

Ukraine Reform Conference – Copenhagen – 27 June 2018

Statement by Cornelis van Rij - Ambassador-at-Large

Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Kingdom of the Netherlands



Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Netherlands I would like to extend my gratitude to the governments of Ukraine and Denmark for organizing and hosting this conference.

This day provides us with a good opportunity to look back on the remarkable progress Ukraine has made reforming itself. Not only since the conference last year, in London, but since 2014. And under difficult circumstances; with an active conflict raging within its boundaries, Ukraine has made impressive steps in its reform process.

With reforms in the fields of pensions, health care, education and decentralization, the Ukrainian population will start to reap the fruits of this process. For the Netherlands this is an important point to make. Reforms are not a goal in themselves, but an indispensable means to achieve the real goal of improving the lives of citizens.

Bearing that in mind, the Netherlands expresses its hope that Ukraine will keep up this ambitious pace of reform. For its part, the Netherlands will continue to support Ukraine in this regard. Under the umbrella of the Dutch MATRA-program, focusing on societal transformation, the Netherlands provides demand-driven and flexible support. Apart from projects being implemented by Dutch NGO's, the MATRA-program provides project funding to local, Ukrainian NGO's. This helps build the capacity of Ukrainian civil society organizations which are, in turn, important drivers for pushing for more reforms.

This aspect underlines the salience of civil society organizations being allowed to do their work without impediment. In this regard, The Netherlands would like to stress the need to revoke the electronic asset declaration obligation for such organizations and its employees.

True to the Netherlands being host to the International Court of Justice and numerous other international organizations in the field of justice, the Netherlands focuses its help in the field of the rule of law. This is also the case with the Dutch support for the UNDP-project in the east of Ukraine which works on improving community security and social inclusion.

Only very recently, the authorities of the two oblasts of Luhansk and Donetsk took the initiative to coordinate donors' efforts within the government controlled areas of both regions. A concerted effort instead of competition will lead to more and better results for the people that donors wish to reach. This situation can be taken as an example for how to organize international assistance in other sectors and regions of Ukraine. Joining efforts will increase impact.

With the year ahead, the Netherlands calls upon Ukraine, once again, to stay ambitious in its reform process, including the initiation of new reforms and the perpetuation of already adopted laws. Moreover, allowing the established designated anti-corruption institutions to fulfil their mandates without undue interference is essential.

To improve the lives of citizens. To improve the investment climate, thereby benefitting the economy. And also, to improve resilience against unwanted, outside interference. In this regard, I would like to express the Netherlands' unwavering support for Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty.

Allow me to take the opportunity, ladies and gentlemen, to end this statement with expressing my country's gratitude for the strong and close cooperation between Ukraine and the Netherlands on MH17. The tragedy with flight MH-17 remains an open wound within Dutch society. And Ukraine's help is crucial in bringing the perpetrators to justice.

Thank you.