacekeeping operations. Or its defence budget of 6 per cent of gross domestic product, which far exceeds the Nato target of 2 per cent of GDP. And consider too the newly-adopted national security law, which will bring Ukraine closer to Nato standards. This week, I will announce an increased Ukrainian contribution to Nato's Resolute Support peacekeeping mission in Afghanistan. I will continue to promote the fundamental role played by peacekeepers wherever they are needed, including in the occupied Donbass.

This "Ukrainian week" will send a powerful message that will be heard in Brussels and beyond — most importantly in Helsinki. Based on our agreed approach of doing nothing on Ukraine without Ukraine, I wish Mr Trump well in his efforts to bring Mr Putin back into line. Knowing the Russian president as I do, I would bet that he craves our defeat. But that is not an option, and never will be.

*The writer is president of Ukraine*