

MEMORANDUM

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A DURABLE CEASEFIRE AND ENDURING PEACE IN UKRAINE



Women's Network
for Dialogue and Enduring Peace

We are women peacebuilders and civil society and humanitarian aid leaders from across Ukraine and both sides of the front line. We are members of the Women's Network for Dialogue and Enduring Peace which we founded in 2015. We have over a decade of experience in peacebuilding, dialogue and providing support to conflict-affected populations on both sides of the front line.

Our human-centered approach aims to protect the lives and well-being of all affected by the conflict, and we are dedicated to ensuring their interests are represented in the peace process. A human-centered approach can address the needs of all affected communities, prevent future violence and build a sustainable peace.

CONTEXT

As negotiations proceed for a ceasefire in Ukraine, it is essential that lessons be drawn from the failed ceasefires put into place under the Minsk agreements. While supporting conflict-affected populations on both sides of the front line, we learned many lessons about why the ceasefires repeatedly failed.

In this memorandum, we outline key lessons learned and make practical recommendations for a durable ceasefire, solving cross border issues, advancing stability in Ukraine and for normalizing relations between the citizens of Ukraine

and Russia, all of which are imperative for building an enduring peace.

We make specific recommendations in four areas:

- **Durable ceasefire** including: monitoring and accountability, civil society engagement and digital security, technology and ethics, transparency and trust, security and protection, humanitarian corridors and reunification, and confidence building measures.
- **Reunification** of millions of families in Ukraine and Russia who have been separated during the conflict including: establishing protocols for crossing points, creating an alternative to the existing enemy narrative and developing a shared glossary of terms.
- **Reconciliation** between Ukrainians on both sides of the front line, and between Ukrainians and Russians, including: the establishment of sustained civil society dialogue processes and creating opportunities for voices of people living in non-Ukrainian government controlled territories to be heard and understood.
- **Providing Support to Affected Populations** including: guiding principles for humanitarian assistance, facilitating the return of children from Russia, support programs for children, internally displaced persons, refugees and other vulnerable groups, reintegration and rehabilitation programs for demobilizing individuals, psychosocial support for families of demobilized soldiers and the integration of intra-community and intergroup dialogue programs into peace processes.

I. LESSONS LEARNED FROM FAILED CEASEFIRES UNDER MINSK AGREEMENTS

While supporting conflict-affected populations on both sides of the front line, we learned many lessons about why the ceasefires put into place under the Minsk Agreements repeatedly failed. These include:

- Ceasefire monitoring did not operate 24/7. We observed that monitoring ended daily at 4 PM, after which ceasefire violations would increase,

with significantly greater impacts on affected populations until monitoring resumed the following morning.

- There was no transparency or communication about the ceasefire implementation or monitoring mechanism with civil society and affected populations, and there was no mechanism to engage them in efforts to monitor or support the ceasefire on the ground.
- There was no verification or compliance mechanism for ceasefire violations. Ceasefire violators were not held accountable.
- Ceasefire monitoring was not tied to the Normandy Format negotiations and political process.
- Essential services, humanitarian aid, security and protection were largely unavailable in the buffer zone and demining was never completed.

All of these factors served to undermine public trust, ceasefire legitimacy and durability.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A DURABLE CEASEFIRE

Informed by lessons we learned from the failed ceasefires under the Minsk Agreements, we recommend:

1. MONITORING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- **Create a special ceasefire monitoring body** composed of representatives from neutral countries and agreed upon by both Ukraine and Russia. It must function day and night, 24/7. In addition to monitoring, this body should have the mandate to resolve disputes and hold ceasefire violators accountable.
- **Implement a transparent ceasefire monitoring mechanism.** Civilians must understand who records violations, how the information is used, and how it protects them personally. This is essential for building trust, legitimacy and a durable ceasefire.

2. CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION AND DIGITAL SECURITY

- **Engage civilians and civil society organizations** in monitoring efforts, with a secure data transfer mechanism in place that ensures the physical safety of the informant.
- **Establish a mechanism providing an open two-way communication channel** for affected populations to voice their needs, concerns and recommendations for achieving lasting peace in Ukraine and to receive transparent and timely information on progress being made on their recommendations and all relevant matters of concern, such as: announcements of demining operations and locations for distribution of humanitarian aid. This mechanism needs to be put in place with the ceasefire and function for the duration of the peace process.

3. TECHNOLOGY AND ETHICS

- **Use technology** such as satellites, sensors, and cameras to support the monitoring of the vast 750-mile front line and reduce the risk to human monitors.
- **Satellite data** should be collected and managed by an international body or organization that is a neutral trusted source and made available to the ceasefire monitoring body.
- While many suggest the use of **drones**, this will cause more psychological trauma in affected populations because drones are associated with warfare and death, and people will be unable to determine whether the drone is serving a peaceful monitoring purpose or is on its way to attack.
- **We therefore propose eliminating the use of drones until drone technology is developed which makes it possible for affected populations on the ground to be able to distinguish between incoming military or monitoring drones.** In this case, the monitoring drones should be easy to

identify, and a wide public education campaign would be needed to build trust and gain support for drone use from affected populations.

