**Due to the aggravation of the situation in eastern Ukraine, Caritas is mobilizing all available forces and resources**

The escalation of the conflict from the Russian side will inevitably lead to a colossal humanitarian and social catastrophe. During the eight years of the war, almost all possible resources have been exhausted. The COVID-19 pandemic and the deteriorating economic situation have significantly increased poverty, particularly along the 420-kilometer line of contact, where daily life for locals is the struggle for survival.

In late summer 2021 Caritas Ukraine began preparations for the possible escalation of the conflict in order to strengthen the network and to increase its capacity. During the last two months, with the assistance of our partners, the training of employees and preparations for a possible complex emergency have been intensified.

Today each of the local Caritas offices, particularly in eastern Ukraine, hosts the training on the deployment of field kitchens, opening of temporary shelters, and, if necessary, assistance to people who will be forced to leave their homes due to hostilities. At the same time, we are ready to host the potential IDPs in Dnipro, Poltava, Zaporizhzhia, as well as in Western Ukraine - in Khmelnytsky, Ivano-Frankivsk, Ternopil, and Lviv.

"*We are doing everything possible to be able to provide assistance and support to people in need, even in an emergency, as we have been doing in eastern Ukraine since 2014*", says Tetiana Stawnychy, the President of Caritas Ukraine. "*We work closely with church structures and local authorities to be prepared for new challenges and threats if necessary*," she added.

Due to the resumption of constant shelling, taking into account the safety of social workers, trips to the buffer zone have been suspended until March 2, and local Caritas teams are working only on their regular locations. Provision of the psychosocial support has been switched into the online format, and, as Caritas Ukraine managers say, requests for such support have significantly increased. In this situation social workers themselves also need help and support. We are also receiving requests for help from people who have suffered from shelling recently.

People are worrying, especially those who survived during the 2014-2015 events, they have had a terrible experience and most of all do not want to experience the loss of loved ones, the loss of home, the loss of life to which they are accustomed. The tension is increasing due to constant shelling and uncertainty. The memories of eight years ago, which began to be erased from memory appeared again and caused incredible stress.

The situation is alarming and changing very quickly, so the possibility of relocating local centers near the front line is being discussed - for the safety of workers and their families and the possibility of provision of further assistance to people in need. However, at the moment, all Caritas offices are fully operational.

The large Caritas team is sincerely grateful to all our partners and friends who help and support us around the world. For all of us and all of our beneficiaries, this is a guarantee that we are not alone in the face of the enemy.

Since 2014, Caritas Ukraine has been assisting victims of war in eastern Ukraine, including both IDPs and residents of isolated settlements along the front line. The assistance is comprehensive in its efforts to meet the complex needs of people and includes distribution of food, drinking water, hygiene kits, materials for housing reconstruction, medical care, and psychosocial support, financial assistance for the development and support of small businesses, and agriculture. Caritas develops and implements programs to identify and meet the needs of the most vulnerable groups, including children, the elderly, and people with disabilities.