

Good Day. My name is Jay Truesdale, and I am an economic officer at the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv. Firstly, I would like to thank the organizers of this event, as well as all its participants, for coming together to create such a forum. The topics you will discuss in Donetsk and Svetogorsk are important and timely, both for Ukraine and its many partners in the international community.

Given that my role at the embassy is to serve as an advisor on economic issues, I would like to take a couple of minutes to speak about that subject as it relates to my country and yours.

On Wednesday this week, President Obama gave his annual State of the Union address to the American public. From President Obama's speech, it is clear that our government's top priority remains economic recovery and growth after a very difficult 2009. In the United States, the President took huge risks in working with our Central Bank to stabilize the American and global economy. We stood on the precipice of the worst crisis since the Great Depression. And, while it has been bad -- certainly bad here in Ukraine, where people are truly suffering from a major contraction in GDP -- it could have been much worse had there not been urgent and quick leadership.

Ukraine's presidential election presents a similar test in leadership, with the first round already showing that Ukraine values free, fair, and open democracy. The results of the election must allow Ukraine to move forward quickly on a variety of pressing topics, perhaps most importantly a reform program to prevent the economic crisis from worsening.

The U.S. Embassy will continue to support reform programs that relieve pressure on the budget and the pension system, that provide greater transparency and financial viability to Naftohaz, and that reduce corruption. We will work with international financial institutions like the IMF, the World Bank, and the EBRD to engage with Ukrainian authorities and assist in implementing the necessary economic, administrative, and judicial changes that experts like you have already identified as top priorities.

From our perspective, these steps are also necessary to create a business environment to attract investors. We can't tell an American company to invest here. The investor comes and looks at the situation, he talks to the other companies who are here, and then he makes an evaluation. I think it's pretty obvious that in the world today, especially when we are talking about investments, there is great competition, and the bottom line is that Ukraine has to present itself in the best possible way as the best place to invest. I think many American companies see this country as one with the great potential. But there are a lot of other things that can be done to change the environment, to make it more hospitable to attract more companies here.

So, in conclusion, I would like to say that I am disappointed I cannot be with you in person to discuss these issues further, since I would greatly value your feedback. If you are ever in Kyiv and would like to meet, please feel free to contact me. Thank you for the opportunity to join you by video, and good luck at this conference.

Goodbye.