

**LETTER DATED 27 MARCH 2003 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE  
OF UKRAINE ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE  
CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT TRANSMITTING THE ABRIDGED  
UNOFFICIAL TRANSLATION OF THE PRESS CONFERENCE HELD ON 21 MARCH  
2003 BY HE ANATOLIY ZLENKO, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF  
UKRAINE, REGARDING THE DEVELOPMENTS IN IRAQ**

I have the honour to forward herewith the abridged unofficial translation of the Press Conference held on 21 March 2003 by HE Anatoliy ZLENKO, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, regarding the developments in Iraq.

I would be grateful if this text could be issued as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament and distributed to the delegations of all Member States of the Conference and Non-Member States participating in its work.

*(Signed):*

Mykhailo SKURATOVSKYI  
Permanent Representative of Ukraine  
to the United Nations Office and other  
International Organisations at Geneva

Press conference on 21 March 2003 by HE Anatoliy ZLENKO,  
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine

(Abridged)

The Minister informed that, Leonid Kuchma, President of Ukraine, had clearly stated the position of Ukraine concerning the developments in Iraq. This position remains categorical and unchanged: Ukraine is opposed to any war.

Mr. Zlenko stated that 20 March 2003 would be enshrined as a sad date in the history of diplomacy. The persistent attempts by the world community to avert the war in the Middle East have failed. The United States and the United Kingdom have started the military operation aimed at disarming Iraq and changing the political regime in this country.

The influence on the developments by the United Nations Security Council, the supreme level of the international law, is rather limited. The international situation may be characterised as extremely tense and unpredictable.

In question are the guarantees of peaceful life for the millions of people. In question is the authority of the United Nations that has been underlying the world political order through the post-war period. In question are the prospects for the global economic development, as well as the global security system itself. We are extremely concerned by the dangerous trend of events in the Middle East and fully aware of their likely consequences for the world community.

The Minister is confident that, under the circumstances, the following two key aspects come to the forefront:

The first and foremost is that the lives of the people in the region are at stake. He urged the coalition forces to do their utmost to minimize the civil casualties. Any war is an extreme political means. But it is not the death only, it is the life to be waged under the extreme conditions. Though the worst scenario would have been hundreds and thousands of those killed among the civil population. With this in mind, Ukraine has taken the decision to detail a CBR-protection battalion to Kuwait. He said he was aware that it was not an easy decision for the President, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defence and the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Nevertheless, the Minister was convinced it was the only right and adequate decision. That the Ukrainian soldiers were departing for the Middle East with the solely peaceful mission to save lives, rather than participate in the hostilities. The Minister stressed that the present situation was not the case for one to hide the head in sand. So, according to Mr. Zlenko, Ukraine must take a concrete position, and the choice has been made.

Then the Minister referred to the second key political aspect that is believed to be most topical today, that is the rehabilitation of the United Nations' authority. The situation in Iraq has reached the point when it is inadmissible to waste time establishing who is right and who is wrong. All efforts must be aimed at minimising the human and political toll for the whole mankind. The only way to do that is by directing the situation into the framework of the United Nations.

The political assignment of this organization is to solve the gravest conflicts. Therefore, he welcomed the fact that the UN does not relieve itself of the responsibility for the further development of the situation. All the parties must listen to the voice of the Secretary General and the UN Security Council that must resound now with all the clarity and responsibility.

On the other hand, the world community must draw the due conclusions from the current situation. The fact that the Security Council has failed during the last months to prevent the war must not be interpreted as if the United Nations Organization is politically sentenced. The Minister regarded it rather as a political stimulus to reform the Security Council. The adaptation of this key peace-maintenance instrument to the current challenges must become a pending priority.

Mr. Zlenko concluded that the agenda for the world community at this stage must be as follows: averting the humanitarian catastrophe, stabilization of the situation in Iraq, reforming the UN Security Council, strengthening the world security system.

Ukraine is ready to actively participate in all the links of this political chain that is principally significant for the global development.

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