President Zelenskyy opened his remarks by thanking the community for being Ukraine’s best diplomats, stating, “You defend our sovereignty, our territorial integrity here, in the United States, and throughout the world. We are very thankful to you.” Understanding his audience, and in an effort to be forthright, President Zelenskyy put aside his prepared remarks and took questions from the audience.

Over the course of a short Q&A exchange, community leaders raised a wide range of issues, including US-Ukraine bilateral relations, the conflict in eastern Ukraine, the illegal occupation of Crimea, and recognition of the Holodomor as an act of genocide against the Ukrainian nation. In response to the question of what he anticipated from his upcoming meeting with President Trump, Zelenskyy stated, "I think we will have a meaningful, substantive meeting," underscoring that he hoped President Trump would provide unequivocal support for Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. Zelenskyy also stressed that he would like to achieve greater transparency in President Trump’s policy because Ukraine needs the support of the United States. In addressing his policy to resolve the armed conflict in Donbas and return Crimea, President Zelensky emphasized that he would use diplomacy and hoped that a meeting in the Normandy format would take place in the near future. “We want to leave this meeting with certain results on specific terms of ending the war and returning our territories. We believe in this, we want this and we will try to do it all,” the Head of State said.

The topic of dual citizenship was also raised, to which President Zelensky responded that plans were under way to grant Ukrainian citizenship to ethnic Ukrainians living outside of Ukraine, but understandably with some caveats.

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On September 6-8, the Ukrainian World Congress (UWC) held its Annual General Meeting (AGM) in Berlin, Germany. Participants from over 20 countries gathered at Berlin’s City Hall to reviewed UWC’s work since November 2018 and developed an action plan for the next year; while supporting the Ukrainian community’s efforts in Germany to garner their government’s support of the current situation in Ukraine, including: the importance of consolidating action in the war with Russian hybrid aggression.

Over three days participants had the opportunity to hear reports from President Paul Grod and UWC leadership, and to discuss topical issues for Ukrainians in the diaspora during six round tables: “Development, coordination and structuring of Ukrainian communities in the world”, “Means of cooperation between Ukraine and the diaspora under new circumstances. Defending the interests of Ukraine globally - on the path to the EU and NATO”, “Shaping the self-identification of Ukrainian youth in the diaspora”, “Substantial extension of the rights of Ukrainians living outside Ukraine - creating favorable conditions for their return and strengthening relations with Ukraine”, “Unifying role of Ukrainian churches and the importance of their recognition in ecumenical structures”, “UWC strategy for international recognition of the Holodomor as genocide of the Ukrainian people.” During the meeting delegates resolutely condemned the Russian Federation for its hybrid war against Ukraine and illegal imprisonment of Ukrainian political prisoners, and called upon the international community to continue supporting the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine, significantly strengthen sanctions against the Russian Federation for violating the international order, and to increase lethal weapons and military support to Ukraine. The UWC AGM welcomed Ukraine’s strategic course toward European and Euro-Atlantic integration and called upon the European Union and NATO to expedite Ukraine’s full membership.

On September 9, 2019, UWC’s leadership held its first Ukrainian Day in Berlin during which a series of meetings took place with members of the German Bundestag and government officials to discuss continued support for Ukraine in the struggle against Russian aggression.

On September 25th, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy addressed the 74th session of the UN General Assembly. In his 15-minute speech, Zelenskyy reminded the world of the ongoing war in Ukraine, underscoring that war is the biggest threat to human civilization. He called for international support for Ukraine “five years into war with Russia,” which has resulted in more than 13,000 deaths. Holding up a bullet, President Zelenskyy relayed the story of a Ukrainian soloist with the Paris Opera, who was killed in the war, stating “… it [the bullet] costs only $10… And this is, unfortunately, the price of a human life on our planet. There are thousands of such stories. There are millions of such bullets.”

“From this highest world rostrum, we always hear the calls for fair changes, righteous promises, and new initiatives. It is high time to ensure that those calls are backed up by deeds because in a modern world, where human life costs just 10 dollars, words are not enough,” he stated.

Ukraine’s President recalled that the UN was established nearly 75 years ago to maintain and strengthen international peace and security. “But what should we do when the very fundamentals of international security are endangered? Since each war today – in Ukraine, Syria, Libya, Yemen, or anywhere else in the world, no matter the number of casualties – is the biggest threat to the civilization as a whole. That’s because in 2019, human beings, homo sapiens, still prefer to solve conflicts by murdering their own kind.”

It is with great sadness that UCCA’s Executive Board learned of the recent passing of three remarkable individuals – Professor Dmytro Shtohryn, Ambassador William Miller, and Professor Mark von Hagen.

A long-time member of UCCA, Professor Shtohryn’s commitment to the field of Ukrainian studies was unparalleled - establishing Ukrainian Studies as a discipline at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Ambassador Miller served as the United States’ second ambassador to Ukraine and continued his support for Ukraine’s democratic development until his passing. Professor von Hagen was a brilliant scholar whose legacy includes the fundraising for and establishment of the Ukrainian Studies Program at Columbia University.

May they rest in peace! Vichnaya Pamyiat!