

EU leaders call for robust & credible security guarantees for Ukraine as military leaders of “coalition of the willing” meet in London



* European Commission President von der Leyen, European Council President Costa, and High Representative for Foreign Affairs & Security Policy Kallas after Council meeting.

The European Council, which consists of the leaders of the 27 member states of the European Union, European Council President António Costa, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, and High Representative for Foreign Affairs & Security Policy Kaja Kallas, met Thursday in its usual quarterly meeting. As in all of its meetings over the past three years, the focus was on Russia’s continuing war against Ukraine. After discussing via a video link recent developments in the war with Ukrainian President Zelenskyy and recalling their previous conclusions, most recently in their meeting on March 6, the leaders reaffirmed in their conclusions to the meeting their “continued and unwavering support for Ukraine’s independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.” The EU maintains, they said, its ‘peace through strength’ approach, “which requires Ukraine to be in the strongest possible position, with its own robust military and defense capabilities as an essential component. In line with this approach, the EU remains committed, in coordination with like-minded partners and allies, to providing further comprehensive support to Ukraine and its people, as it exercises its inherent right to self-defense against Russia’s war of aggression.”

Continuing, the leaders reiterated their support for a “comprehensive, just and lasting peace based on the principles of the UN Charter and international law,” said they welcome “all efforts towards achieving such a peace,” and recalled the principles they set out in their March 6 meeting that should guide peace negotiations. They also said

they welcome “the joint statement by Ukraine and the United States following their meeting in Saudi Arabia on March 11, 2025, including the proposals for a ceasefire agreement, humanitarian efforts, and the resumption of US intelligence sharing and security assistance,” and called on Russia “to show real political will to end the war.” They emphasized that a “credible pathway to peace must include humanitarian relief efforts, notably the exchange of prisoners of war, the release of civilians and the return of all Ukrainian children and other civilians unlawfully deported and transferred to Russia and Belarus.” They said the EU “remains ready to step up pressure on Russia, including through further sanctions and by strengthening the enforcement of existing measures, including further means and measures to counter their circumvention, in order to weaken its ability to continue waging its war of aggression.” They also agreed that “subject to EU law, Russia’s assets should remain immobilized until Russia ceases its war of aggression against Ukraine and compensates it for the damage caused by this war.”

The leaders said, “The EU and its member states will contribute to the peace process and help secure a just and lasting peace for Ukraine, which is in the interest of both Ukraine and Europe as a whole. A comprehensive peace agreement, which respects Ukraine’s independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, needs to be accompanied by robust and credible security guarantees for Ukraine to deter future Russian aggression. The European Council welcomes the efforts that have started in this regard together with like-minded and NATO partners. The EU and Member States are ready to contribute to security guarantees, in particular by supporting Ukraine’s ability to defend itself effectively, based on their respective competences and capabilities, in line with international law.”

The leaders also said the EU “will continue to provide Ukraine with regular and predictable financial support,” called on the Commission to “swiftly take all necessary measures to frontload financing under the Ukraine Facility and the G7 ERA initiative,” and urged the Commission and Member States “to use all options under the Ukraine Facility to increase financial support to Ukraine.” They also recalled the initiatives to enhance EU military support to Ukraine, notably that of the High Representative to coordinate increased support by Member States and other participating States, on a voluntary basis, notably on large-caliber artillery ammunition and missiles, as well as the military needs component of the G7 ERA initiative and called on the member states to urgently step up efforts to address Ukraine’s pressing military and defense needs.

The leaders reaffirmed the EU’s “strong commitment to ensuring full accountability for war crimes and the other most serious crimes committed in connection with Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine.” In this regard, they said the progress made in establishing a Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine within the framework of the Council of Europe is an important step. They said the EU “remains committed to supporting Ukraine’s repair, recovery and reconstruction, in coordination with international partners” and said the Ukraine Recovery Conference in Italy in July

will be important in that regard. In concluding, the leaders reiterated “the inherent right of Ukraine to choose its own destiny, based on the UN Charter and international law” and said the EU “will intensify support for Ukraine’s reform efforts on its path towards EU membership.

Last week’s conclusions largely reiterate those the EU leaders reached in regard to the war in their meetings in December and March, and as in those meetings the conclusions were supported by 26 of the 27 leaders – all but Hungarian Prime Minister Orbán. But since there is no rule that the conclusions of a discussion must be approved unanimously, Orbán’s refusal to agree is irrelevant – although it will no doubt be remembered by Ukraine’s many friends on the Council.

Meanwhile, as the EU leaders were discussing the war, senior military officers of the 31 countries that have joined the “Coalition of the Willing” organized by British Prime Minister Starmer and French President Macron were meeting at a military base outside London to discuss plans for an international peacekeeping force in Ukraine that would provide a security guarantee for Ukraine if and when a ceasefire is agreed and implemented. Starmer and Macron have said they are willing to provide troops to maintain a ceasefire once one is agreed upon, and the British government has said a “significant number” of governments have said they are willing to do the same. Macron announced the leaders of the coalition of countries supporting Ukraine would meet again in Paris next Thursday in order to “fine-tune” their plan for providing a “credible security guarantee” for Ukraine.

The question, of course, is whether Russia will agree to a ceasefire if the members of the “Coalition of the Willing,” many of which are NATO members, commit to providing troops on the ground in Ukraine in order to maintain the ceasefire and guarantee Ukraine’s security – which may be why Starmer recently suggested that the forces guaranteeing Ukraine’s security might have to be air and naval forces rather than ground forces.

David R. Cameron
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