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BRUSSELS SUMMIT SUMMARY: IMPLICATIONS FOR UKRAINE

On the 11th -12th July 2018 the 29th meeting of Heads of State and Government of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization was held at the NATO Headquarters in Brussels. The task of the Brussels Summit was to make important decisions aiming at further strengthening security in Europe and neighboring countries, particularly by improving containment and defense, spreading stability and combating terrorism, developing partnerships with the European Union, modernizing the Alliance and ensuring a fairer distribution of costs. The affirmation of this was the signing, on the eve of the meeting, of the declaration on strengthening cooperation in areas of military mobility, cyber security and hybrid attacks, countering chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear risks, as well as the fight against terrorism and illegal migration in the Mediterranean to protect citizens of the countries members of the European Union and North Atlantic Treaty Organization. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg pointed out that one of the main issues at the summit would be the decision to invite the Republic of Northern Macedonia to NATO membership, as well as to discuss regional, safety issues with the presidents of Ukraine and Georgia, and to carry out reforms in these countries with the support of NATO.

As always, the participants of the summit were preparing for difficult and controversial discussions. The provocative conduct of Donald Trump at

the G7 summit a month before the meeting at the NATO headquarters showed that participants of the conference should expect sharp statements from the US President in Brussels. Thus, the president of the United States condemned Germany for the support of Russia in the construction of the “North Stream 2” pipeline, during the official breakfast with J. Stoltenberg, where in spite of the status of a closed meeting media were present. The President of the United States has repeatedly emphasized that the United States are defending European countries, and at the same time they spend billions negotiating with Russian leadership and neglecting not only collective security but also their own protection. Donald Trump is entitled to such accusations, since US contributions amount is 22% of the NATO budget, and US troops are present in many European countries. However, in a few hours after meeting with Angela Merkel, the American president stunned journalists with the statement that the United States had wonderful relationships with Germany. Responding to the press, leaders of the two states avoided acute issues, but Trump said that “North Stream 2” was discussed at the meeting. After Trump's speech, the media joked that the thesis for his speech had been written by the Ukrainian side. Indeed, the Brussels Summit brought positive news to Ukraine, despite the blocking of the NATO-Ukraine Commission meeting by Hungary, the alliance recognized Ukraine's aspirations for membership. Blocking of the commission by Hungary has no effect on the Euro-Atlantic integration of Ukraine, as NATO is able to tighten the Ukrainian security sector through the Annual National Program and the Strategic Defense Bulletin. In contrast to Tunisia, Iraq, or Afghanistan, the format of practical cooperation with Ukraine is different, as indicated by a series of events. For example, the alliance found it possible to hold meetings with the participation of Petro Poroshenko and NATO Heads of State and Government, ignoring the opposition of Hungary, indicating that the alliance would not endanger cooperation with a key partner in favor of bilateral issues. The president of the United States at the press conference on the summit said that he did not like the situation in the Crimea, but the responsibility for the annexation of the peninsula belonged to Barack Obama, as it had happened during his presidency. In addition, despite the fact that the American president abolished most of the bilateral talks, Donald Trump's meeting with the Ukrainian president was held on July 12 and was mostly concerned with the issues of summit of presidents of the United States and Russia. They discussed a wide range of issues, including “North Stream 2” and further defense cooperation.

The summit adopted a declaration approved by the Heads of State and Government of the Alliance, which confirmed the prospect of Ukraine's

future membership in NATO and condemned the aggression of Russia. Ukraine was granted the status of “aspirant country”, which confirmed the state's aspiration to join the alliance. Only the aspirant country can provide an action plan for NATO membership, but without recognizing the state of their aspirations for joining it is impossible to launch an Intense Dialogue on Reforms aimed at potential membership. However, obtaining a plan of action does not provide the candidate with security guarantees. Alliance commitments for joint defense are valid only for member states. Therefore, the new status of Ukraine does not guarantee quick membership, for example, as Macedonia, which received the plan of action in 1999, but still did not become a member of NATO because of the Georgian veto. Consequently, the conflict with Hungary and tense relations with Russia are complicated by the accession of Ukraine.