



Peace Initiatives for Ending the War in Ukraine

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Since the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian war on 24 February 2022, various states have already come up with several peace initiatives. The backgrounder provides a brief comparative description of them.

Istanbul agreements

The first draft of the peace treaty was a [document](#) on which the delegations of Russia and Ukraine worked during three rounds of negotiations on the territory of Belarus, and then at a meeting on 29 March 2022 in Istanbul (edits were exchanged online in the next two weeks; the latest version of the document [dated](#) 15 April 2022). It was titled the «Treaty on Permanent Neutrality and Security Guarantees for Ukraine» and consisted of 18 articles. The agreement also had an [annex](#) titled «Maximum number of personnel, weapons and military equipment that exist in the combat composition of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in peacetime».

In June 2023, Russian President Vladimir Putin publicly [demonstrated](#) the first pages of the draft treaty and protocol. In addition to the preliminarily agreed wording, they also record differences between the positions of the parties. For example, Kyiv insisted on a quantitative ceiling for the Armed Forces of Ukraine of 250,000 people, and Moscow – on 85,000 people, plus 15,000 people in the National Guard; Kyiv wanted to have 800 tanks, but Moscow agreed only to 342; the Ukrainian side sought to maintain 600 multiple launch rocket systems, while the Russian side determined the MLRS limit at 96 units, etc.

According to Putin, the draft agreement was initialled by the head of the Ukrainian delegation, yet representatives of Kyiv [claim](#) that no signatures were placed. In any case, in the second half of

April 2022, Kyiv withdrew from the negotiation process, so the full text of the document was never agreed upon.

Among the provisions of the draft agreement were:

- *Ceasefire and withdrawal of Russian troops.*
- *Acquisition of permanently neutral status by Ukraine.*
- *Kyiv's agreement to follow three nuclear-free principles: not to accept, not to produce and not to acquire nuclear weapons.*
- *Kyiv's adoption of quantitative restrictions on its own armed forces.*
- *Ukraine's refusal to host foreign military bases and weapons on its territory.*
- *Security guarantees for Ukraine; permanent members of the UN Security Council were named as guarantors (it was also proposed to include other states, including Belarus and Turkey, among the guarantor states).*

At a media briefing following the meeting on 29 March in Istanbul, the Ukrainian delegation [presented](#) its own vision of possible agreements. Apparently, the presented provisions were based on the ideas and principles discussed by the parties, however, at least in some respects, they reflected Kyiv's requests, and not the wording that was agreed upon. These provisions later became known as the [Istanbul Communiqué](#). It included such provisions as:

- *Negotiations on Crimea will last for 15 years, the parties will not resort to the armed method of resolving the Crimean issue.*
- *The issue of the status and fate of the certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions should be discussed by the presidents of the two countries during a personal meeting.*
- *Ukraine is ready to agree to a non-aligned non-nuclear status and the absence of foreign military contingents on its territory if the permanent members of the UN Security Council provide documented security guarantees. Ukraine insisted on the substantive proximity of such guarantees to Article 5 of the UN Charter, which, according to members of its delegation, was reflected in paragraph 5 of the Istanbul Communiqué.*

Zelensky's peace formula

In November 2022, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky proposed his own «peace formula», which later became known as the Zelensky peace plan. The formula includes the following points:

1. *Radiation and nuclear safety (including the safety of the Zaporizhzhia NPP).*
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2. *Food security (including ensuring the export of Ukrainian grain).*
3. *Energy security (restoration of Ukraine's infrastructure and creation of a mechanism for price restrictions for Russia).*
4. *Release of all prisoners and deportees.*
5. *Implementation of the UN Charter and restoration of the territorial integrity of Ukraine and world order.*
6. *Withdrawal of Russian troops and cessation of hostilities.*
7. *Restoration of justice (creation of a tribunal for crimes committed).*
8. *Countering ecocide (including the creation of a damage assessment mechanism that Russia will be obliged to compensate for ecocide).*
9. *Preventing escalation (and creation of feasible security guarantees for Ukraine).*
10. *Proclaiming the end of the conflict.*

The formula received support from Western countries. Thus, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken called Zelensky's plan «a good start», and President Joseph Biden [said](#) that he and Zelensky share the same vision of the world. EU High Representative Josep Borrell [said](#) the EU considers Zelensky's formula the only possible peace plan. Russia unequivocally [rejected](#) Kyiv's 10 points.

