

## **THE FIRST DECEMBER INITIATIVE GROUP FREE MAN IN A FREE COUNTRY**

**Dear participants in the National Forum “New Social Contract”,**

The First December Initiative Group welcomes the concerned citizens of Ukraine represented by each of you.

Ukraine needs care.

After all, we are facing very serious challenges, both external and internal. For the first quarter of the century, we first felt what armed aggression of the country willing to strangle us in its “brotherly” embrace is. We have managed to break the Russian scenario of destroying Ukraine as a state, but much is lost. We become stronger as a nation, but many political pitfalls will await us. Not only in Donbas or Minsk, but also in Kyiv.

The root cause of the modern Ukrainian crisis is the loss of mutual trust between society and politicians, as well as the people’s despondency because of the impossibility to bring about changes for the better through the political process. Such alienation of the people and government is destroying Ukraine from inside.

To overcome the current crisis in a peaceful way is possible only through the restoration of public confidence in political institutions and the political process itself.

In its “Word on Freedom and Responsibility”, the First December Initiative Group drew national attention to the fact that trust requires efforts of the government and businesses, churches and community leaders, volunteers and society. We emphasized that our society gives voice to the arising request for the introduction of a large agreement on the future – new and conscious social contract whose basic principles will form our lives’ rules, and therefore outline the dream we aspire to achieve.

This is not about creating another concinnous document, but about how to reach social consensus on WHAT we ALL are doing to unite and develop Ukraine.

What is the social contract? This is when the whole society and the government agree on the rules on relations among individuals, society, and the state. We must come to the mutual understanding through dialogue. Society and political elites must jointly agree on how we should move on and what kind of Ukraine build. Having come to an agreement, they should assume joint responsibility for the country’s future.

The political elite must find the courage and wisdom to ask the Ukrainian people how society sees the role of a human being, self-organized communities, local communities, and finally the state in a future Ukraine.

The whole society must realize that neglecting moral values for political, ideological or any other group interests is destructive. Therefore, to bring our personal and social life in harmony with the moral law is a precondition for overcoming the crisis.

To respect and consciously adhere to the new rules, Ukrainian society must become their active co-creator, but not delegate this right to politicians whom it does not trust.

Our march to freedom requires from society a different rhythm of life than during usual times. And it is important for each and all of us to follow the rules and values with the first step. So we welcome you on this difficult, but reassuring way and wish success to all of us.

*On behalf of the First December Initiative Group  
The Latest Chairman Prof. Volodymyr Panchenko*

*The First December Initiative Group includes the leading representatives of Ukrainian intelligentsia: Viacheslav Briukhovets'kyi, Bohdan Gavrylyshyn, Cardinal Lubomyr Husar, Ivan Dziuba, Yevhen Zakharov, Myroslav Marynovych, Volodymyr Panchenko, Myroslav Popovych, Vadym Skurativs'kyi, Yurii Shcherbak, and Ihor Yukhnovs'kyi.*