**CEEC Statement to President Biden**

**Prior to NATO Summit in Vilnius**

**July 11-12, 2003**

On behalf of the Central & East European Coalition, which represents 25 million Americans of Central and East European descent, we strongly urge you to publicly support Ukraine’s NATO membership bid, both during and before the NATO Summit in Vilnius on July 11-12, 2023. Ukrainian accession to NATO is pivotal for Western stability and security, and the Ukrainian people have long earned the right to join the Alliance.

Since the outbreak of full-scale war in 2022, thousands of Ukrainians have made the ultimate sacrifice to defend their homeland. Millions more have left behind their homes, their families, and their livelihoods. They have done so not only to protect their own future, but also that of the entire Western alliance. Simply put: Ukrainians are dying so that their NATO allies don’t have to.

Yet despite their enormous sacrifice, the Ukrainian people remain without a clear path to NATO membership. As NATO itself [explains](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_37750.htm), “a strong, independent Ukraine is vital for the stability of the Euro-Atlantic area.” Mr. President, the fact of the matter is that a strong, independent Ukraine, capable of resisting Russian aggression, is impossible without NATO membership. Ukraine’s accession to NATO provides the strongest guarantee of peace and sovereignty in this region for generations to come.

In the leadup to the 2008 Bucharest Summit, you warned that deferring Ukraine and Georgia’s membership bids would give Russia a green light to undermine its neighbors’ democracies. Today, it is abundantly clear that you were right. We urge you: do not let NATO make the same mistake again. Should Ukraine have its application deferred in Vilnius this July, NATO will once more give Russia a green light to push forward with its campaign of devastation. An application delayed is an application denied.

As lives are lost and war fatigue infiltrates political posturing, NATO membership for Ukraine is of existential importance. Mr. President, as leader of the free world, we implore you to publicly express your unwavering support for Ukraine's acceptance into NATO membership during at the NATO Summit in Vilnius.

 With the Summit fast approaching, we request to meet with you in the coming weeks so that we can further discuss this life-or-death issue.

Sincerely,