

Representatives of 100 governments & international organizations meet in Switzerland in Summit on Peace in Ukraine



Swiss President Amherd and Ukrainian President Zelenskyy on Sunday at the conclusion of the Summit on Peace in Ukraine.

On Saturday and Sunday, representatives of 100 governments and international organizations met in Switzerland in a Summit on Peace in Ukraine. The Summit followed four international meetings last year and earlier this year, prompted by the fact that the war has been going on for more than two years at an immense cost in lives and damage to Ukraine and with no end in sight. It was prompted also by the fact that there is, and has been for a year and a half, a comprehensive ten-point peace plan that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy gave the leaders of the G7 in October 2022, eight months after President Putin began his “special military operation” in the Donbas – a “special military operation” that very quickly became nothing less than a full-fledged war against Ukraine.

Zelenskyy’s ten-point plan consists of 1) ensuring radiation safety at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant and all of Ukraine’s other nuclear plants; 2) ensuring the continuation of Ukraine’s export of grain to those who depend on it; 3) ensuring the protection of Ukraine’s energy sector; 4) providing for the release of all prisoners and deportees, including the tens of thousands of individuals, including children, who were forcibly deported; 5) ensuring the implementation of the UN Charter and restoration of Ukraine’s territorial integrity; 6) ensuring the withdrawal of all Russian troops and military units from the territory of Ukraine; 7) establishing a Special Tribunal to hold Russia responsible for its aggression against Ukraine and creating an international mechanism to compensate it for all damages caused by the war; 8) removing the multitude of environmental threats caused by the war; 9) providing Ukraine with effective international security assurances; and 10) formal confirmation of the end of the war in a document signed by the parties.

The possibility of organizing some type of international meeting that might find a way to end the war in Ukraine arose in discussions among various government officials at several international meetings last year. In January, Swiss Foreign Minister Ignazio Cassis said another discussion about organizing an international meeting to find a path to peace in Ukraine had taken place at the World Economic Forum in Davos. Also in January, Swiss President Viola Amherd met with Zelenskyy in Bern and assured him of Switzerland's support in organizing a high-level conference, and subsequently she announced that Switzerland was planning to organize a "possible peace conference." Switzerland then contacted numerous governments and international institutions to explore options for initiating a peace process. In April, the Swiss Federal Council, after taking note of the results of the exploratory meetings in regard to a possible high-level conference on peace in Ukraine, announced "there is currently sufficient international support for a high-level conference to launch the peace process," set the date for the two-day conference, and began inviting governments and international organizations to participate. The conference, it said, will aim "to establish a forum for a high-level dialogue on ways to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace for Ukraine in accordance with international law and the UN Charter. It aims to create a common understanding of a framework favorable to this objective and a concrete roadmap for the peace process."

Switzerland reported on Saturday that 100 delegations, 92 of them representing national governments and 8 of them representing international organizations, including the UN, the OSCE, and the EU, would participate in the two-day Summit. At Zelenskyy's insistence, Russia was not invited. China was invited but did not attend because it believed Russia should have been invited. In announcing the opening of the summit, the Federal Council said, "The aim of this summit is to stimulate a future peace process and to identify practical elements and steps on the way to such a process. By organizing this summit, Switzerland is providing a platform for discussion where all states present can contribute their ideas and visions for a just and lasting peace in Ukraine. The aim of this summit is to initiate a peace process. To achieve this, several elements are necessary: the broadest possible level of participation as a signal of support, the development of a common understanding on three topics that lend themselves to building trust, namely nuclear safety, food security and the humanitarian dimension, and set out a vision for the next steps in which Russia is included. In hosting this summit, Switzerland is providing a platform for dialogue where all states present can contribute their ideas for a just and lasting peace in Ukraine." The Federal Council, alluding to Ukraine's veto of Russian participation, also said, "the summit also offers the opportunity to discuss for the first time at the highest level how and when Russia can be included in this process. For the Federal Council, the development of a lasting solution ultimately requires the participation of both sides."

