

# New Ukrainian President Zelenskiy Takes Office, Calls to End War in East

May 20, 2019



Volodymyr Zelenskiy **Efrem Lukatsky / AP / TASS**

Ukraine’s new President Volodymyr Zelenskiy was inaugurated on Monday morning, saying that his first task in office will be to achieve a ceasefire in eastern Ukraine, where a five-year-old conflict with Russian-backed separatists has killed 13,000 people.

“Our first task is to end the conflict in the Donbass,” Zelenskiy [said](#) in translated comments as he took office on Monday to applause from Ukrainian lawmakers.

**Related article:** [Ukraine’s Zelenskiy: Border ‘Only Thing Left in Common’ With Russia](#)

Noting that Ukraine is ready for dialogue with Russia, Zelenskiy switched to Russian, [saying](#): “I believe that the first step to begin this dialogue will be the return of all Ukrainian prisoners [held by Russia].”

He said he was ready to make tough decisions, at a cost to his reputation — “and, if need be,

even this job” — to achieve peace.

Zelenskiy also announced that he was dissolving the Ukrainian parliament. His party has no representation in the Rada, making it expedient for him to call a snap poll while his popularity remains high.

*Reuters contributed reporting to this article.*

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2019/05/20/new-ukrainian-president-zelenskiy-takes-office-calls-end-war-east-a65649>