



October 19, 2011

**The Hon Julie Bishop
Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs
Parliament House
Canberra 2600**

Dear Ms Bishop

The Australian Federation of Ukrainian Organisations (AFUO) draws your attention to the verdict handed down on, Tuesday October 11, 2011, by the Pechersky Court in Kyiv in the trial against former Prime Minister of Ukraine, Yulia Tymoshenko.

The court sentenced Tymoshenko to seven years' incarceration and a 3 year ban from holding public office. She now has 15 days to appeal.

Tymoshenko was sentenced for alleged abuse of power in her dealings in signing the Gas deal with the Russian Federation during her term of office.

The AFUO wrote to the Minister for Foreign Affairs Kevin Rudd at the time of her detention and after the court verdict highlighting the very political nature of this court action.

The Minister's Office has replied that the Australian Government is deeply concerned about this issue. It raises doubts about motives in the trial proceedings and verdict which contribute to the appearance of a politically-motivated prosecution. The letter also indicates the matter has also been raised with the Embassy of Ukraine in Canberra.

Over the past weeks many European leaders have condemned the trial and verdict, highlighting its political nature and attempt to eliminate Tymoshenko as an Opposition leader.

During the same period Ukraine's aspirations for associate membership in the European Union have been hampered due to the fact that many European leaders indicated that Ukraine must adhere to European democratic practices and that *show trials* were in contradiction with these standards. As you may be aware the European Union today cancelled the proposed meeting with President Yanukovich which was scheduled for this coming Thursday in Brussels. The AFUO continues to call on the Australian Government to publically express its concern and dismay as to the process and final verdict in this case.

It is important to demand the adherence to democratic processes and that actions of this nature against political rivals are totally unacceptable.

There is outrage and action from many countries in sending President Yanukovich a clear message that this situation will lead to ramifications.

We ask that you join these world leaders in sending publically a strong and unequivocal message of protest to President Yanukovich and his Government.

We also request that the matter be raised in the Federal Parliament to highlight the importance of this issue.

Please do not hesitate to call me on 0419 531 255 if you wish to discuss this matter further. I will be in Canberra on October 25, 2011 and would be pleased to meet with you or your representative if schedules permits.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stefan Romaniw', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**Stefan Romaniw OAM
CHAIRMAN**