Below is the transcript of the recording

Dear Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Indeed I feel a great honor and a great pleasure to have hosted a seminar where Mr. Mustafa Jemilev himself participated; that was a great pleasure because I have to confess that since my young days Mustafa Jemilev was one of my heroes as a dissident, as a human rights defender and a as a great example of a non-violent and peaceful way of trying to restore the dignity and the rights of his people, the Crimean Tatars. I have to say that since my young days when I started talking to my friends and colleagues, basically people who were active among Soviet dissidents, Moscowans many of them, Lithuanians who were quite active in the circles of Jelena Bonner, Andrei Sakharov and other dissidents. Those high profile dissidents, they indeed expressed their fascination for Mustafa Jemilev, calling him one of the most unique examples of how to tackle the most difficult issues of the 20th century.

We know that if there is one example of the brutality of Stalinist deportation, the brutality of social engineering undertaken by the Soviet regime, I think the Crimean Tartars are the example of how much brutality and injustice indeed they saw in the middle of the 20th century. And needless to say, although Europe is changing dramatically, in Lithuania as myself I can witness that the Baltic states can exemplify this tendency better than any other country – as some former Soviet republics have joined the European Union and NATO they have changed the political map of the world dramatically and they start associating themselves to other political players and actors defending human rights. They have moved from a political victim to those political players that raise many painful issues. And of course there is another aspect of the former Soviet Union; that on the one side we have very successful countries, like Ukraine which is a democracy and which is a partner and friend, a cherished friend, but at the same time there is a package of very painful problems. A painful legacy of the Soviet Union, a painful legacy of the 20th century. And of course it is not easy to solve them.

One example of how my country, Lithuania, is trying to tackle some problems is the restoration of Jewish property. You know that in Lithuania after the Holocaust only 20 000 Jews remained after the Holocaust, after the brutal massacre – although it was 240 000 Jews before the Second World War. And needless to say, the deprivation and what happened to them during the Second World War; the new and independent Lithuania just had to, somehow, tackle the fact that something had to be done with regards to the Jews, their property, their dignity. And of course it is a test. It is a difficult test because some countries inherit political problems that they did not create themselves. They were created by others. And they inherit some painful problems, they have to tackle them, they have to do something about them. And it is a test of the maturity of society. It is difficult. And we know that, technically speaking, the devil works in the detail. It is difficult to tackle those issues from many points of view, but the problem is that we can only rely on the democratic credentials and democratic consciousness of governments, politicians, the political class, civil society, and that is why I think it is a test for Ukraine, it is a test for any country involved in these things.
What is very important concerning the Crimean Tatars is that nothing is easy and nothing is trivial here. I think it is quite difficult, the problems are quite multi-faceted and multi-dimensional and that is why they require political maturity and political wisdom, generosity and benevolence of all parties. But what is absolutely unique in our days and I would enthusiastically join Mr. Marino Busdachin who expressed this better than I would do; the way that Mustafa Jemilev exemplifies the hope of the future and non-violent methodology and non-violent ways of dealing with those issues. I have to say that although in my heart I support very strongly many freedom fights all over the world, many movements, but I have to say that the methods that they adopt somehow make me quite skeptical and we know that the methods are not an easy thing. Sometimes they can discredit the ends themselves. The methods that some groups adopt and use can discredit the political objectives, the ends, and much to the honor and credentials of Mr. Mustafa Jemilev, I have to say that he is an example for the rest of the world of how a person of unquestionable democratic credentials can tackle those issues showing benevolence, wisdom and understanding of the multi-dimensional nature of these problems.

That is why I believe that instead of simply taking sides or simply showing our political empathy or sympathy, we have to understand what is happening on the ground, we have to evaluate the legacy of the 20th century and I think that this is one of the most important aspects of 21st century politics, somehow, some Eastern European societies and their politicians are preoccupied with political memory but I have to say that the evaluation of the past has to be not the ovation of suffering, it is not a new martyrlogy. We have to evaluate our mistakes, we have to evaluate some political errors and injustices and I think it is never too late to do justice. It is never too late to restore justice.

But in any case I do believe that some processes could be useful for Europe and useful for Ukraine. I do believe that Ukraine is a mature and democratic society. And I know that Ukraine getting closer to the European Union, or eventually joining the EU, would be a dream of many countries and of many politicians all over Europe. That is why I think that some difficult challenges, some difficult issues that Ukraine has to face, has to confront, I think that Ukraine will benefit. At the end of the day, I guess there are some problems. There are some political packages, some agendas that allow societies and political systems to mature. They allow them because this kind of challenge is important not only for Ukraine, not only for Russia but I think it is one of the typical issues of our understanding of justice and our understanding of the ways of dealing with the legacy of the 20th century.

That is why I am happy to see you today, I am grateful that you were able to make it and to attend this meeting. I am very grateful to our speakers who kindly agreed to share their insights with us. I would like to thank for your kind attention and again I would like to thank UNPO and Mr. Busdachin and Mr. Swan for moderating and for organizing the whole thing, and thank my bureau and all colleagues for their generosity and kindness. I would like to express my hope that it is not for the last time we meet here and we will try to organize something not too involved in partisan politics but just to raise some issues. As if to say to all people of wisdom, generosity and good will, I need to raise some issues to keep them high-profile and raise attention and just to keep us sensitive and able to confront the most difficult political and moral issues of the 21st century. Thank you.