

The Secretary General

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Strasbourg, 6 May 2022

**Message to the participants in the international conference of students,
graduate students and young scientists' topic
"Urban Development Strategy: Youth and the Future (innovation elevator)",
organised by the O.M. Beketov University**

Dear friends in Kharkiv,

Dear participants,

In these difficult times of war, especially for Kharkiv, keeping up a certain level of structures and routines is very important. Lectures and exchanges are one of these elements and I very much welcome the international conference of students, graduate students and young scientists organised by the O.M. Beketov University. The topic "Urban Development Strategy: Youth and the Future (innovation elevator)" is very relevant for the post-war reconstruction of Ukraine. It is my pleasure to greet the students of the O.M. Beketov National University of Urban Economy in Kharkiv, a university which I am very closely attached to – besides my own Alma Mater, the Paris Lodron University of Salzburg, Austria.

When I had the honour to give a lecture about the European standards of local self-government and citizen participation in political and planning processes in March 2016, I was impressed by the wide range of the themes the students can choose from and the combination of high academic performance with excellence in sports. And I was impressed by the knowledge and the curiosity of the students I discussed with after the lecture. The great ambiance of the responsibly renovated historic buildings and the identity and mission of the university as well as the links to the international academic world are a fertile ground for research and new approaches to all the questions proposed to the students.

The city and the Oblast of Kharkiv can be proud of the O.M. Beketov University, which includes social and economic values and promotes education and youth culture as the most important factors of the country development. A university lives and grows not only from its reputed professors. It is the students who carry the reputation out into the country and beyond and attracts future generations of qualified students. Ukraine will need your know-how and knowledge, and Ukraine will need the commitment of your generation to the country of Ukraine, in which you believe so strongly.

The international friends of Ukraine, notably the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, have shown political solidarity since the very beginning of the war. We have called for an end of the unreasoned and illegal war, called for the release of mayors and councillors and condemned the attacks also against the symbols of local self-government and regional democracy: the Russian shelling of townhalls and regional council buildings.

You, the students who specialise in housing and municipal economy, municipal management, construction, transport, electricity-, water-, gas-, and heat supply, tourism as well as ecological and technological safety, you are indispensable actors in the post-war reconstruction of Ukraine.

I congratulate the O.M. Beketov University on its 100th anniversary, greet the participants of the conference and wish you all strength and the continued belief in and love for your country Ukraine!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Andreas Kiefer', with a stylized, cursive script.

Andreas Kiefer