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Dear Convener

## Ukraine Resettlement – MS Ambition

Thank you for your invitation, subsequently confirmed by my office, to attend the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee on 9 February. I am delighted to have this opportunity to update the Committee on Scotland's support for Ukraine.

Since the Scottish Government's super sponsor scheme opened in March 2022, providing an accessible and safe route to those fleeing war, it has been overwhelmingly popular with more than 30,000 visas now sponsored by the Scottish Government.

As part of providing safe and welcoming temporary accommodation to allow arrivals to immediately travel to Scotland, the Scottish Government chartered two passenger ships, MS Victoria and MS Ambition. Both have been an excellent addition to our accommodation estate and have been well received by guests.

When I wrote to you on 2 December, I confirmed the contract for MS Victoria, docked in Edinburgh, would be extended to 13 June and that would update you further on our plans for MS Ambition, docked in Glasgow.

While an extension to the contract for MS Victoria was necessary to avoid disruption to guests over the festive period, I have decided no such extension is required for MS Ambition. It will therefore remain in service for the full duration of its existing contract until 31 March.

The latest published statistics show that, as of 7 December, there were around 1,200 guests on-board MS Ambition. And while more than 250 guests have disembarked since the vessel arrived in September, the Scottish Government is providing additional staff and resources on-board to assist the council's resettlement leads.

As part of the joint Glasgow City Council-Scottish Government 'Disembarkation Strategy', the council is leading a regional approach with neighbouring authorities to ensure suitable volunteer hosts, and other sustainable and viable options are prioritised for those on-board.



I would be pleased to update the Committee in further detail on progress of this joint work, as well as Scotland's wider response to this humanitarian crisis, when we meet on 9 February.

I hope you have found this information useful. I provide a copy this letter to the Social Justice and Social Security Committee for awareness.



**NEIL GRAY**