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Peace Initiatives for Ending the War in Ukraine (as of 23 January 2026)

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Summary

The backgrounder provides a chronological overview of the main peace initiatives and plans that the parties to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and third actors have put forward since 2022.

Contents

1 Istanbul agreements
2 Zelensky's peace formula
3 China's position
4 African peace plan
5 Jeddah discussion
6 Other initiatives
7 Summit on Peace in Ukraine in Switzerland
8 Putin's proposals for a peaceful settlement
9 The Donald Trump Administration's Peace Efforts

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 during a series of online sessions. At the meeting on 29 March 2022 in Istanbul, the sides stated publicly that a draft treaty was being negotiated (some members of the Ukrainian delegation confirm it privately that both Kyiv and Moscow made several concessions as the talks progressed). For two weeks after the Istanbul round, the delegations continued to exchange edits online; 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. On 15 June 2024, the New York Times published the full draft of the treaty dated 15 April 2022. The document contained, among other things, the following key provisions:

- *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.*
- *Giving the Russian language an official status in Ukraine; ban on the propaganda of Nazism.*
- *Providing Ukraine with international multilateral security guarantees.*

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. However, the biggest point of contention was Article 5 of the treaty. The Russian vision implied that in the event of a new armed attack on Ukraine, the guarantor states (including Russia itself) would provide the country with the necessary military support "based on a decision agreed upon by all guarantor states." Kyiv feared that such language could lead to Moscow again invading Ukraine and then vetoing any military intervention in support of Kyiv by guarantor countries.

At a media briefing following the meeting on 29 March in Istanbul, the Ukrainian delegation presented a vision of possible agreements. The presented provisions were mainly based on the ideas and principles discussed by the parties, however, in some respects they might have reflected Kyiv's requests, and not the wording that had been agreed upon. These provisions later became known as the Istanbul Communiqué based on the results of the 28-30 March 2022 consultations. In 11 points it set out the main provisions of the future agreement on security guarantees for Ukraine and the modalities of its conclusion and implementation. Among the key provisions were:

- *Declaration of Ukraine as a permanently neutral state under international legal guarantees in order to implement a non-aligned and nuclear-free status. Kyiv wanted to see China, Russia, the USA, France, Turkey, Germany, Canada, Italy, Poland and*

Israel as possible guarantor states. Moscow also proposed to include Belarus in the list of guarantors. In the future, the treaty was to be open for signing by other states.

- *International security guarantees will not apply to Crimea, Sevastopol and certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. At the same time, the agreement should have contained interpretations of how the parties understand the territorial borders of the certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk region.*
- *In the event of aggression, any armed attack on Ukraine or any military operation against Ukraine, each of the guarantor states, after urgent consultations between them (within no more than three days), will provide assistance to Ukraine as a permanently neutral state that has been attacked. Assistance may involve such individual or joint action as is necessary, including the closure of airspace over Ukraine, the provision of necessary weapons, and even the use of armed force. The mechanism for implementing security guarantees "taking into account protection against possible provocations" should be regulated in the agreement based on the results of additional consultations between Kyiv and the guarantor states.*
- *Negotiations on Crimea and Sevastopol will last for 10-15 years, the parties will refrain from an armed method of resolving the Crimean issue.*
- *Ukraine does not enter into any military alliances, does not deploy foreign military bases and contingents, and conducts international military exercises only with the consent of the guarantor states. For their part, the guarantor states confirm their intention to promote Ukraine's membership in the European Union.*
- *The signing of the agreement and/or the adoption of political decisions on remaining unresolved issues was expected during the meeting of the presidents of Ukraine and Russia later in 2022.*

According to Vladimir Putin, the draft agreement was initialled by the head of the Ukrainian delegation, but representatives of Kyiv claim that no signatures were placed (although members of the Ukrainian delegation privately confirm that significant negotiation progress was made). 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 main reasons for the withdrawal is the lack of willingness of many Western states to sign an agreement on multilateral guarantees, without which the entire treaty structure would lose practical meaning for Ukraine.

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).*
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.

