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Ukraine must be part of peace talks to end Putin's terror

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As we mark the third year since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the media is filled with coverage of Donald Trump's intervention.

In reading these stories, Australians should understand that President Trump and Ukraine are aligned in their goal: we want peace.

We welcome the President putting peace on the agenda with the Kremlin. In fact, as Trump was making his views known last week, Moscow was bombing Kyiv. No one wants the killing of innocents to end more than we do.

[The reality is that for a peace deal for Ukraine to be successful](#), the sovereignty and the safety of Ukrainians must be secured. Any negotiation process about the war on Ukraine should include several important features.

[First, that Ukraine, its European neighbours and other partners, such as Australia, be part of negotiation processes](#). European leaders have now made clear their view that a workable agreement needs to include them at the table. The outcomes of such negotiations can have far-reaching implications for Europe and the Indo-Pacific region.

One of the reasons negotiation needs to be multilateral is to make sure it's effective and binding. Moscow has poor form on this front.

There have been some 200 rounds of negotiations with Russia post-2014; none given by the Kremlin has ever been fulfilled.

This record of failure must change and international co-operation is what can change it. We need to learn from the past. Poor and weak agreements such as the 1994 Budapest Memorandum – implemented by Ukraine but not by other signatories – have contributed to the origins of the current war-torn situation.

Second, a peace process must see withdrawal of Russian forces from invaded and occupied Ukrainian territory. For us, this is not about land and borders per se – Ukraine has been fighting for our people and their survival.

We know what's happening to our citizens trapped in the occupied territories. They are subjected to draconian dictatorship and deprivation of their human rights by Moscow's occupying military force. This includes the war crime that Putin has been charged with by the International Criminal Court: the systematic kidnapping of up to 20,000 Ukrainian children.

In another example, HIV rates from needle use in occupied Donetsk have skyrocketed as Moscow's mafia mates use it as a lawless hub for international drug trafficking.

Third, a peace process must be based on long-term commitments and ensure prevention of another war. That means Ukraine needs security guarantees to protect it from future invasions.

Had Ukraine been a NATO member in 2014 or 2022, there would be no war to disrupt international security and economic prosperity. The recent decision of the NATO Washington summit now sets the future course for Ukraine's ultimate membership.

In the meantime, Ukraine continues the fight. It is now the world's largest manufacturer of drones. It has taken out Russia's Black Sea Fleet and 20 per cent of its energy production. It has held Kursk in Russia for six months now. Nothing is forcing us to the table.

Fourth, as Russia has targeted and destroyed thousands of Ukraine's educational, cultural and health facilities, any future framework must cover Ukraine's reconstruction. An available source of funds is the \$300bn in Russian sovereign assets held in Western accounts, including some by Australian institutions.

What is Australia's role in this context? That is, of course, for its leaders to decide, but I make this representation on behalf of my President.

Australia's foreign policy for many decades has been founded on the highest regard for the international rules-based order, including the recognition of the sovereignty of nations.

It has been a champion of the UN Charter. To stand with Ukraine at this critical juncture is a continuation of that successful multilateral policy.

I know from my many positive interactions with your political leaders that Australia sees that, when might is right, security risks increase across the globe and in the Indo-Pacific region.

If Russia is recognised or rewarded for a neo-colonial land grab and the brutal subjugation of a nation, a green light is also given to others who might seek to assert their hegemony on a region or a neighbour.

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