European External Action Service (EEAS)

Foreign Affairs Council: Press remarks by High Representative Kaja Kallas upon arrival

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Check against delivery!

Good morning everybody,

We have a full day ahead.

First, we have a discussion on the foreign information manipulation and false information. What we can do actually about this. We have tools developed that we have helped our friends, other countries with, but it is clear that it is also becoming an issue in Europe. It is clear that we have these networks that are really working against us. And it is also cognitive warfare. It is a battle of narratives for the hearts and minds. So, we are discussing, what more can we do in this regard.

And then, of course, we have a discussion on Ukraine.

Tomorrow marks the fourth anniversary of this horrible war. Of course, there is going to be discussion on the 20th sanctions package. But as you all know, I think there is not going to be progress regarding this today, but we will definitely make this push. Then, also the discussion about what should we talk to the Russians about. It is clear that the pressure so far has been on Ukraine when it comes to the peace talks, but it is clear that it has to be on the Russian side, because they are the aggressor in this war.

And if we want this war to stop. If we want this not to go any further, then we also need to see concessions from the Russian side. That is also very clear. And then, of course, we will discuss also the €90 billion loan, how it should be pushed forward. But let us see how that works out.

Then we have the Middle East. We have Nickolay Mladenov coming to talk to us. We want to be part of the peace process in Gaza and also contribute with what we have. We have the EUBAM Rafah border crossing mission, and we have EUPOL COPPS. In order to disarm Hamas, it has to be the Palestinian police, and there EUPOL COPPS could be very handy. We have had agreements also with Jordan and Egypt on how we can best do this, but we also need the approval from the Israeli side. And then, we will also discuss Syria, the developments in northeast Syria, and what concerns are there.

And then, after that, we will also touch briefly on points like Venezuela and issues that other Member States want to raise.

Thank you.

Q&A

High Representative, do you want to be the negotiator with Russia from the EU? Do you want to have this position? Do you want [inaudible] negotiator from the EU with Russia?

I think more important than who talks to Russia is what we want to talk them about. And that is why these concessions that we need to see, whoever talks to Russia, whether bilaterally or as representative of Europe as such, needs to also ask these questions on what Russia is willing to concede. Because if you ask a lot, you get little. If you ask little, you get nothing, and if you ask nothing, you will pay on top - that is very clear. So, let us focus on what kind of concessions we want to see from the Russian side, not who is bringing those concessions to the table.

What size of the Russian army is ideal for peace negotiations?

It is not up to me to say, but the point is that if there are limitations on the Ukrainian army, there should also be limitations on the Russian army, because they are actually the problem here. But it is, of course up to the discussions.

After the ceasefire in Syria, right now, what message do you have for President al-Sharaa and the Kurdish leader Mazloum Abdi?

We have the ceasefire and of course it is very fragile, so we need those forces to work together to bring about the inclusive government and really the reconciliation of the country, and we are willing to help in this regard as much as we can. Also, regarding institution building, today we are going to also discuss whether time is right to have high-level political dialogue with Syria to address all these concerns.

On what Mr. Witkoff said, you seem pessimistic, but he seems optimistic, saying that he expected breakthroughs in the coming weeks and possible summits between Putin and Zelensky and maybe Trump. How do you see this optimistic going on? Do you have the same [inaudible]?

Looking at the signs, I do not share this optimism, because the negotiators on the Russian side are not really serious, and they are not willing to talk about anything political. So, of course, we have seen a lot of pressure on Ukraine to concede and give up what they are not willing to give up, but it does not bring long-term peace. So, I am not that optimistic that we will see any results in the coming weeks and months.

inaudible [situation in Iran]

Yes, the situation in Iran, of course, is very, very intense. We do not need another war in this region. We already have a lot. So, we have stressed the diplomatic way out of this, and we are also willing to contribute. It is not only the nuclear issue, but it is also the ballistic missile programme and the other worries we have with Iran. It is true that Iran is at its weakest point that they have been. We should be really using this time to find a diplomatic solution.

On the 20th sanctions package, you said that today it will not pass on. So, what kind of signal does it give four years after the start of the war?

We are of course, doing our utmost to have this sanctions package, to push this through. And I have talked to the Member States who are also going to raise this and convince the countries who are blocking. And we are also looking at ways how we can do it. But as we have heard some very strong statements from Hungary, that is why I do not really see that they are going to change this unfortunately today, this position that they have.

What compromises are on the table to bring it over the line with Hungary?

Well, we have heard from the media there, problems that they have that are totally not related to the 20th sanctions package. We should not tie together things that are not connected to each other at all. But let us listen to them explaining what are the reasons why they are blocking, and then see whether there are possibilities to overcome.

Speaking about negotiations with Russia, about your proposal or idea. Can you confirm that your idea is also to request to speak about the withdrawal of Russia’s troops from occupied territories, for example, for us, from Georgia and can you estimate the situation in Georgia? You know that the situation gets worse and worse.

Yes, it is true that Russia has occupied a lot of territories, and their forces are in different parts when it comes to Georgia, when it comes to Moldova. So yes, it would be clear to have long-term peace that they would withdraw from all the occupied territories where they are. Of course, some say these demands are not realistic, but let us be honest, the demands from the Russian side are not realistic at all. I mean, they are demanding territories that they have not conquered, even militarily by diplomatic means. So, this is in order to a bit balance the negotiation situation and really bring the focus on the problem, which is Russia continuing to attack its neighbours. Thank you very much.

Link to the video: https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/media/video/I-285103

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