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Technical assistance and capacity-building

Written statement* submitted by The Next Century Foundation, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



The Unresolved International War – the Way Forward

Since its escalation on 24 February 2022, the war between the Russian Federation and Ukraine remains unresolved.

Though all Ukraine continues to be recognised by the international community as an integral part of Ukraine; both sides consider the territory that Ukraine is attempting to reclaim from Russian control to be a part of their respective national identities.

The likelihood of a lasting peace is currently low. That however does not mean that the attempt should not be made. The alternative may be a lengthy war between the Russian Federation and Ukraine, marked by sporadic escalation and de-escalation.

It is crucial that the world has a plan to deal with the current conflict. The goals of any action plan could include:

- (1) Encouraging the Russian Federation and Ukraine to cease hostilities.
- (2) Supporting reconstruction.
- (3) Facilitating Ukraine's admission to the European Union.
- (4) Strengthening agreement for the safe transfer of grain through Odessa port.

However, the purpose of this paper is not to deal with credible outcomes. Doubtless factors to be placed on the table include possible NATO and EU membership, in addition to all of the territory in consideration (including the Autonomous Republic of Crimea), and appropriate assistance for reconstruction and re-settlement. A way is needed to let Ukraine feel vindicated, while the Russian Federation will need some kind of assurance that its existential interests have been recognized.

To de-escalate tension throughout the Euro-Atlantic region, and ameliorate damage being done to the world's poorest countries by the economic impact of this conflict, it is imperative that the Ukraine war be resolved. However, the fighting in Ukraine has settled into a pattern that is a new and massive "frozen conflict," increasingly reminiscent, though on a far larger scale, of those in the Republic of Moldova, Georgia, and in Armenia and Azerbaijan, where fierce fighting at the time of the demise of the Soviet Union was reduced by de facto cease-fires but no effective peace process was found.

To stop the persistent harm to European security, the rising human and financial costs, and the threat to Ukraine's sovereignty, this war must end. We recognise that for Ukraine to begin talking, it will need to be convinced it cannot win on the battlefield. However initial steps should be put in place in case of that eventuality.

The United States of America could broker a peace process. Either that or encourage the Türkiye to do so.

China also seeks such a role in the aftermath of what they perceive as their recent success in the Middle East. China has gained immensely from this conflict, cementing its strategic, economic, and political relationship with a vast country whose sheer territorial size completes the Heartland which Halford Mackinder warned of over 70 years ago. China must be included in any future proposed solution but may not be able to take the lead.

Key Concerns

Children are suffering from the economic catastrophe brought on by the conflict in Ukraine. The Russian Federation has seen the highest increase in children living in poverty, with 2.8 million impoverished children in the Russian Federation and 500,000 in Ukraine.

China, the United States of America, France, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, are all key members of the Security Council. They should urge both the Russian Federation and Ukraine to do their utmost to stop collateral damage to civilians.

This alarming scale and speed of displacement of civilians has not been seen in Europe since the Second World War. The Next Century Foundation appeals to both parties to the conflict to protect people, their homes, and civilian infrastructure. The predicament of women and children is especially worrying because human trafficking was a well-known occurrence in the area even before the war. We call on all bordering and affected nations to ensure that children fleeing Ukraine unaccompanied by immediate family are promptly identified and registered.

The extensive use of drones by both sides in this conflict is of particular concern. This is the first ever war in which both sides have used drones and both sides are using artillery launched cluster bombs.

Efforts for Conflict Resolution

China has offered to facilitate talks for peace by assigning a special representative to Ukraine. Li Hui, China's Special Representative on Eurasian Affairs and former Chinese ambassador to the Russian Federation, will act as the special envoy in future meetings with Ukraine's authorities and other concerned countries.

Türkiye has similarly been helpful. In order to facilitate the export of Ukrainian's grain, allied foods, and fertilisers, Ukraine, the Russian Federation, Türkiye, and the United Nations entered into the Black Sea Grain Initiative, endorsed by all.

Call for Action

In forthcoming negotiations and strategic decisions aimed at establishing the parameters for a lasting settlement of the conflict between Ukraine and the Russian Federation, the United States of America may and should play a key role. One path that could be considered would be to reinvigorate the Normandy structure (The Normandy format being the informal forum that was set up by France, Germany, the Russian Federation and Ukraine in 2014, the first meeting of which took place in Normandy).

In the immediate aftermath of the Russian Federation's acquisition of Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the start of hostilities in Donbass, the United States of America chose to highlight the European-led negotiating process. Washington now either joining or endorsing a framework for conflict resolution could help.

How to organise the military pull-out to reduce the likelihood of a reversal will be a problem. Allowing the parties to designate specific "reserves" for their forces in crucial areas that will enable them to "hedge" against the prospect of a restart of hostilities is one idea. The concept has its roots in earlier, fruitful phased withdrawals in Middle Eastern and Balkan conflicts. That said, it would be challenging for both parties to agree to and accept "security reserves", which should be time-limited and confined to a small number of localities. However, they may make the difference between a passable outcome and an overly ambitious blanket withdrawal deal that fails before the ink is dry.

A Polish proposal for peacekeeping cannot gain traction in the absence of a peace settlement. A key element of the Polish idea is to send out a force that might aid in humanitarian missions and would be strong enough to defend itself in battle. There are many different types and sizes of peacekeeping missions, and it's feasible that a temporary international presence may be required to assist an end to the conflict in Ukraine.

A Way Forward

More than a year of cruel and violent conflict in Ukraine has wreaked havoc on the nation, and exacerbated global economic unrest.

Given current circumstances, the Ukraine – the Russian Federation war, cannot end without a peace process. There is no chance that one side will ever be completely militarily defeated by the other. Indeed the total defeat of the Russian Federation is not possible without a nuclear conflict.

There has as yet been no true peace process, nor can there be without some initial second-track discussions. A peace process will also require the support of the United States of America and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

There is no "higher power" in geopolitics or international law that can free Ukraine from its dire situation. Donbass, Ukraine, and Europe's future peace and prosperity still depend on the challenging work of managing and resolving the war through talks among the major players involved. A lead from Washington is vital in this context.

The region's leaders are re-evaluating their balancing acts. This has opened the door to new chances for China and Türkiye, two states with historically significant links to Central Asia. These two countries are in the best possible position to initiate a peace process if Washington accedes. Of course there are concerns voiced about China's neutrality and Türkiye's role as the protector of entry to the Black Sea.

China still claims to adhere to and can be held to Zhou Enlai's "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence":

- (1) equality and mutual benefit;
- (2) respect for one another's territorial integrity and sovereignty;
- (3) mutual non-aggression;
- (4) refraining from meddling in one another's domestic affairs;
- (5) peaceful co-existence.

China's recently released peace plan, though deliberately vague, is reminiscent of Zhou Enlai's approach.

The worst-case scenario is that the war will be prolonged and escalate. To avoid this outcome, the Anglo-American alliance are needed to foster a peace process.

However, the longer the conflict lasts, whether as a low-intensity war or a war that escalates, the more it will strengthen populist and far-right elements on both sides and turn the region into a haven for trafficking, outsourcing, and other criminal activities.

We have reached a stalemate in the Ukraine war. Mutual escalation of the nature of the war is unlikely to produce a victor. The time for a peace process is now.