In November 2024, Zelenskyy presented another proposal, named a «victory plan». The Ukrainian president positioned it as a roadmap for pushing Russia towards peace. The «victory plan» was to be implemented not instead of, but in conjunction with the previously proposed «peace formula». According to media reports, the plan had five public points and several non-public annexes, which were bilaterally presented to Kyiv's partners. The publicly accessible provisions included the following:

- *An «unconditional invitation» for Ukraine to join NATO until the end of the conflict.*
- *Strengthening Ukraine's defences, both by the Ukrainian Armed Forces and jointly with Ukraine's partners.*
- *Deployment of a «comprehensive non-nuclear strategic deterrent package» in Ukraine.*
- *Concluding an agreement between Kyiv and interested Western partners on the joint protection of the country's critical resources, joint investment, and the utilization of Ukraine's economic potential.*
- *Replacing certain contingents of US armed forces in Europe with Ukrainian units after the end of hostilities.*

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. In the words of NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, «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 Kyiv 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 Presiden**t 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.

Summit on Peace in Ukraine in Switzerland

The conference on resolving the Russian-Ukrainian conflict took place on 15-16 June 2024 in Bürgenstock, Switzerland. The goal of the conference was to "develop a common understanding of a path towards a just and lasting peace in Ukraine." The conference focused on three topics: nuclear, food and human security.

Representatives of over 90 countries, mostly Western, took part in the conference. Russian representatives did not receive an official invitation from the Swiss government, as "Russia has repeatedly stated that it is not interested in participating." The Russian Foreign Ministry stated that Moscow does not intend to take part in events that are tied to Vladimir Zelensky's peace formula. Later, Vladimir Putin emphasized that "without Russia's participation [...] it is impossible to reach a peaceful solution in Ukraine and in general regarding global and European security." China also refused to participate in the event, explaining that: "China has always insisted that an international peace conference has to be approved by both Russia and Ukraine." In May 2024, China,

together with Brazil, put forward the idea of organizing an alternative conference on peace settlement between Russia and Ukraine, which would be supported by both Moscow and Kyiv.

As a result of the conference in Switzerland, the representatives of 83 states and organizations signed the joint communiqué (a number of participating states refused to sign the document). Its main points concerned the safe use of nuclear energy and the unacceptability of the use of nuclear weapons, ensuring uninterrupted food supplies, as well as the release of prisoners of war and respect for the rights of displaced civilians. Vladimir Zelensky said that he would present Moscow with a proposal to end the war as soon as it is approved by the international community. This will be done so that "at the second peace summit we can record a real end to the war."

Putin's proposals for a peaceful settlement

On 14 June 2024, prior to the start of the peace summit on Ukraine in Switzerland, Vladimir Putin announced a Russian proposal to end the conflict. He named the following conditions for the start of negotiations with Ukraine and the subsequent complete and final end of the conflict:

- *Withdrawal of Ukrainian troops from the Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions and the four regions' full recognition as subjects of the Russian Federation.*
- *Kyiv's statement on the renouncement of its intentions to join NATO.*
- *Neutral, non-aligned, nuclear-free status of Ukraine, its demilitarization and denazification.*
- *Ensuring the rights and freedoms of the Russian-speaking citizens of Ukraine.*
- *Enshrining these basic conditions into "fundamental international agreements", which also implies the lifting of sanctions against Russia.*

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that Russia would make attempts to implement this peace initiative together with China. As expected, negative reactions followed from Ukraine and its Western allies. Thus, Vladimir Zelensky called Putin's proposal "an ultimatum that cannot be trusted," and the Secretary General of NATO said that this initiative would actually allow Russia to "occupy even more Ukrainian lands."

The Donald Trump Administration's Peace Efforts

During the 2024 election campaign, Donald Trump repeatedly emphasized his confidence in the possibility of resolving the Ukrainian conflict quickly. After taking office, he began actively pursuing peacekeeping efforts: he held several meetings with

Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Ukraine's European partners, held several telephone conversations and a meeting in Anchorage, Alaska, with Vladimir Putin. Trump facilitated the launch of parallel and direct negotiating tracks.