- **Develop a secure system for storing and analyzing monitoring data.**

4. TRANSPARENCY AND TRUST

- **Clearly articulate the terms of the ceasefire.** Vague formulations lead to disputes and increase the risk of violations.
- **Ensure the ceasefire agreement is transparent,** accessible and easily understood. This will build trust and support for the ceasefire in the population.

5. SECURITY AND PROTECTION

- **Establish a demilitarized buffer zone** along the entire front line and carry out thorough demining in the area.
- **Ensure the operation of essential services** in the buffer zone for the people living there who are mostly elderly and do not want to leave their homes, including emergency medical care, fire department services, water, electricity, gas and garbage collection.
- **Provide regular humanitarian aid**—food, medicine, and essential supplies—for people living in the buffer zone.

6. HUMANITARIAN CORRIDORS AND REUNIFICATION

- **Open humanitarian corridors** for the secure movement of civilians and the reunification of families and communities on both sides of the front line.

7. CONFIDENCE BUILDING MEASURES

To build on the recent exchanges of bodies and prisoners of war, **we recommend**

implementing interim ceasefires in sectors such as energy and nuclear power infrastructure, and geographical ceasefires focused, for example, on residential and densely populated areas in specific regions. Under such interim ceasefires, monitoring, verification and other mechanisms can be established to deconflict and manage the ceasefires and create corridors for humanitarian aid.

 A sustainable ceasefire is imperative for building an enduring peace. It must be based on trust, meaningful civil society participation and transparency. The Women's Network for Dialogue and Enduring Peace continues to work to ensure that the voices of affected populations are heard and that decisions are made with the participation of those who actually live with the consequences of war.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE REUNIFICATION OF FAMILIES

Millions of people remain separated from their families as a result of the war in Ukraine. The separation of families and communities violates fundamental rights and remains an enormous barrier to lasting peace. The reunification of families can support reconciliation and build a sustainable peace.

Informed by lessons we have learned while supporting conflict-affected populations on both sides of the front line over the past decade, we recommend:

- **Immediately establish secure crossing points** along the front line, jointly controlled by both sides, in sufficient quantity to accommodate the numbers of people who want to cross, under the oversight of international organizations (such as the OSCE and the International Committee of the Red Cross).
- **Develop a clear procedure for crossing points**, which addresses the needs of all population groups.
- **Equip the crossing points with all the necessary infrastructure, basic medical and other support services**, including sanitary toilet facilities, to serve the needs of people of different ages, genders, health conditions, disabilities, etc.

- **Set up permit centers on both sides of the front line**, enabling people to obtain permission to cross and enter the other side of the front line, with mechanisms for coordination between these centers.
- **Adopt a phased approach** to expand crossing points and streamline the crossing process, in tandem with progress in the peace process.
- **Create an alternative narrative** to the existing enemy narrative about people on both sides of the front line. Advance a new narrative that includes the shared suffering and concerns of separated families and recognizes their human right to reunification as a normal and necessary part of recovery.
- **Develop a shared glossary of terms** related to the reunification of families, avoiding language that could be misinterpreted, viewed as political or provocative or cause tension on either side. Recognizing that different people have different points of view, use neutral descriptions that do not evoke humiliation or cause hurt on one side or the other. For an example of a neutral way to describe where people live: people living in territories controlled by Ukraine and people living in territories not currently under the control of Ukraine.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RECONCILIATION

Reconciliation is a vital long-term process that lays the foundation for lasting peace and helps prevent future conflicts. Dialogue is an essential part of the reconciliation process – for solving cross border issues, normalizing relations between Ukraine and Russia, advancing stability in Ukraine and building a lasting peace.

Based on more than a decade of experience organizing and participating in reconciliation dialogues, we recommend:

1. ESTABLISH A SUSTAINED DIALOGUE PROCESS BETWEEN UKRAINIAN AND RUSSIAN CIVIL SOCIETY REPRESENTATIVES

- Create dialogue platforms in neutral countries—such as Turkey, Armenia, or Georgia—that allow visa-free entry for citizens of both Ukraine and Russia.
- Provide a safe space for these dialogues to take place, to support the security of participants, such as under the umbrella of international organizations.
- Engage experienced, neutral facilitators from outside Ukraine and Russia to guide the dialogue process.
- Ensure the participation of civil society representatives living in territories not currently under the control of the Ukrainian government.

2. ESTABLISH A SUSTAINED DIALOGUE PROCESS BETWEEN UKRAINIAN CIVIL SOCIETY REPRESENTATIVES FROM BOTH SIDES OF THE FRONT LINE

Provide a safe space for these dialogues to take place, such as under the umbrella of international organizations in a secure location outside Ukraine.

3. CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE VOICES OF PEOPLE LIVING IN NON-UKRAINIAN GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED TERRITORIES TO BE HEARD AND UNDERSTOOD

Develop channels to communicate first-hand information about life in these territories and the needs of the local populations, provided by people living there.

 It is important to start reconciliation dialogues as soon as possible to support the peace process. The dialogues will evolve as the peace process progresses and must continue through all phases of the peace process, including reconstruction and recovery, to support a sustainable ceasefire and lasting peace.

