



Dear Fellow Citizen Diplomats,

Witnessing the horrific events of the past week in Ukraine, leaders in our communities – instinctively and understandably – want to say something, to do something, and to act towards a collective disapproval of this assault on humankind; endeavoring to make a positive difference at this critical juncture in our global discourse.

Yet, suspending or ending a sister city relationship with a Russian city partner should not be one such action.

As citizen diplomats, we must be alert to counsel and remind our elected officials as well as our local municipal leaders of the critical role that Sister Cities International and each local sister city relationship offers, especially in times of conflict. We applaud those sister cities programs and citizens around the globe, including in Russia, who have voiced their support of an independent Ukraine and reaffirmed their belief in peace through mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation.

While suspending or ending a sister city relationship to register disapproval of a foreign government's actions may seem, on the surface, like a positive policy protest action, it has the complete opposite effect – closing a vital and, oftentimes, last channel of communication with vulnerable or isolated populations.

As a result, we reemphasize and underscore that our policy remains to

encourage our members and U.S. communities to keep their sister city relationship active, especially now when the political issues and actions of the day threaten to disrupt the positive, constructive relationships that have been made, over many years, at the people-to-people and community-to-community levels. We ask each of you to reaffirm this policy in all your interactions within your communities.

Should you have any questions or need any assistance, please contact our SCI National Headquarters. Thank you for your continued support of Sister Cities International and our mission to "Promote Peace through Mutual Respect, Understanding, and Cooperation – one individual, one community at a time."

Sincerely,

Leroy R. Allala | President and CEO

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