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MEDIA RELEASE

**UWC PRESIDENT EUGENE CZOLIJ CALLS UPON HIGH-RANKING EU OFFICIALS
TO EXPEDITE SIGNING OF EU-UKRAINE ASSOCIATION AGREEMENT**

On December 11-13, 2012, in Strasbourg, France, Ukrainian World Congress (UWC) President Eugene Czolij held a series of meetings with high-ranking officials of the European Union (EU).

Eugene Czolij presented the UWC position on current Ukrainian issues to the former President of the European Parliament (EP), Jerzy Buzek, the Vice President of the EP, Jacek Protasiewicz, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the EP Delegation to the EU-Ukraine Parliamentary Cooperation Committee, Pawel Kowal and Siiri Oviir, and Members of the EP: Libor Roucek, Vice-Chair of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats, Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, Zuzana Roithova, Jan Kozłowski, Tunne Kelam, Marek Siwiec and Kristiina Ojuland.

In separate meetings, Eugene Czolij asked that Ukraine not be equated with its governing authorities. He also called upon officials to help expedite the signing of the *EU-Ukraine Association Agreement*, which is of strategic importance to collective European interests. This will also help Ukraine to distance itself from Russia's imperialistic plans, which have become evident in the "*Russkiy Mir*" ideology and the pressure being exerted by Russia for economic integration through Customs and Eurasian Unions. Moreover, the UWC President emphasized the need to promote a pro-European course among the Ukrainian people, namely through student exchanges and the easing of visa requirements for travel between the EU and Ukraine. He cited the results of surveys in Ukraine which revealed that support for EU membership is strongest among young Ukrainians and people who have visited one of the EU member countries, the United States or Canada. Eugene Czolij also called for more action by the EU to strengthen Ukrainian civil society. With respect to breaches of democratic principles by Ukraine's governing authorities, the UWC President encouraged the EU to consider adopting legislation similar to the *Magnitsky Bill*, passed by the US Congress. This bill contains measures such as the denial of visas, forbidding of transactions and freezing of assets, for individuals who commit serious human rights violations.

Eugene Czolij also raised the same issues in private conversations with the Chairman of the EP Committee on Foreign Affairs, Elmar Brok, and the European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy, Stefan Füle.

On December 12, 2012 the UWC President attended the Plenary Session of the EP during which issues related to Ukraine were discussed. Thereafter, the EP adopted a *Resolution on the situation in Ukraine*, which contains the following provisions:

The European Parliament [...]

9. Expresses continued support for the European aspirations of the Ukrainian people; regrets that the recent parliamentary elections did not constitute meaningful progress in advancing Ukraine's credentials in this regard; stresses that the EU remains committed to working with Ukraine, including civil society (NGOs, religious organisations, etc.), in order to improve democratic institutions, strengthen the rule of law, ensure media freedom and advance essential economic reforms;

10. Confirms the EU's commitment to further advancing relations with Ukraine through the signing of the association agreement as soon as the Ukrainian authorities demonstrate determined action and tangible progress, as called for above, possibly by the time of the Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius in November 2013; notes that progress in political association and economic integration is dependent on Ukraine's tangible commitment to democratic principles, the rule of law, the independence of the judiciary and media freedom;
14. Welcomes the signing of the amended visa facilitation agreement between the European Union and Ukraine, which introduces clear improvements in the delivery of visas for Ukrainian citizens, compared with the agreement currently in force; calls on the Council to advance EU-Ukraine dialogue on visa liberalisation ahead of the Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius in November 2013.

The UWC is the international coordinating body for Ukrainian communities in the diaspora representing the interests of over 20 million Ukrainians. The UWC has member organizations in 33 countries and ties with Ukrainians in 14 additional countries. Founded in 1967 as a non-profit corporation, the UWC was recognized in 2003 by the United Nations Economic and Social Council as a non-governmental organization (NGO) with special consultative status.

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