



**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Burisma Holdings, Ltd.

**FROM:** Blue Star Strategies

**DATE:** December 2, 2015

**RE:** U.S. Vice President Biden's Trip to Ukraine Next Week

We participated in a conference call today with senior Obama Administration officials ahead of U.S. Vice President Joe Biden's trip to Ukraine next week. We have prepared these minutes for your information. Please let us know if you have any questions.

Michael Carpenter, Vice President Biden's Special Advisor for Europe and Russia, and Dr. Colin Kahl, the Vice President's National Security Advisor, presented the agenda for the trip and answered questions about current U.S. policy toward Ukraine.

**Trip Agenda**

The Vice President's delegation leaves for Ukraine on Sunday, December 6, and arrives late in the evening in Kyiv. He will return from Kyiv to the U.S. on Tuesday evening, December 8.

On Monday, December 7, Mr. Biden will have three meetings. In the morning, he will host a roundtable with Ukrainian reformers and civil society activists. In the afternoon, the Vice President will participate in a working lunch and lengthy bilateral meeting with President Petro Poroshenko. In the evening, Mr. Biden will have a separate bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk.

On Tuesday, December 8, Vice President Biden will deliver a speech to the Verkhovna Rada. According to the White House officials, this speech marks the first time that a senior foreign official of Vice President's stature will have addressed Ukraine's parliament. For Mr. Biden, this address presents an opportunity to clearly lay out U.S. policy towards Ukraine, and for him personally, to address Ukraine's parliament, given Mr. Biden's more than 30 years serving in the U.S. Senate.

Before Mr. Biden departs for the U.S. on Tuesday evening, he plans to meet with the Mayor of Kyiv Vitali Klitschko.

## **Messaging**

According to the senior administration officials on the call, Vice President Biden will discuss the following issues and themes during his trip to Ukraine, namely that the U.S.:

- maintains its strong and sustained commitment to Ukraine in the face of Russian aggression;
- continues to categorically oppose Russia's annexation of Crimea;
- urges Ukraine to pass more reforms strengthening rule of law and governance;
- wants to see full implementation of the recently passed anti-corruption laws;
- remains concerned about Ukraine's ongoing economic and humanitarian needs, especially as winter approaches;
- supports implementation of the Minsk Agreements and de-escalation of the violence that persists along the conflict line with Russia and separatists;
- reinforces a broader diplomatic strategy with the support of European partners to maintain the sanctions against Russia until the Minsk Agreements are fully implemented; and
- advocates for ongoing U.S. security assistance to Ukraine, including U.S.-led training of Ukrainian military.

## **Questions and Answers**

In a question-and-answer session with reporters, the two officials responded to a number of questions about the U.S.-Ukraine relationship and policy toward Russia.

When asked about the recent Russian proposal for restructuring Ukraine's \$3 billion debt to Russia, the U.S. officials maintained that this was a bilateral matter between Ukraine and Russia. Dr. Kahl also remarked that Russia's proposals have only been made in the media but nothing has been formally proposed.

With regard to Russia's involvement in Syria, the White House officials stressed that dialogue with Russia in Syria is compartmentalized and will not affect U.S. policy toward Ukraine. Mr. Carpenter said that sanctions against Russia will hold until the Minsk agreement is fully implemented, and that sanctions with regard to Crimea will stay as long as Russia occupies the peninsula. He stressed that European partners previously agreed to this linkage in writing and will maintain solidarity with the U.S. on sanctions.

In response to questions about Ukraine's anti-corruption efforts and reforms of the Prosecutor General's Office, Dr. Kahl said that Mr. Biden will reiterate the message that Geoffrey Pyatt, the U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine, has been saying: more needs to be done to enable anti-corruption reforms and not have the Prosecutor General's Office stand in the way of those efforts. During his trip, Mr. Biden will stress that it is not enough to set up a separate, special prosecutor for anti-corruption within the Prosecutor General's Office, which has already been done. Rather, the entire institution needs serious reforms to overhaul its corrupt practices.

The officials also responded to questions about American security assistance to Ukraine and the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which authorizes \$300 million in security assistance to Ukraine. The officials said it is unclear how the money in the NDAA will be spent, but they believe that the Ukraine crisis will be solved through diplomacy and long-term reform efforts rather than the decisive contributions of lethal weaponry. Mr. Carpenter reminded the listeners that the U.S. has already provide \$450 million in security assistance to Ukraine, with more than half of that amount spent on defensive weaponry, communications and training.

Finally, answering a question about the Vice President's relationship with Ukraine, the officials said that President Obama has asked the Vice President to play a special role in U.S. diplomacy with Ukraine. Mr. Carpenter stressed that Mr. Biden has a long history with Ukraine and the region and has put in the effort to develop personal relationships with the country's leaders. Mr. Carpenter noted that during Mr. Biden's more than 30 years in the U.S. Senate, he confirmed a belief that all politics is personal, especially in international affairs. Mr. Biden has been able to develop a degree of candor and trust with Ukrainian leaders, including efforts to work with former President Yanukovich. The timing of this latest trip will demonstrate, in the midst of the Syrian crisis, that the United States has not forgotten about Ukraine. This visit will be the Vice President's fourth trip to Ukraine since the Maidan of 2014 and his fifth visit to Ukraine since becoming Vice President. Overall, the officials reiterated that Mr. Biden's major theme will be that Ukraine remains central to U.S. national interests, and more broadly, to ensure that Europe remains peaceful, whole and free.