



LOCAL GOVERNMENTS UNITE FOR WELFARE AND PEACE

Press release

"Local Governments Unite for Welfare and Peace": the International Marathon started with March, 18 meeting of the Ukrainian local self-governments' leaders with the municipalities of Poland, Hungary, Moldova, Romania and Slovakia.

Closing the sky over Ukraine, tightening sanctions against Russia and supporting Ukraine's aspirations for European and Euro-Atlantic integration are the three main calls made by the Ukrainian mayors during the International Marathon "Local Governments Unite for Welfare and Peace".

The marathon will continue until the end of the month. It is planned that it will unite the local self-government of the world in support for sovereignty of Ukraine and achievement of peace, as well as to promote the establishment of horizontal cooperation between Ukrainian municipalities and their foreign partners.

On the first day, the leaders of local self-government of Ukraine held a dialogue with their colleagues from Poland, Hungary, Moldova, Romania and Slovakia. Today, these countries receive and care for the largest number of refugees from Ukraine.

Along with gratitude, the leaders of municipalities called on their foreign peers to appeal jointly to the heads of states, national governments and politicians, and the leaders of international institutions to support those decisions that will help to save the lives of ordinary Ukrainian citizens.

"First of all, we ask you to help us close the sky - in any way that is possible. You all know about the terrorist act - the bombing of a cultural institution in the basement of which were hundreds of civil residents, including children - which was committed by Putin in Mariupol on March 16. More than 100 children have been killed in the past three weeks. Hundreds of schools, kindergartens and hospitals were destroyed. As long as Russian planes and missiles are able to attack our cities, all of this will continue" stressed **Oleksiy CHERNYSHOV**, Minister for Communities and Territories Development of Ukraine.

The participants of the marathon stressed that Russia, with support of Belarus, is waging war not only against Ukraine, but against the entire civilized world, its values and institutions. Therefore, one should not have illusions that Putin will calm down after the conquest of Ukraine. The policy of ceding that has long been pursued by the West over Russia (related to attacks Georgia, Syria, Crimea and Donbas) and which is supposed to prevent a major war, only encourages Putin to go further to his fanatical goal of restoring the Soviet Union (de facto Russian empire) and destroying unity of European countries and the democratic world.

During the marathon, each of the Ukrainian mayors spoke about the situation in their city and about challenges that they face in Russian armed aggression and how they ensure the livelihood of their municipalities in such difficult conditions.

"We used to say, «Good morning!» but now we can't call our mornings good, because every day begins with the shelling of peaceful Kyiv with rockets, projectiles and bombs. Every morning I go out to help people find a roof over their heads and bury the dead. I have just returned from Podilskyi district and Vynohradar. The school and kindergarten were destroyed there. The nearby five-story buildings are uninhabitable. Here you can see granules, cubic centimetre large, which fly 500 meters. These weapons are designed to kill people massively. And such missiles fly to Kyiv. Since the beginning of the war, 222 people have died in Kyiv, including 6 children. Satellite cities of Kyiv - Irpin, Bucha, Borodyanka are completely destroyed. We call the Russian military orcs, not people. In Irpin, the remains of murdered Ukrainian citizens lie along the roads, the infrastructure is completely destroyed", said **Vitaliy KLYCHKO**, Kyiv Mayor, President of the Association of Ukrainian Cities. Also he calls upon international community to terminate all economic relations with Russia because "every dollar or euro from abroad Russia is investing not in their people but in weapons to attack Ukraine".

"23 days of war, this is 23 days of constant bombing – by Grad, Uragan, locomotive artillery. We are also constantly bombed from the sky. An air alert has now been declared, and Russian planes are once again flying to bomb our city. I am convinced that peer-to-peer diplomacy can help us. I appeal to the European mayors to lobby our request to close the sky over Ukraine. This is extremely important for us. I saw the bombers, I was lying on the ground under the shells. Kharkiv is being totally destroyed. 708 buildings were destroyed, more than 600 residential houses. People lost their homes, and we place them in schools and kindergartens. But more than 60 schools were also destroyed. The Russians are deliberately attacking electricity and heat power stations, water supply and sewage systems, and communal companies working 24 hours per day, under shelling that is not stopping even for an hour," said **Igor TEREKHOV**, mayor of Kharkiv, a city that is suffering more and more destruction every day.

" Almost every day we take people out of Kyiv City suburbs (Irpin and Bucha) by our buses. Among them are children without arms or legs, some children say that only the basement in which they survived just remained of their building. We sent children with cancer to Switzerland and other sick children to the Netherlands. Our city receives a lot of humanitarian aid, which is distributed throughout Ukraine. Medicine and food – this is good, but we need weapons. If you cannot give weapons, give us bullet proof vests, helmets, 4*4 vehicles. The number of people willing to serve in the territorial defence is outrageous, and we need to cut military, fuel and food supplies for the Russian army from Belarus through our Zhytomyr region, "said **Serhiy SUKHOMLYN**, the mayor of the central Ukrainian city of Zhytomyr.

