



30 January 2022

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

AUSTRALIAN -UKRAINIAN COMMUNITY REJECTS RUSSIAN AMBASSADOR'S DISINFORMATION ABOUT CURRENT CRISIS IN UKRAINE

The AFUO strongly rejects and condemns the Russian Ambassador's recent comments which claim that the Russian troop build-up is a warning to discourage Ukraine from "trying reckless military adventures".

AFUO President, Mr Stefan Romaniw OAM, said whether the massing of 127,000 troops on Ukraine's border is a 'threat' or a 'warning' is immaterial; invasion is a serious possibility.

"Ukraine is not threatening Russia. It is Russia that invaded Ukraine in 2014, seized and retains control of Ukraine's Crimean peninsula and part of eastern Ukraine, and is engaging in military activities that look like the preparations for an invasion' he said.

'Ukraine's only current 'military adventures' are to ask for military equipment to defend itself from Russian attack' he said.

Mr Romaniw also rejected the Ambassador's contention that Ukraine had broken the terms of the Minsk Agreements, signed in 2014 and 2015.

"Russian forces attacked and occupied the Ukrainian town of Debaltseve before the ink was dry. Under Minsk II, Ukraine would be forced to change its constitution, effectively creating a Russian-controlled province in Ukraine which would be represented in Ukraine's Parliament. As critics of Minsk II in and outside Ukraine have pointed out, Russia would be able to destabilise or paralyse the country at any time of its choosing" he said.

"The agreement legitimises the first steps of Putin's plans to re-establish a Russian area of influence in eastern Europe and create puppet states subject to Russian control".

"The Ambassador's comments are the height of hypocrisy. It is the Russian government which has violated a number of international agreements, most notably the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, which guaranteed Ukraine's independence and territorial integrity in return for it giving up its nuclear weapons" he added.

Although the Ambassador states that Australia should not become involved, Mr Romaniw emphatically rejects the notion Putin's actions do not concern Australia.

"Australia is a member of the international community. It upholds international law and abides by norms of international behaviour. If Australia and the West do not respond to the threat of coercive force, the sovereignty and independence of any country in the world is not guaranteed, including those in the Asia-Pacific region".

"Taking the international foot off the pedal would be a sign of weakness and compromise. That would be the green light for Putin to act" he added.

Mr Romaniw acknowledged the Australian Government's support of Ukraine in its statements and pledge of assistance in Ukraine's cyber defence.

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