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Communiqué

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Canadian experts, Ukrainian Ministry of Defence officials, and NATO representatives meet in Kyiv to discuss joint pilot-project focusing on the adoption of NATO health-care standards for Ukraine's women in uniform

Kyiv – Between October 1- 5, 2018, Canadian experts representing the Ukraine Support Fund, a Canadian not-for-profit organization which supports technical assistance projects aimed at facilitating Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic integration, took part in a series of meetings in Ukraine to address the health-care needs of women currently serving in Ukraine's Armed Forces. About 56,000 women are currently employed in the service of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU), of whom approximately 24,000 are engaged in active military service, including approximately 10,000 in combat positions.



Surgeon General Colonel Ihor Khomenko (centre) with Canadian Medical Advisor, Dr. Christine Derzko MD, FRCSC (right) and USF President Lisa Shymko (left)

Among the key discussions with officials of Ukraine's Ministry of Defence was a bilateral meeting on October 3rd with Colonel Ihor Khomenko, Surgeon General of the Ukrainian Armed Forces and Head of the Main Military Medical Directorate (M3D). Col. Khomenko was accompanied by Yurii Hordiienko (Head of International Cooperation, M3D, Ministry of Defence), Captain Anna Ladyeyeva (Coordinator, Gender Health Equality Program in the Armed Forces of Ukraine), and a gynecologist representing the Main Military Clinical Hospital. The Canadian delegation was represented by Lisa Shymko (President, Ukraine Support Fund) and Dr. Christine Derzko MD, FRCSC (Associate Professor of Obstetrics & Gynecology as well as Internal Medicine - Endocrinology Division, University of Toronto - St. Michael's Hospital). Dr. Derzko

serves as the Ukraine Support Fund's Independent Medical Advisor. Accompanying the Canadian delegation was Major Patrick Lebeau (Commander, LoE 5- (Medical Training), Joint Task Force-Ukraine (Op UNIFIER, Roto 6). Also participating in the meeting was James Cahill, MHA, US and NATO Military Medical Advisor, who works closely with the Main Military Medical Directorate (M3D) of Ukraine's Ministry of Defence.

During the meeting, the Canadian delegation commended Col. Khomenko's ongoing efforts to re-organize the medical services structure of the AFU based on Western models and acknowledged the positive reform achievements which, by adopting NATO Best Practices, have already substantially reduced soldier mortality rates. With the significant growth in the number of women entering the Ukrainian army, Col. Khomenko indicated that the AFU will be taking decisive steps to make gender equity in health care a priority for women in uniform. Important health issues confronting frontline field hospitals treating deployed servicewomen include infectious diseases, urogenital infections, pelvic pain, including endometriosis, pelvic inflammatory diseases, heavy vaginal bleeding, uterine fibroids, and pregnancies. The Canadian and Ukrainian representatives agreed to pursue a joint workplan aimed at implementing a Canadian-initiated multi-phase project to facilitate Ukraine's adoption of NATO health standards as they relate to the gender-specific health-care needs of Ukraine's women in uniform. This pilot project is a major part of the Ukraine Support Fund's *Military Women's Health Initiative* and is the first of its kind in Ukraine.



Captain Anna Ladyeyeva, following the joint meeting with the Armed Forces of Ukraine Surgeon General and USF representatives



Representatives of the Canadian mission also met with Sharon Irwin (Deputy Director of the NATO Liaison office) and her staff at the NATO Representation to Ukraine Bureau, where they received a summary of the recent findings of the 2017 *Gender Impact Assessment of the Security and Defense Sector in Ukraine*, conducted by *UN Women in Ukraine* in collaboration with the *NATO Liaison Office in Ukraine*. The discussions focused on possible areas of collaboration between our Canadian project addressing military women's health and the NATO Liaison Office, which promotes gender equality as an integral part of Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic integration.

Dr. Christine Derzko and Lisa Shymko also met with Dr. Yuriy Antipkin (Director of the Institute of Gynecology & Women's Health at the National Academy of Medical Sciences of Ukraine (NAMSU)) & Deputy Director of Research, Dr. Tetiana Tatarчук, to acknowledge and support the outstanding work being carried out by Dr. Olena Burlaka (a lead researcher at the Institute of Pediatrics, Obstetrics and Gynecology at the NAMSU in Kyiv). Dr. Burlaka, whose work we encourage and support, has been a pioneer in providing gynecological care to women at the frontline hospitals. Her unique work includes research data collection, the analysis of which, coupled with situational assessments and technical assistance activities, are key to identifying, understanding and addressing the specific health-care needs of Ukrainian military women and veterans.



At the invitation of the Canadian Embassy, representatives of the Ukraine Support Fund also met with Allied Advisers. The meeting was an opportunity to share ideas and gain

insight from NATO-partner advisors on how best to facilitate Ukraine's efforts to close the gender-gap in military health-care, by applying NATO standards and procedures within a framework that is manageable for Ukraine's frontline medical personnel. The meeting was attended by Col. Brian Irwin (Canada's Defence Attaché in Ukraine), Major Patrick Lebeau (Joint Task Force Ukraine, Commander LOE 5 Medical Training), Jim Cahill (Senior US Defense Advisor – Medical; NATO Medical Advisor), Randolph Wood (Senior Advisor on Euro-Integration, Office of Defense Cooperation, US Embassy), Patrick Longfield (US Senior Personnel Management Advisor to the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine and General Staff), Robin Seaward (UK Deputy Special Defence Advisor to the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine) and Nadezhda Yegay (Senior Program Analyst/First Secretary, Development Cooperation Section, Canadian Embassy).



Lisa Shymko and Dr. Christine Derzko also welcomed the opportunity to brief Canadian Ambassador Roman Waschuk on the Ukraine Support Fund's efforts to facilitate the Armed Forces of Ukraine's adoption and implementation of *NATO Health-Care Standards for Military Women*. As well, proposed plans were outlined for future collaboration with the Canadian *Joint Task Force-Ukraine* medical training mission of Operation Unifier.

Representatives of the Canadian USF

team also had the opportunity to meet with Vadym Sviridenko (the President's Commissioner for Veterans' Health and Rehabilitation), Col. Dr. Vsevolod Stebliuk, (Director Clinical Practice, Ukrainian Military Medical Academy), and retired military psychologist Captain-Lieutenant Oksana Mazur to discuss the progress to date of health-care reform impacting those deployed, as well as veterans.

The Ukraine Support Fund looks forward to jointly cooperating with the Head of the Main Military Medical Directorate of the Ministry of Defence, in consultation with NATO-country partners currently working in Ukraine, to assist in Ukraine's adoption of *NATO Health-Care Standards for Military Women*. Doing so will be another step in improving the Ukrainian army's operational capabilities and broadening the basis for future recruitment and troop retention.