China's position

In February 2023, Beijing [announced](#) «China's Position on a Political Settlement of the Ukrainian Crisis». In the media, the document became known as China's peace plan. It includes 12 principles:

1. *Respecting the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of all countries, application of international law without double standards.*
2. *Abandoning the Cold War mentality, respect for the security interests of all countries, refraining from strengthening or expanding military blocs.*
3. *Ceasing hostilities.*
4. *Resuming peace talks.*
5. *Resolving the humanitarian crisis.*
6. *Protecting civilians and prisoners of war as required by international humanitarian law.*
7. *Keeping nuclear power plants safe.*
8. *Reducing strategic risks, preventing the use of chemical, biological or nuclear weapons.*

9. *Facilitating grain exports in accordance with the Black Sea Grain Initiative.*
10. *Stopping unilateral sanctions.*
11. *Keeping industrial and supply chains stable.*
12. *Promoting post-conflict reconstruction.*

Ukraine and its Western allies generally [did not perceive](#) the document as a realistic plan, although initially Volodymyr Zelensky [expressed](#) a positive attitude towards the PRC initiative. The [words](#) of NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg are indicative: «China doesn't have much credibility because it failed to condemn the illegal invasion of Ukraine». Vladimir Putin [noted](#) that many provisions of the Chinese plan «resemble Russian approaches» and can be used to resolve the conflict if «the West and Kiev are ready for it».

African peace plan

In June 2023, a collective [proposal](#) from African countries to resolve the conflict was made (African peace plan). It was personally presented to both Vladimir Putin and Volodymyr Zelensky. According to media reports, the proposal includes the following provisions:

- *Achieving peace through diplomacy.*
- *Peace negotiations must begin as soon as possible.*
- *De-escalation of the conflict by its participants.*
- *Ensuring the sovereignty of countries and peoples in accordance with the UN Charter.*
- *Security guarantees for all countries.*
- *Ensuring the movement of grain and fertilizers from Russia and Ukraine.*
- *Humanitarian support for victims of hostilities.*
- *Resolution of the issue of exchange of prisoners of war and return of children.*
- *Post-war restoration of destroyed infrastructure.*
- *Strengthening cooperation with African countries.*

Volodymyr Zelensky [welcomed](#) the initiative of African countries, but spoke out against freezing the conflict and confirmed Kyiv's demand for the complete withdrawal of Russian troops from the Ukrainian territories. The press secretary of the Russian president [stated](#) that «a very large part of the African peace initiative is feasible and can be discussed». However, Putin himself [emphasized](#) that some points of the plan, such as a ceasefire, cannot be implemented due to the actions of the Ukrainian side.

Jeddah discussion

In August 2023, at a meeting in Saudi Jeddah, a number of countries spoke about their own vision of ways to resolve the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. Although no final documents were published, according to media reports, the following provisions [dominated](#):

1. *Preservation of the territorial integrity of Ukraine.*
2. *Ceasefire on all fronts.*
3. *Peace talks should begin under UN supervision.*
4. *Exchange of prisoners.*

There was no official [reaction](#) from Kyiv to specific proposals, but Ukrainian representatives emphasized the importance of linking the discussions in Jeddah to Zelensky's peace formula. In Moscow, consultations without Russia's participation were [called](#) meaningless.

Other initiatives

In 2022-2023, other international actors also put forward proposals to end the war. For example, in May 2022, **Italy** presented UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres with a four-point peace plan for Ukraine:

1. *Ceasefire and demilitarization of the front line.*
2. *Neutrality of Ukraine, supported by security guarantees from third countries.*
3. *Bilateral agreement between Russia and Ukraine on Crimea and Donbass.*
4. *A multilateral peace agreement between the EU and Russia, implying the withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine and the lifting of Western sanctions against Moscow.*

In September 2022, **Mexican President** Andrés Manuel López Obrador [proposed](#) the creation of a high-level commission for dialogue and peace in Ukraine. He considered it important to include the prime minister of India, the UN secretary general and Pope Francis in its composition.

In April 2023, **Brazilian President** Lula da Silva made his proposal. He [initiated](#) the creation of a negotiating format similar to the G20, and also called on Ukraine's Western allies to stop arms supplies. This initiative was [supported](#) by Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer.

In June 2023, during a speech at an international forum, the **Indonesian Defence Minister** [proposed](#) an immediate ceasefire; withdrawal of both sides to a distance of up to 15 kilometres from

the line of contact; creation of a demilitarized zone under the supervision of a UN peacekeeping mission; and holding a referendum under UN supervision on the «disputed territories of Ukraine» in order to determine their final status. Subsequently, the minister's words were [criticized](#) by the President of Indonesia.

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