

February 27th

A brief overview of the situation

- 1. Developments in the conflict.** The war is transitioning into a new phase. The blitz attacks of the Russian troops on cities which characterised the first days has been replaced by ongoing confrontation. Russian forces have encircled and are laying siege to regional capitals, and localised Russian assault operations have been deployed in strategic towns and infrastructure facilities. Thus far no regional capital has been lost by Ukrainian forces. Russian reconnaissance missions entering the cities in small groups have been mostly pushed back or stopped. Near Kyiv, Ukrainian regular and volunteer forces are gradually pushing the main columns of Russian troops further away from the city. Russians special forces are being deployed to conduct urban and irregular warfare groups in towns as well as cities. During February 27th there was fighting around Mariupol, in particular in the areas densely populated by the Greek community of Ukraine. Sartana and Volnovakha have sustained significant damage resulting from the attempt by Russian forces to create a land corridor to Crimea. Along the entire front line there is significant collateral damage of civilian infrastructure—numerous houses, educational institutions, hospitals, etc being destroyed. Several bridges on important transport routes have been destroyed by the Ukrainian forces **in order to prevent the advance of Russian troops**. On 27th February a Ukrainian AN-225 strategic airlift cargo aircraft stationed on the airfield in Hostomel was destroyed. Hostomel or Vasilkiv's airports could provide Russian troops a bridgehead for landing strike forces and opening a second front—thus far the Ukrainian army has been able to prevent this. The Ukrainian government has already filed a lawsuit to The Hague against the Russian government.
- 2.** Videos posted on the internet purport to show a high degree of demoralisation of the Russian military personnel. They are sometimes stopped by the local population. On several occasions residents of villages have been able to fend off military vehicles. **Russian forces, however, are not broadcasting video with footage of the situation on the ground** as was the case during the campaign in Syria, **in contrast to the otherwise usual tactics of media support**. This may be indicative of the absence of tangible successes that could boost the morale of the Russian soldiers.
- 3. Environment.** Overnight there have been missile strikes against strategic infrastructure facilities, such as **the oil terminal in Vasilkiv (30 km from Kyiv)**. **The Russians struck this with a ballistic missile**, which may have an enduring impact for the environment. On 26th February, there was **also an explosion at the oil terminal in Rovenky** (on territory not currently under Ukrainian control in the Certain Areas of the Luhansk Region).
- 4. Nuclear.** **On 27th February a radioactive waste disposal facility of the Kyiv branch of the state specialised enterprise "Association Radon" near Kyiv was shelled.** Currently background radiation in the region is normal. Today Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation to put the nuclear deterrence forces on combat mode, raising the threat of nuclear conflict.
- 5. Negotiations.** Today, the Russian government sent a delegation to Belarus to organise negotiations, and urged Ukraine to take part in them as well. Eventually, the Ukrainian government agreed and a place was chosen on the Ukrainian-Belarus border. **The negotiations began without the preliminary conditions that the Russian Federation put forward yesterday.** The Ukrainian society might distrust the negotiations, since the Ukrainian proposals have not been communicated to the public and consent to participate in the negotiations was not announced until the last moment. In the meantime, anti-war demonstrations supported by a number of opposition politicians continue in Russia and Belarus—these have broadly been suppressed. The sanctions packages and growing international boycott of Russia is gradually helping to increase the social support base for an emerging anti-war movement in Russia. This appears to be mounted not only by the general public, but also by national elites, national business leaders, military elites as well as local and regional elites. It is important to take note of the fact that V. Medvedchuk—an opposition politician close to President Putin—has escaped from detention. Russia may seek to declare him President of Ukraine in case of victory or conquest of a region, such as Kharkiv.
- 6. International support for Ukraine.** International support for Ukraine is steadily growing, first of all, including the EU and NATO member states. Support is chiefly in the form of new economic sanctions against Russia, as well as providing lethal and non-lethal military support to Ukraine. Sanctions have not

been imposed on the oil and gas industry—except for freezing the new North Stream 2 gas pipeline. **On February 27th, Ukrainian President Zelenskyy announced the establishment of special detachments for foreign volunteers** who are ready to go to Ukraine.

7. **Humanitarian dimension.** On 27th February, the civilian population was being evacuated from some settlements in the Donetsk oblast. At the same time, evacuation is not possible from **some settlements surrounded or taken by Russian troops**. In particular, these include Kyiv's satellite towns of Irpin, Hostomel and Bucha. The population there remains in extremely difficult condition amidst the fighting and shelling. Humanitarian corridors are needed for those who would like to leave area with ongoing fighting. The imposition of a curfew in Kyiv has also led to increased vulnerabilities. The inability to provide supplies of food and medicines to vulnerable groups has put them at significant risk. Moreover, the urban elderly population in particular have experienced difficulties in moving back and forth to shelters putting them at risk. **Increasingly important areas of international effort include those focused on reaching humanitarian ceasefires, the establishment of humanitarian corridors for civilians and the exchange of POWs and the dead.** There are a growing numbers of POWs that need to be fed, treated, and held.
8. **Ethnic communities.** A number of specific ethnic communities that live in the south of Ukraine are at risk due to the heavy fighting occurring there during the war. Greeks around Mariupol, Roma in Kherson oblast, and Crimean Tatars in Kherson and Mykolayiv oblasts among others have been affected.
9. **Coordination of support to refugees and IDPs.** International charitable organisations with support programmes for refugees and IDPs—in particular People in Need and ICRC—are gradually starting their activities in Ukraine. In these early days of the conflict, there is a proliferation of small volunteer support programmes. To ensure their effectiveness, their activities should be coordinated and increasingly placed in the Ukrainian context. Coordination and support clusters are expected to emerge in the coming days in key cities within and on the borders outside of Ukraine.