European External Action Service (EEAS)

Foreign Affairs Council: Remarks by High Representative Josep Borrell upon arrival

2022-01-24 · Brussels

Check against delivery!

Good morning early in the morning,

Today we have two main points on the agenda. As you can imagine, the two focuses of tension are Russia and Ukraine on one side and Mali on the other side, although we are going to talk also about Syria, because Syria is a forgotten war and we have to think about Syria also.

But I suppose the most important issue for you, for the public opinion, is what is happening in the Ukrainian border.

We will formalise what we discussed at the Gyminch meeting. We will continue building up our position towards Russia's attempts to undermine the security structure in Europe, and to rebuild spheres of influence which are completely outdated. We are going to have a video conference with Secretary [of State of the United States, Antony] Blinken in order to continue our strong coordination. During the whole process, the European Union has been very much in touch coordinating with the United States, being informed before and after the meeting. And we will continue doing so.

On Mali, we are going to have now a meeting with the Member States that are part of the Takuba operation led by France.

And, finally, we will have also something to discuss about other parts of the world where there are events that are important for the European Union security, but the most important one for sure is what is happening in the Ukrainian border.

Q&A

Q. The fact that the Americans asked the families of the diplomats to leave Ukraine soon, does it mean that the war is very close?

Well, Secretary Blinken will explain us the reasons of this announcement. We are not going to do the same thing, because we do not know any specific reasons. But Secretary Blinken will inform us and I do not think we have to dramatise. As far as the

negotiations are going on - and they are going on - I do not think that we have to leave Ukraine. But maybe Secretary Blinken has more information that he will share with us.

Q. The European Union personnel and their families will stay in Ukraine for now?

There is no decision about that now. Unless Secretary Blinken gives us information that justifies a move, it is not.

Q. On sanctions, do you consider Berlin a reliable partner, because they are sending mixed signals? Are they too hesitant when it comes to Russia?

How can you ask if I could see in Berlin a reliable partner? All members of the European Union are reliable partners.

Q. But do you consider Berlin too hesitant when it comes to Russia?

All members of the European Union are united. We are showing an unprecedented unity about the situation in Ukraine with a strong coordination with the United States, being perfectly coordinated and participating with all in debriefing and being informed about what is going on. No problem with any Member States.

Q. SWIFT sanctions are not on the table anymore?

The process of deciding about sanctions is a complex one. Sanctions have to be decided by the Council at the proposal of the High Representative - that is to say, me - or a Member State. But we want to act in strong coordination with our allies, with the United States, in particular, also with Canada and the United Kingdom. For the time being, we continue building up a strong package of sanctions, but nothing concrete will be approved today because there is a process. The process is underway. Be sure that everything will be ready when needed, but we are not going to announce any concrete measures.

Q. You said there is unity, but is the European Union really playing an active role on this?

Sure, it is.

Link to the video: https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/video/I-217219

Source: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/foreign-affairs-council-remarks-high-representative-josep-borrell-upon-arrival_en