

Q1: SITUATION IN UKRAINE

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I have something to confess. We have worked hard on this session to have five countries represented in this session, including all three South Caucasus states. However, for various reasons, it was unfortunately not possible, but we have two great speakers with us: our now very good friend Roman Vassilenko, who was with us last year, and our new guest, Vahan Kostanyan, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia.

Mr. Kostanyan, last year, after our session, the first question coming from our audience was about Nagorno-Karabakh. We answered it as best we could but, this year, we have a real opportunity to know more about the situation today and first hand perspective.

However, I would like to start with the question about what we have just heard by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dmytro Kuleba. I would like your reaction to what Minister Kuleba said. How do you see the current situation in Ukraine on the ground, the current and coming risks? What if the West no longer has the will to support Ukraine because of Ukraine fatigue; and the multiplication of tensions inside conflict and wars outside, including the Middle East? What can be the end of the war in Ukraine? And what if Ukraine loses the war? The question is not taboo now. What would be the impact on your country, on your region, and on global balance?

We will start with Mr. Vassilenko, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan.

Roman Vassilenko, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kazakhstan

Thank you very much, and I am delighted to be here again. Thank you for inviting us.

I had a friend for many years, a journalist, and he told me to never answer a question that begins with 'What if', because speculating is an ungratifying kind of job.

However, what I would like to say is that it is an extremely sorrow and painful thing to watch and to feel in your heart. It is a tragedy that is taking place, that continues to take place for more than a year and a half now.

As Kazakhstan which is a peace loving country that does not have problematic relations with any country, we naturally want the solution as soon as possible. We are prepared to help, to serve as a negotiating platform if Russia and Ukraine would want our services. We maintain relations with both Russia and Ukraine, so we keep the bridges and the doors open.



We think the solution can be only found on the basis of the United Nations Charter and the respect for the fundamental principles of this Charter, including their respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of states including, in this case, Ukraine.

Tatiana Kastouéva-Jean

Thank you very much.

Vahan Kostanyan, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia

Thank you. I believe that, first, we should understand what happened, and when it started. The very principle of use of force was violated, and it was not violated for the first time back in February 2021.

The international community and the South Caucasus witnessed the violation of this very principle a year before the war in Ukraine started, in 2020, in our region of Nagorno-Karabakh. Unfortunately, at that time, many of our international partners were silent and they were both sided when it came to a situation and not putting a clear and direct course that the use of force is not acceptable.

This became a precedent. If something can be tolerated in the case of one country, probably the others can think or interpret the situation as a green light for them to act in violation of the UN Charter as well.

Nobody knows better than us the horror of war. We witnessed it back in the 90s and in 2020. We are still witnessing the consequences of the recent military aggression of September 19th, 2023, as a result of which Nagorno-Karabakh and 100,000 people were forced to displace and basically Nagorno-Karabakh is ethnically cleansed.

However, we do believe that, at some point, the world order should be established in a way that the principles can be equally projected to everyone, and everyone should adhere to these principles. Violation of principles, without any geopolitical calculations, should be equally raised, and should be equally rejected by the international community.