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Ukraine / Politics

Davos Ukrainian Lunch

Political stability pitches dominate table talk

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Brad Wells

bw@concorde.com.ua
+380 44 391 5577

Ukrainian politics overtook economics at the 6th Davos Ukrainian Lunch last Friday. Presidential contenders Yulia Tymoshenko and Viktor Yanukovich, campaigning ahead of the Feb. 7 election, participated via video linkup, each called for political stability and provided the international financial community insight into their plans and personalities.

Event logo



Source: Viktor Pinchuk Foundation

Speakers

Yulia Tymoshenko, Prime Minister and presidential candidate

Viktor Yanukovich, Presidential candidate

Sergiy Tigipko

Arseniy Yatseniuk

Carl Bildt, Foreign Minister of Sweden

Aleksander Kwasniewski, former President of Poland

Key quotes

"The crisis has highlighted an increasing number of problems in the country. We saw that the structure of the economy, which is based on several industries – metallurgy and chemistry – had more difficulties working through the crisis." – Yulia Tymoshenko

"I will make every effort to create an effective coalition that will be responsible for a platform, which it will sign with me. This will either be with a new coalition in this parliament or in its new composition after elections." – Viktor Yanukovich

Presidential election watch list

Second round vote	Feb. 7
Second round results	By Feb. 17
Inauguration*	By Mar. 17

* Exact dates yet to be announced; subject to change. Source: Central Election Commission

Tymoshenko: 'We must diversify the economy'

Prime Minister and presidential candidate Yulia Tymoshenko stressed the need to deregulate and diversify Ukraine's economy, dependent on metallurgy and chemicals, as a way out of the financial crisis. Tymoshenko, in response to a question about what she would do to improve Ukraine's investment climate, said her priorities would be, first, to secure political stability, then to work at deregulating the economy, implement tax reform, and root out corruption. Tymoshenko called for strengthening the middle class and new support for small and medium-size business. Among her first steps as president, Tymoshenko said she wanted to complete the Ukraine-EU Association Agreement, which will establish a new free trade zone.

Yanukovich: 'Effective coalition needed to implement reform'

Opposition leader and presidential candidate Viktor Yanukovich said a primary task upon being named president would be to create a stable coalition in parliament in order to implement reforms. Immediately after taking office, Yanukovich also said he would start negotiations on a gas transportation consortium to improve gas transit from Russia to Europe via Ukraine. Yanukovich pledged to increase the volume of trade between Ukraine and Russia, which he said declined in recent years due to the policies of the current president. Yanukovich said improving the investment climate in Ukraine required fighting corruption and reforming the judicial system.

Tigipko & Yatseniuk: Faces of Ukraine's political future

Sergiy Tigipko and Arseniy Yatseniuk, the third and fourth place finishers in the first round of presidential elections, spoke in person at the event. Both politicians said Ukraine needed political reform and declined to support either of the 'old faces' in the election runoff. Tigipko said Ukraine needed structural reform of the court system, which he named as a major obstacle for foreign investors. Yatseniuk said the new president should provide a completely new agenda for the country and that economic priorities were legislative changes and improving energy efficiency.

Closing thoughts: Who are you going to call?

Moderator Chrystia Freeland ended the discussions with Tymoshenko and Yanukovich by asking them which foreign leader they would call first after being elected. Tymoshenko replied that she would first phone key Ukrainian government institutions, while Yanukovich, who was the runner up in the 2005 presidential election, said, "Why should I call anyone? I'll let them call me — I've been waiting for that call for five years!"

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Concorde Capital, Head office

2 Mechnikova Street, 16th Floor
Parus Business Centre
Kyiv 01601, Ukraine
Tel.: +380 44 391 5577
Fax: +380 44 391 5571

www.concorde.ua

Concorde Capital

4 Fourth Lesnoy Pereulok, 5th Floor
Capital Plaza
Moscow 125047, Russia
Tel.: +7 495 642 87 15
Fax: +7 495 225 85 00

office@concorde.com.ua

CEO

Igor Mazepa im@concorde.com.ua

Head of Sales & Trading

Alexander Shnir ash@concorde.com.ua

International Sales & Trading

Anastasiya Nazarenko an@concorde.com.ua
Marina Martirosyan mm@concorde.com.ua

Domestic Sales & Trading

Yuriy Pilipenko up@concorde.com.ua
Alisa Tikhomirova at@concorde.com.ua

Director of Research

Andriy Gostik, CFA ag@concorde.com.ua

RESEARCH

Strategy

Andriy Gostik, CFA ag@concorde.com.ua

Metals & Mining

Andriy Gerus ga@concorde.com.ua

**Utilities (Telecom, Energy),
Machinery**

Yegor Samusenko syg@concorde.com.ua

Oil & Gas

Andriy Gerus ga@concorde.com.ua

Real Estate, Consumer-related

Andriy Gostik, CFA ag@concorde.com.ua

Economics, Financial services

Mykyta Mykhaylychenko mms@concorde.com.ua

Fixed Income

Andriy Gerus ga@concorde.com.ua
Mykyta Mykhaylychenko mms@concorde.com.ua

Politics

Brad Wells bw@concorde.com.ua

Editor

Brad Wells bw@concorde.com.ua

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