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December 12, 2022

### A Statement to Senator Stabenow, Senator Peters, and Representative Slotkin

The Greater Lansing Peace Education Center (PEC) appreciates that several weeks ago you met with the Michigan Peace Alliance (MPA) to hear concerns about international issues, especially about the ongoing war in Ukraine. The PEC is following up on this meeting to reiterate our concerns about the danger to the world the longer the Ukrainian War continues. When the MPA met with you, you seemed open to supporting negotiations with Russia under the right conditions to find an end to this disastrous war. The PEC now believes that time has come. The PEC believes that given the current balance of forces, support for Ukraine's maximum goals, or even less, remains consistent with the United States's and Ukraine's interests in now beginning negotiations with Russia to end this war. The PEC believes that the longer this war continues, the greater the social, political and economic harm not just for Ukraine but for the world.

In the abstract, most no-negotiations' supporters recognize that the war will end with negotiations but believe that the time for them is not ripe yet. The unspoken assumption about these ultimate negotiations rests on the expectation that within some reasonable time period, Ukraine will have scored a complete military victory; In this case, negotiations really just represent the terms of Russia's defeat – in essence, something like the Treaty of Versailles or Japan's surrender on the deck of the Battleship Missouri. But such expectations of unconditional victory don't always pan out – see Iraq, Syria, Libya, Vietnam and Afghanistan.

Noticeably, on November 9<sup>th</sup>, Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Mark Milley recognized, "There has to be a mutual recognition that military victory is probably, in the true sense of the word, not achievable through military means." The PEC asserts that starting negotiations now represents smart foreign policy whether the war ends in Russia's total military defeat or in a World War I stalemate. The PEC hopes that you will consider the following explanation about why negotiations should begin as soon as possible:

First, starting negotiations does not mean that the outcome of those negotiations will ultimately favor one side or the other. It's not

uncommon for negotiations to begin while a war continues but before the outcome of the war or of the negotiations are clear. President Eisenhower negotiated with China and North Korea while the Korean War continued to agree to the 1953 Armistice; President Nixon negotiated with North Vietnam to reach a U.S. withdrawal from South Vietnam in 1973 while the war continued; President Trump negotiated with the Taliban for the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021 while the war continued. The U.S. and Ukraine should follow these examples and start negotiations now even if the outcome of these negotiations remains to be decided.

Second, the Ukraine and the U.S. can now seek negotiations from a position of relative strength. When Russia first invaded Ukraine, the initial expectation was that Putin's armored forces would sweep into Kyiv and establish a puppet government. But with limited NATO support and great courage, Ukraine defeated Russia, thus guaranteeing that whatever the outcome of the fighting in Eastern Ukraine, Ukraine will emerge as a sovereign democratic nation regardless of any final border lines. After the Russian defeat, the war has shifted to the Eastern regions where Ukraine has scored offensive success putting Russia on the defensive. Thus, if Ukraine and the U.S. now seek negotiations, they are doing so from a stronger position than when the war started.

Third, the longer the war continues and Russia suffers setbacks, the greater the danger either side may escalate the fight to the point of even greater destruction and death. The U.S. has provided Ukraine with weapons of increasing lethality; In response, Russia has attacked Ukraine's power grid and other critical infrastructure. In response, Ukraine may be tempted to try to involve NATO into direct conflict with Russia. The world saw an example of Ukraine's effort to directly involve NATO in the war when Ukraine attempted to blame Russia for a misfired Ukrainian missile that landed in Poland. Now Ukraine is sending attack drones inside of Russia. What's next?

Moreover, the most serious threat of escalation could be Russia's threat to use tactical nuclear weapons if it confronts what it believes represents an existential threat to Russia as the war unfolds. Whatever happens, the nuclear threshold must not be crossed. Failures by both sides to understand what the other will do under various threats, developments and potential escalations remain critical to avoid dangerous moves. The best way to make certain that the war, as horrible as it is now, does not get even worse stands as keeping in constant communication to prevent a miscalculation. Ongoing negotiations represent a critical way maintain contact to prevent a dangerous escalation that crosses the other side's redline.

Fourth, while Ukraine and its U.S. supporters inside and outside their governments now insist that the war be fought to what amounts to Russia's unconditional surrender, this might not be feasible or realistic. While the war's momentum now favors Ukraine, the likelihood that Russia remains so weak that Ukraine can militarily force it out of all territory in relatively short order may be mistaken. Competent military leaders, like General Milley, have suggested that Ukraine may not be strong enough to achieve total victory. Ukraine's supporters seem reluctant to even think about or even consider how the war could be ended if Ukraine cannot win a complete victory at any acceptable cost. This inability to imagine something other than total victory could

extend this war and its harm for a long time with world-wide disastrous consequences. Being in ongoing negotiations would give the parties better chances to find a reasonable way to end the war if both sides must make difficult compromises.

Fifth, even assuming that Ukraine's military and the West's sanctions force Russia to make major concessions or to withdraw completely as part of a negotiated settlement to provide for Ukraine's security, a wise long-term foreign-policy move would offer Russia some security guarantees. This would serve both as a face-saving concession and as an opening of the door for Russia's post-Putin reentry into a less contentious relationship with Europe and the U.S. In fact, French President Macron has proposed this.

Macron recognizes that a largely defeated nuclear-armed, resentful, likely pariah Russia needs an off ramp to save face and to find a path to reintegrate itself into Europe. Russia will still have national interests and nuclear weapons after Putin is gone. Macron recognizes that even before Russia invaded Ukraine, it had feared a NATO presence on its borders. Given Russia's 20th Century experience in World War II, any Russian government, not just one led by Putin – even by Gorbachev – would have these fears. Security guarantees would be a fig leaf to soften Russian concessions or even total defeat no matter how this war reaches a negotiated end.

Sixth, the longer the war continues, the greater the harm to Ukraine, Europe, the U.S. and the rest of world. Already Ukraine and much of Europe face a cold and economically difficult winter. Sanctions on Russian energy have sent inflation in Europe skyrocketing causing a growing war-weariness that will only increase as the cold weather continues. And it is not just Europe. At a United Nations General Assembly, non-Western leaders have called out for negotiations to end the war. In spite of some food shipments leaving Ukraine, hunger is some poorer countries mains a danger. A statement issued after the recent G-20 meeting in Bali stated that the Ukraine War “is causing immense human suffering and exacerbating existing fragilities in the global economy – constraining growth, increasing inflation, disrupting supply chains, heightening energy and food insecurity and elevating financial stability risks.” The longer the war continues, the worse these harms will increase.

Finally, the PEC appreciates your willingness to meet with groups like us even if there is no immediate agreement with our concerns about the Ukrainian War. We hope that you will consider our concerns as this awful war continues and push openly for negotiations to begin. The PEC also has other concerns about world peace and justice that we hope to bring to your attention over time. We appreciate your openness to discussion with us on all issues, even in the face of disagreements. We await your response

Respectfully,

Nelson Brown, Jr, Co-Chair

For the of the Board of the Greater Lansing Peace Education Center