As the delegations arrived for the meeting last Friday, they were no doubt aware of the important speech President Putin gave that afternoon to the Board of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He made it very clear there could be no peaceful resolution of the conflict in Ukraine without Russian participation: "I would like to stress," he said, "that it is impossible to reach a peaceful solution to the Ukraine crisis and to overall European security without Russian's participation, without an honest and responsible dialogue with us. Right now, the West ignores our interests, while prohibiting Kiev from negotiating and keeps hypocritically calling on us to negotiate.... They should first command Kiev to lift the ban on negotiating with Russia and second, we are ready to get down to negotiations

as soon as tomorrow.” He said, Our conditions for starting such talks are simple, and come down to the following:…The Ukrainian troops must be completely withdrawn from the Donetsk and Lugansk people’s republics and Kherson and Zaporozhye regions. Let me note that they must be withdrawn from the entire territory of these regions within their administrative borders at the time of their being part of Ukraine. [The four regions were unilaterally incorporated into the Russian Federation in October 2022.] As soon as Kiev declares that it is ready to make this decision and begins a real withdrawal of troops from these regions, and also officially notifies that it abandons its plans to join NATO, our side will follow an order to cease fire and start negotiations will be issued by us that very moment.” However, at another point in the speech he said he doesn’t rule out preservation of Ukrainian sovereignty over the Kherson and Zaporozhye regions “provided Russia has a stable land bridge to Crimea.” But he later hedged on that, saying, “The residents of Kherson and Zaporozhye have expressed their positions in referendum, and Kherson and Zaporozhye regions, as well as the Donetsk and Lugansk People’s Republics, have become part of the Russian Federation. And there can be no talk of disturbing our state unity. The people’s will to be with Russia shall be inviolable. This matter is closed forever and is no longer a matter for discussion.” Continuing, he said, “As soon as Kiev declares that it is ready to make this decision and begin a real withdrawal or troops from these regions, and also officially notifies that it abandons its plans to join NATO, our side will follow an order to cease fire and start negotiations will be issued by us that very moment. I repeat – we will do this expeditiously.”

On Sunday, at the conclusion of the two-day summit, the participants issued a “Joint Communiqué on a Peace Framework” which says in part, “The ongoing war of the Russian Federation against Ukraine continues to cause large-scale human suffering and destruction, and to create risks and crises with global repercussions. We gathered in Switzerland on 15-16 June 2024 to enhance a high-level dialogue on pathways towards a comprehensive, just and lasting peace for Ukraine. We reiterated resolutions A/RES/ES-11/1 and A/RES/ES-11/6 adopted at the UN General Assembly and underscored our commitment to upholding international law including the United Nations Charter. This Summit was built on the previous discussions that have taken place based on Ukraine's Peace Formula and other peace proposals which are in line with international law, including the United Nations Charter.”

Continuing, the Communiqué states: “We had a fruitful, comprehensive and constructive exchange of various views on pathways towards a framework for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace, based on international law, including the United Nations Charter. In particular, we reaffirm our commitment to refraining from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, the principles of sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of all states, including Ukraine, within their internationally recognized borders, including territorial waters, and the resolution of disputes through peaceful means as principles of international law. We, furthermore, have a common vision on the following crucial aspects: Firstly, any use of nuclear energy and nuclear installations must be safe, secured, safe-guarded and environmentally

sound. Ukrainian nuclear power plants and installations, including Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, must operate safely and securely under full sovereign control of Ukraine and in line with IAEA principles and under its supervision. Any threat or use of nuclear weapons in the context of the ongoing war against Ukraine is inadmissible. Secondly, global food security depends on uninterrupted manufacturing and supply of food products. In this regard, free, full and safe commercial navigation, as well as access to sea ports in the Black and Azov Seas, are critical. Attacks on merchant ships in ports and along the entire route, as well as against civilian ports and civilian port infrastructure, are unacceptable. Food security must not be weaponized in any way. Ukrainian agricultural products should be securely and freely provided to interested third countries. Thirdly, all prisoners of war must be released by complete exchange. All deported and unlawfully displaced Ukrainian children, and all other Ukrainian civilians who were unlawfully detained, must be returned to Ukraine. We believe that reaching peace requires the involvement of and dialogue between all parties. We, therefore, decided to undertake concrete steps in the future in the above-mentioned areas with further engagement of the representatives of all parties. The United Nations Charter, including the principles of respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all states, can and will serve as a basis in achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine.”

Switzerland subsequently reported that 80 of the 92 government delegations signed the communique, including all of the G7, all of the NATO member states and all of the EU member states (as well as the EU Commission, Council and Parliament which were separately represented). The 12 delegations that didn't sign the Communiqué were Armenia, Bahrain, Columbia, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Libya, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Thailand and the United Arab Emirates.

It would be naïve to assume that the Summit this past weekend will have any effect in bringing about an end to the war in Ukraine; when and how that will happen will unfortunately be decided on the battlefield, not in a resort high above Lake Lucerne. Nevertheless, the Summit may at least provide a framework for the talks that will inevitably follow once Russia or Ukraine, or both, decide the time has come for a ceasefire and might eventually result in a peace treaty.

David R. Cameron
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