"Chernivtsi has sheltered about 50,000 internally displaced persons from the war zones. There are queues at local military enlistment office, both local and refugee, who have taken their families to safe place, and are returning to defend their hometowns in the East and North. Only together we can defeat the enemy. We are fighting not only for our country, but also for a free and independent Europe. But Europe must also ban any trade with Russia, and in this way you will help us defeat the occupiers," said **Roman KLICHUK**, Chernivtsi mayor.

"Look what these monsters did to Kharkiv! They can do the same with Mukachevo, because they do not have any moral limits. I would like to address the representatives of Hungary. We need helmets, first aid kits and so on (..) More than 80% of Russians support a potential attack on EU territory. If anyone thinks that this war will be Putin's last, if Ukraine loses, he is deeply mistaken. The last war for Putin will be the one in which he is fully defeated. We are actually brothers and sisters. And let's be together at such a difficult time for the whole of Europe. I'm addressing especially Hungary to facilitate transit through Hungary of various types of assistance to Ukraine from third countries. We

would also be glad to welcome the Hungarian government to take a difficult decision to suspend commercial projects with Russia, in particular in the fuel and nuclear energy sector", said **Andriy BALOHA**, Mukachevo Mayor.

By the way, Mukachevo and Chernivtsi, which are close to the borders of neighbouring European countries, have today become hubs for the reception of internally displaced persons, on the one hand, and numerous humanitarian aid, on the other.

"I am just on my way, returning from Poland. We are transporting two trucks of humanitarian aid from Germany worth more than 100 thousand euros. We have one heartbeat, one rhythm now. Thousands of Ukrainian women and children are now at the border. This cannot be put into words. But now we have to persevere, and we will persevere. We took almost 2,500 refugees to small Chortkiv town. I was struck by the persistence of the men who brought women and children from Kharkiv to us and then returned to defend their hometown. We received a lot of humanitarian goods, and now we have taken care of the city of Trostyanets, Sumy region. We also sent 300 tons of cargo just to Sumy and Mykolayiv regions, where whole municipalities have just been liberated from orcs. The Russians must understand that not only the Ukrainian army is fighting against them, but also our entire state. However, you must understand that without closing our sky, we will not stop this horde. Stop the transit of goods through Belarus, which is helping Russia to bypass sanctions. Russia must be stopped from all points. In addition to our condolences, you must persuade your governments to isolate Russia," said **Volodymyr SHMATKO**, mayor of small Chortkiv, where he planned to celebrate its 500th anniversary this year.

The participants of the marathon focused on the terrorist nature of the actions of Russian troops - mass shelling of civilians and infrastructure (destruction of power plants, water supply infrastructure, energy supply), destruction of national and world cultural heritage (destroyed or damaged more than 30 churches, including Svyatogor (1627)), provocation of a nuclear catastrophe that could affect both Russian Federation and Europe. All these facts are recorded and will be presented at the international tribunal, which will certainly take place in The Hague, Nuremberg or Kharkiv.

Claudia Luciani, Director of Human Dignity, Equality and Governance at the at the Council of Europe, expressed her support for Ukrainian local leaders.

"I feel ashamed that I am not in Ukraine. I also feel fear and resentment. The Council of Europe strongly condemns the attack of Russia, which was expelled from the Council this week. This is an extremely difficult time for the whole of Europe and everything that is dear to us. Violence will have huge consequences for the world economy, the environment, and so on. You are bravely fighting this violence, protecting your people and your institutions. We would like to pay tribute to all employees of local self-government of Ukraine who take part in this fight. We thank all the countries that have hosted Ukrainian refugees," said **Claudia LUCIANI**, Director of the Directorate of Human Dignity, Equality and Governance, Council of Europe.

Foreign representatives of local self-government have expressed their solidarity with mayors, whom Russian troops are "hunting", kidnapping (Melitopol, Dniprorudne), or even killing in public (Gostomel).

"Speeches by mayors of Ukrainian cities break my heart. We – the platform of 14 associations of local self-government - have set up a working group to help Ukraine. It is a coordination centre that determines the needs of Ukrainian cities in medicines, electric generators, fuel and in organization of camps for temporarily displaced persons. We do everything we can to help you at least a little bit. We direct our assistance to logistics hubs in Poland. You are constantly in our prayers for peace in

Ukraine and for ending the suffering of Ukrainians, "said Joachim Roth from Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe (NALAS).

Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe created an informal Steering Committee to provide political support in specific activities for Ukraine and to coordinate humanitarian aid according to Svetislav Paunovic.

"Local self-government in every democratic state is the government closest to the people and therefore a great force. Join your voice with ours, let the voice of local self-government be fully heard in Europe and in the world, " Minister **Oleksiy CHERNYSHOV** urged in his closing remarks.

Ukrainian mayors will appeal to their colleagues in other countries as well. The next event in the framework of the International online Marathon is already planned - a dialogue of representatives of Ukrainian local self-government with the municipalities of Austria, France, Germany, Switzerland and Great Britain, will take place on March 22.

Live stream recoding of the event: <https://www.facebook.com/events/306474131581562/>

Contact for additional questions: popiukrd@minregion.gov.ua

Official Telegram channel about war in English language: https://t.me/UA_struggle

Photos: <https://decentralization.gov.ua/news/tag/foto-viiny>

Link to the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PvSyRzSEP3Y>