

In Memoriam: Leonid Kravchuk

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UPF-International - Our heartfelt condolences go out to the family and friends of Leonid Kravchuk, a Ukrainian politician who served as the first president of Ukraine. Born on January 10, 1934, he passed away at the age of 88 on May 10, 2022.

During the August 19-21, 1991 Soviet coup attempt Mr. Kravchuk, who was then the chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR, did not support the attempt to remove the USSR leader Mikhail Gorbachev from power. Mr. Kravchuk then resigned from the Communist Party.



When the Verkhovna Rada (Ukraine's parliament) passed the Act of Declaration of Independence of Ukraine on August 24, 1991, the Ukrainian constitution was amended to create the post of president of Ukraine. Before the vote for the Declaration of Independence of Ukraine Mr. Kravchuk was instrumental

in persuading the communist majority in parliament to accept the opposition's demands of Ukrainian independence.

Following the Act of Declaration of Independence Mr. Kravchuk was vested with presidential powers, thus becoming both de facto and de jure head of state. Later that year, on December 5, 1991, voters formally elected him president in Ukraine's first presidential election. On the same day, the voters voted overwhelmingly to secede from the Soviet Union - a move which Mr. Kravchuk fully supported. This made Mr. Kravchuk the first head of state of independent Ukraine (December 5, 1991, to July 19, 1994).



On December 8, 1991, together with Russian President Boris Yeltsin and Belarusian head of state Dr. Stanislav Shushkevich, Leonid Kravchuk signed the Belovezh Accords, which ended the Soviet Union and replaced it with the Commonwealth of Independent States.

In 1992 President Kravchuk signed the Lisbon Protocol, undertaking to give up Ukraine's nuclear arsenal. He also served as a chairman of the Verkhovna Rada and People's Deputy of Ukraine, being the leader of the Social Democratic Party of Ukraine (united) parliamentary group (from 2002 to 2006).

After becoming president of independent Ukraine, Leonid Kravchuk achieved and strengthened the formal sovereignty of the country and developed its relations with the West. He refused to retain the common armed forces and currency inside the Commonwealth of Independent States. Rather than NATO expansion, President Kravchuk wanted Ukraine's participation on an equal footing with the Central European countries, Russia, and NATO in building a new, inclusive security architecture for Europe.

In October 2005, Mr. Kravchuk invited and warmly welcomed UPF co-founders Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon to Kyiv, Ukraine, during their worldwide UPF inaugural tour.

Mr. Kravchuk was awarded the honorary rank of Ambassador for Peace by UPF. In this role he took an active part in different activities and forums organized by UPF locally and worldwide. As a far-sighted politician he supported social democratic reforms and advocated UPF's integrated approach to world peace through the promotion of interdependence, mutual prosperity and universal values.