

March 6, 2014

STATEMENT ON UKRAINE

In the recent past, we have witnessed leaders of a number of nations justifying the oppression of dissenting voices, we have seen them deny their citizens democratic participation and ignore human rights and dignity. In the global context, there appears to be an escalation of such activities, to the point where violence committed by the state against its own citizens, as a means of exercising political control, appears to be the “*new normal*”.

We watched with horror as the political protesters demonstrating in the main square of Kiev, Ukraine were met with deadly violence. These recent developments in Ukraine speak to this broader global trend of governments responding to political dissension with draconian legislative measures, criminalizing free speech and freedom of assembly and directing unmitigated violence and brutality against their own citizens.

Unifor joins with the over 1.2 million Ukrainian/Canadians in Canada – many who are Unifor members who are welcoming the news of an agreement that will begin the process of reconciling disparate political viewpoints. We are hopeful that the people of Ukraine will prevail in creating political institutions that are open, fair and democratic and that through these processes the people will determine their own future.

We acknowledge that the underlying issues in Ukraine are extremely complex: the country continues to reel from the aftermath of harsh economic reform following the fall of communism. The bleak economic circumstance is compounded by an ethno-linguistic political division, between those with longstanding economic, social, and political ties to Russia, and those closer to the west. But, this is all the more reason to give Ukrainians the time and space required to overcome the nation's deep divisions and mistrust.

Our union will stand in solidarity and will continue to support the people of Ukraine in their fight to create a constructive democratic dialogue between the different political communities in Ukraine, so that the country can embark on an independent and socially progressive path, in harmony with its neighbours to the east and west.