Our experience shows that the practice of dialogue that brings together civil society representatives from both sides of the front line not only contributes to sustainable long-term solutions but also helps break down enemy stereotypes the war has entrenched in society.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROVIDING SUPPORT TO AFFECTED POPULATIONS

Based on our first-hand, on-the-ground experience providing humanitarian aid and support for affected populations for more than a decade, we recommend:

1. GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

- Ensure **equal access** to humanitarian assistance based on need.
- **Needs-based support:** When organizing support, the needs of specific population groups must be taken into account. Different territories and population groups have diverse, sometimes unique needs. Preliminary needs assessments of populations should be conducted when designing aid programs.
- **Local partnerships:** International aid efforts should engage the participation of local organizations that understand the specific context and needs of the population and that are located in the immediate vicinity of the beneficiaries.

2. SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Facilitate the return of children** who were taken to Russia without their parents, prioritizing the specific needs and best interests of the child.
- **Provide educational and support programs for children** who remained in Ukraine and those who have returned, taking into account their varied traumatic experiences and types of displacement, and protecting them from discrimination and bullying.
- When developing support programs for **internally displaced persons, refugees, and other vulnerable groups**, include resettlement and relocation assistance.
- Ensure people have the **freedom to choose where they live**, including across the former front line, providing relocation and resettlement support

as needed. Create a **housing exchange fund**, modeled on Northern and Southern Cyprus.

- Develop mechanisms for the **safe crossing of the front line by civilians**, for the purposes of family reunification, restoring broken relationships, obtaining necessary documents, visiting relatives or the graves of loved ones, and regaining access to property.
- In addition to support for psychological services and treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder, comprehensive **reintegration and rehabilitation programs for demobilized individuals** should include employment opportunities and retraining if needed. People returning from the front must have jobs.
- Programs providing **psychosocial support to families of demobilized soldiers** should include family adaptation courses to support the reintegration of soldiers returning home from the front.
- Integrate **intra-community and intergroup dialogue programs** into peace processes, national reconciliation strategies, educational curricula, social support centers, and local government bodies. This is essential for building a sustainable peace.
- Establish **dialogue platforms and other mechanisms for working with historical memory** as a foundation for a durable peace. These are essential for providing the space for the voices of all affected population groups to be heard.

 For all four areas outlined above, we have more specific, detailed recommendations informed by over a decade of first-hand, on-the-ground experience.



THE WOMEN'S NETWORK FOR DIALOGUE AND ENDURING PEACE

WHO WE ARE

We are women peacebuilders, and civil society and humanitarian aid leaders from across Ukraine both sides of the front line. We are members of the Women's Network for Dialogue and Enduring Peace which we founded in 2015. We have over a decade of experience in peacebuilding, dialogue and providing support to conflict-affected populations on both sides of the front line.

We have first-hand, on-the-ground experience coordinating the evacuation of tens of thousands of civilians from active war zones; resettling over half a million internally displaced persons and providing them with a wide range of humanitarian aid and support; providing critical psychological assistance, supporting the return of children from Russia; managing economic development programs, including in rural areas; and convening and facilitating peacebuilding and reconciliation dialogues between divided communities since 2014.

The war has impacted all of us and our families. Some of us remain separated from our husbands and children by the front line. Many of us have fled bombing and shelling. Some of us have lost everything, including our homes, more than once. We have all lost people we love.

Recognizing the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the war, we are united by our shared goals and values of preserving human lives and protecting basic rights. We have a deep understanding of how the conflict has impacted people on both sides of the front line. We carry with us the hopes, needs, and sufferings of those we serve.

We want to save lives, we want the suffering to end, and we want peace.

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to contribute to a just and lasting peace in Ukraine, grounded in our expertise and experience as women who live and work with people in conflict-affected areas. In support of our mission, we amplify the voices of local

communities, take a human-centered approach to resolving the conflict, and seek the meaningful participation of women and civil society at every stage of the peace process.

OUR PRINCIPLES

1. HUMAN-CENTERED APPROACH

Our human-centered approach aims to protect the lives and well-being of all affected by the conflict, including women and children, refugees, internally displaced persons, prisoners, victims of shelling or the wounded, and families who have lost loved ones. We are dedicated to ensuring their interests are represented in the peace process, and we put their voices, needs and concerns at the heart of negotiations and peace agreements. A human-centered approach can address the needs of all affected communities, prevent future violence and build a sustainable peace.

2. PARTICIPATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND WOMEN AT ALL STAGES OF THE NEGOTIATIONS AND PEACE PROCESS

Women and civil society on both sides of the front line, representing those most affected by the war, must participate meaningfully at every stage of the peace process, including ceasefire negotiations, peace process design, the development and oversight of peace agreements, their implementation, and post-war reconstruction and recovery. This is essential to ensure a lasting peace.

3. TRANSPARENCY OF THE NEGOTIATION PROCESS

It is crucial that the negotiation process be transparent, with visibility into the decision-making process, who is making the decisions and how? This transparency is key to building legitimacy and trust in the peace process and a durable peace.