

HIGHLIGHTS

PULSE OF PEACE IN DONBAS



28 May–3 June, 2021

NEGOTIATIONS POSSIBLE TO BE MOVED FROM MINSK

The issue of postponing the talks on Donbas from Minsk will be considered by the new OSCE leadership, which will come as a result of the expected rotation, [said](#) Oleksiy Arestovych, the speaker of the Ukrainian delegation to the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG). According to him, at the moment there is no discussion at the official level about the transfer of the meetings, however the head of the Ukrainian delegation Leonid Kravchuk noted earlier that Belarus cannot be a platform for the TCG negotiations for a number of reasons, including political sympathies towards one of the parties to the conflict. [According to Bartosz Ciechocki](#), Polish ambassador to Ukraine, Poland is ready to become a platform for negotiations of the contact group to resolve the situation in Donbas. Tetyana Ivanova, a representative of the Ukrainian delegation to the TCG, [said](#) that the issue of moving the negotiating venue will be discussed in the subgroups during the next TCG meeting.

THE MANDATE OF THE OSCE MONITORING MISSION ON THE BORDER WITH UKRAINE IS LIMITED TO TWO MONTHS

Russia has [limited](#) the extension of the mandate of the OSCE monitoring mission at the Gukovo and Donetsk checkpoints (Ukrainian-Russian border). Instead of the standard four months, the mission's activity was extended by only two months. Earlier, the [US](#) and the [EU](#) urged Russia not to block the OSCE activities on the Ukrainian border in this way, noting during a meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council that the two-month extension would create additional administrative

difficulties, further reducing the OSCE ability to monitor the border in accordance with the Minsk Protocol.

MEASURES TO INTENSIFY THE PEACE SETTLEMENT WERE ANNOUNCED

On June 2, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky signed a [decree](#) introducing the decision of the National Defense and Security Council of Ukraine on the peaceful settlement of the situation in Donbas. The decision, among other things, [provides](#) for the preparation of draft laws on the introduction of transitional justice in the temporarily occupied territories in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions and their submission to the Verkhovna Rada, as well as the completion of the arrangement of entry-exit checkpoints (CEP) in Donbas with the creation of humanitarian and logistics and service centers to provide social, administrative, banking, medical, postal and other services.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL SITUATION IN DONBAS SHOWS SIGNS OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL CATASTROPHE

The environmental situation in the territory of Donetsk and Luhansk regions is the subject of a [report](#) released by Truth Hounds, a civic organization documenting war crimes in Donbas. The study assessed threats related to the closure of mines, the operation of water and power systems, the shelling of enterprises, and forest fires. It is stated that environmental problems in Donbas, directly connected with the military conflict or being its consequence, tend to worsen and acquire transboundary character. Significant attention in the report is paid to the analysis of international humanitarian law for legal assessment of actions harmful to the environment in the context of military conflict. The possibility of qualification of the revealed facts as war crimes against the environment is analyzed. Experts, including a representative of the Donetsk Regional Prosecutor's Office, comment on the situation in the [publication](#) by Donbas.Realii.

US SENATORS VISIT UKRAINE

A delegation of US senators [visited](#) Ukraine. During a meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, they discussed security issues in Donbas and along the Russian-Ukrainian border. Volodymyr Zelenski thanked the United States for its military support for Ukraine and noted the importance of continuing the policy of sanctions against the Russian Federation, calling for its new, more effective format. In a [meeting](#) with Dmytro Kuleba, Ukraine's foreign minister, they discussed possibilities for countering Russia's geopolitical project Nord Stream 2. "We do not understand how the EU can first impose sanctions against Russia together with us and then allow it to build the pipeline." "Radio Svoboda" published an exclusive [interview](#) with the senators who visited Ukraine, about the outcome of their visit, the [bill](#) to reinstate US sanctions against Nord Stream-2, and possible topics of discussion during the upcoming meeting between US President Joe Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin. Meanwhile, the US State Department has [included](#) \$255 million in spending in its 2022 budget request to strengthen Ukraine's ability to resist Russian aggression.

UKRAINE VACCINATES RESIDENTS OF NON-CONTROLLED PARTS OF DONBAS AGAINST COVID-19

In Ukraine, [registration for vaccination](#) against COVID-19 has started for residents of non-government-controlled parts of Donbas. First of all, we are talking about elderly people aged 65 and older. Immunization will be carried out at [four sites](#) located near checkpoints. At the same time, Ukrainian human rights activists continue to [note](#) the problems faced by residents of Donbas due to the closure of checkpoints by the so-called "L/DPR" and do not [predict](#) the possibility of their opening soon, and the draft law to repeal fines at border crossings with Russia for residents of temporarily uncontrolled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions [has not been approved](#) in the Verkhovna Rada, which complicates the implementation of vaccination plans.