For example, in February–March 2025, talks were held in Riyadh between the American and Russian delegations, as well as between the American and Ukrainian delegations. In May–June 2025, the first direct talks in three years between Moscow and Kyiv took place in Istanbul. The two parties exchanged memorandums on a possible peace settlement. The version prepared by Kyiv included provisions for an unconditional cessation of hostilities, the creation of a sustainable security system, and security guarantees for Ukraine, as well as the continuation of Ukraine's aspirations to join the EU and NATO. The Russian draft memorandum called for the withdrawal of Ukrainian forces from the Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson regions, the cessation of foreign military aid to Kyiv, and the exclusion of third-country military presence. The agreements ultimately reached were limited to humanitarian issues: the exchange of prisoners of war and the bodies of fallen soldiers.

On 15-16 August 2025, the first meeting between the presidents of Russia and the United States since the beginning of the conflict took place in Anchorage. Despite the historic nature of the meeting, no specific peace agreements were announced either in the form of a communiqué or at the joint press conference between the two leaders. However, the Russian side subsequently repeatedly referred to the «Anchorage formula» and the «spirit of Anchorage». Among other things, this inferred formula implied a move away from the demand for an unconditional ceasefire in order to begin substantial negotiations.

In November 2025, the United States presented a 28-point peace plan to the parties to the conflict, the first comprehensive draft document to emerge from the Trump administration's peace-making efforts. It included the following:

- *A non-aggression agreement between Russia, Ukraine, and Europe.*
- *Russia's pledge to refrain from invasions of neighbouring countries, and NATO's pledge to refrain from expansion.*
- *Reliable security guarantees for Ukraine, including from the United States, which would be automatically revoked in the event of a Ukrainian attack on Russia.*
- *A reduction in the Ukrainian Armed Forces to 600,000 personnel.*
- *Ukraine's non-aligned status and the absence of NATO troops on its territory.*
- *Ukraine's right to EU membership.*
- *Lifting sanctions against Russia and its reintegration into the global economy.*
- *Securing Ukraine's nuclear-free status.*

- *Recognition of Crimea, the Luhansk, and Donetsk regions as de facto Russian territories.*
- *Freezing the frontline in the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions. Withdrawal of Ukrainian troops from the Donetsk region and recognition of this territory as a neutral, demilitarized buffer zone under Russian control.*
- *Russia's renunciation of territorial control and claims beyond the five regions.*
- *Launch of the Zaporizhzhia NPP under IAEA supervision and distribution of electricity between Russia and Ukraine.*
- *Holding elections in Ukraine within 100 days.*
- *A full amnesty for the actions of participants in the conflict during the war.*

Soon, the European Union proposed a counter-version of a peace plan, which detailed possible agreements on a ceasefire, but not on a long-term peace treaty. The plan did not mention specific options for resolving the territorial issue, but merely envisaged a freezing of the frontline, a ceasefire, and international monitoring of its observance. It also proposed providing Ukraine with security guarantees similar to Article 5 of the NATO Charter and lifting restrictions on the size of the Ukrainian Armed Forces.

In December 2025, Volodymyr Zelenskyy announced a reduction of the peace plan to 20 points after consultations with the United States and Ukraine's European partners. The new version was more moderate and fragmented: the document was divided into four draft agreements with varying legal force. Key changes included:

- *Changes to the definition of the demilitarized buffer zone in Donbas: the plan stipulates that the zone should comprise approximately 30% of the territory and will not be considered an internationally recognized part of the Russian Federation.*
- *Removal of the requirement to enshrine the non-aligned status in the Ukrainian Constitution and NATO documents.*
- *A radically new approach to the Zaporizhzhia NPP: instead of management under the auspices of the IAEA, it is proposed to transfer the plant to a new American owner, with electricity distribution among Russia, Ukraine, and the United States.*
- *Increasing the permissible number of Ukrainian Armed Forces personnel from 600,000 to 800,000.*

Further negotiations (supported by "shuttle diplomacy" by US administration officials) focused on finalizing and agreeing on these individual documents. Notably, the discussed plans did not become the subject of any full-fledged media leaks. This reflects a number of measures taken by the negotiating teams, including restricting access to information for European states.

Following Donald Trump's talks with Volodymyr Zelenskyy on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos, as well as the US delegation's meeting with Vladimir Putin in Moscow on 22 January, US Special Presidential Envoy Steve Witkoff stated that only the issue of territories remains unresolved. On 23 January, two working groups began negotiations in Abu Dhabi: a trilateral (Russia-US-Ukraine) group on security issues and a bilateral US-Russian group on economic cooperation.

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