



AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION OF UKRAINIAN ORGANISATIONS
СОЮЗ УКРАЇНСЬКИХ ОРГАНІЗАЦІЙ АВСТРАЛІЇ
Representing 24 Peak Ukrainian Organisations in Australia - Member of Ukrainian World Congress

October 29, 2007

The Hon Alexander Downer MP
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Parliament House
Canberra 2600
(02) 6273 4112
(08) 8398 5577

Dear Minister,

I write to you on behalf of the Australian Federation of Ukrainian Organisations (AFUO) the peak body for Ukrainians in Australia seeking a commitment from the Coalition, that if re-elected to Government, as a matter of priority, it will consider establishing an official Australian diplomatic post in Kyiv, Ukraine in the near future.

The first Ukrainian diplomatic representation was opened in Sydney around a decade ago, and this was followed in 2003 by the establishment of a formal Embassy in Canberra. So far Ukraine has posted two ambassadors to Australia. After 16 years of Ukrainian independence the AFUO believes that it would be opportune to reciprocate the Ukrainian Government's decision to open an embassy in Australia.

A plan for Australian diplomatic representation in Kyiv

The AFUO has previously prepared and presented to Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) officials a detailed plan for the establishment of Australian diplomatic representation in Ukraine. The proposal focused on:

- Responsibilities for the region being split between the Moscow post and a new post in Kyiv to fully capitalise on the opportunities in the region;
- Addressing Australian under representation in Eastern Europe; and
- Benefiting from the rapidly growing, and emerging business opportunities.

In support of this proposal, the following key indicators should also be noted:

- DFAT figures indicate a 40% increase in trade between the Australia and Ukraine;
- Exports to Ukraine (\$83m) have risen by 44.2%;
- Imports from Ukraine (\$29m) have increased by 31.9%;
- For the first time, bilateral trade has exceeded \$110 million;
- Increasingly there are cases of significant Ukrainian business investment in Australia, particularly in the minerals area.

Office address 3 Russell Street Essendon 3040

Postal Address PO Box 251 Essendon 3040

Telephone 61 + 3 9375 1781 Fax 61 + 3 9326 1065

Email: afuo@ozeukes.com **websites** www.ozeukes.com, www.ukiyouth.com

ABN 40 104 855 692

At a state level, the NSW Department of State and Regional Development recently conducted an information session for local business leaders to visit Ukraine in 2008.

Australia and the Orange Revolution

Uniquely among the larger non-Baltic countries that were formerly part of the Soviet Union, Ukraine has developed into a stable democratic nation, and is rated as 'free' by Freedom House. These developments augur well for the future economic growth of Ukraine, its further integration into the sphere of Western Europe, and the potential for growth of economic, cultural and migratory ties with Australia.

Ukraine's journey towards democracy has partly been achieved with assistance from countries such as Australia, whose election observers have been monitors in Ukraine during a number of recent elections. During the *Orange Revolution* in late 2004 the Australian Government provided funding for the Committee of Voters of Ukraine and also for radio broadcasts highlighting the importance and relevance of democracy to the country's future.

It is also worth noting that throughout the last decade and a half Ukraine has provided some strong business and skilled migrants to Australia – around 40 percent with tertiary qualifications - who have integrated well into Australian society. This is a cameo of the 1949 and subsequent immigration flows from Ukraine – strong, hardworking, grateful and committed Australians who have overwhelmingly taken up Australian citizenship.

Influencing the future through an Australian diplomatic presence

Just as Australia has benefited from an early diplomatic presence in China, the AFUO believes that an appropriate diplomatic representation in Ukraine would enable the current successful migration pattern to flourish, and act as a catalyst for further economic development that would build on the currently high growth rates that are being experienced.

The AFUO considers that alternatives to diplomatic representation, such as making arrangements with the Office of International Migration, do not address the key issue of Australian diplomatic representation in Ukraine. In this case, they simply solve the 'courier' problem to Moscow.

We believe there is now a strong case for full diplomatic representation from Australia in Ukraine. The economic, social and migration benefits that can flow from an office in Kyiv are an opportunity that Australia should influence directly – with an Embassy located in Kyiv.

We therefore urge you, as a matter of priority, take announce formal steps to opening the Australia's first Embassy in Kyiv, Ukraine.

Please do not hesitate to call me on 0419531255 if you require further information or to discuss this matter further.

Yours sincerely,



Stefan Romaniw OAM
Chairman