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

Brussels, Belgium

EEAS Press Team

Check against delivery!

Good morning.

So, today is a very special day. First, it is Estonia’s Independence Day, where we celebrate our freedom and independence.

But, for three years, our Independence Day - a happy day - is forever tied with a very grim day which is the start of the full-scale war in Ukraine.

That is why I am also here, in Brussels, discussing with the Foreign Affairs Ministers what more can we do – and not celebrating in Estonia or being with the College in Kyiv.

We have to support Ukraine right now more than ever. We are discussing and hopefully can pass the 16th package of sanctions, which includes [from] gaming consoles to shadow fleet [among] different aspects.

Then we have also put forward a new defensive initiative to support Ukraine with ammunition capabilities in the short term – what they need. I also expect this political discussion to move forward. And then, of course, what more can we do.

Then we have other topics on our agenda as well. We are discussing DR Congo and also the sanctions that we will put to those people who are engaging with the war in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. We are also discussing the suspension of the raw materials agreement, the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Rwanda.

And then we have the Middle East. We will first have a discussion; we will go forward with the suspension of the sanctions against Syria. This includes transport, energy, banking sector and then of course other aspects.

After the Foreign Affairs Council, we also have the Israel-European Union Association Council. It usually is just format European Union and Israel. This time we also have 27 Member States in the first part so that everybody can express their thoughts and interact with the Israelis.

It is going to be a very intense day and [I am] looking forward to it.

Q&A

Q. Ever since Donald Trump was re-elected, the Europeans said that they cannot be cut out of the negotiations. Now exactly that is happening, and it seems that the Europeans are sort of clueless on what to do about this. Are the Europeans all talk but no action?

No deal without us can work. That is very clear. You can discuss whatever you want with Putin, but if it comes to Europe or Ukraine, then Ukraine and Europe also have to agree to this deal. That is why we need to be [present if this is] discussed. Whatever that is.

Q. High Representative, Macron is meeting with Trump today, Starmer tomorrow. Who should be the person speaking on behalf of Europe? And how worried are you about the political cultural gap between Europe and the United States. I mean, we have heard kind of shocking things from Donald Trump calling Zelenskyy a dictator and so forth. How worried are you?

First, I think it is good that we have as many interactions with the new administration in the United States as possible. I am also travelling tomorrow to the United States to meet [Secretary of State], Marco Rubio, and others there to discuss these issues because it is extremely important. It is also important that we keep the unity and that the points that we discuss are all the same with [the] different European leaders who have the meetings with the Americans. Well, of course, we cannot speak for President Trump and these statements are quite interesting. I mean, dictator, first, when I heard about this, then I was sure that he was making a mistake and mixing other two people because Putin has not had elections, or Russia has not had elections in 25 years. Zelenskyy is [an] elected leader, elected in free and fair elections. And, of course, during the war time you cannot have elections. Many countries have in their constitutions points that you cannot have elections. And why? Because in the elections you always fight between each other. Not in a situation where you have actually the outside enemy that you have to focus your strength on.

Q. What do you expect from the new German government? There were elections yesterday in Germany.

I expect close cooperation with the new German government. The German people have made their choice. Now they need to put together the government, and I hope that they do it as fast as possible, because we really need to move on with the decisions also on the European level that requires German participation.

Q. Syria [Inaudible] political parties from the religious ethnic [inaudible]. What is your message to Damascus?

Our message has been always the same, together with our regional actors as well: any kind of government needs to be inclusive, and needs to take into account all the different groups that are in Syria. We know that Syria is a very diverse country with many, many groups. We are keeping a very close eye on this and close contact also with the regional actors. If everything does not go right, then we also ready to put the sanctions back.

Q. President Macron said he want to make sure the Kurds are safe, and they have they are rights. What is your message?

Well, yes, not only the Kurds, but the other groups in Syria as well – if you think about the different groups that there are. That is why the message has been that the government has to be all-inclusive and there is no retaliation and no radicalisation. We are keeping an eye on this.

Q. EU official told us that you will also discuss Georgia issue. Can you tell us more details on what we can expect today and your vision of the recent situation and developments in Georgia?

Yes, we will discuss Georgia as well. Of course, the developments are quite worrying. We are discussing what more we can do. We have put forward sanctions on those who are actually using violence against peaceful protesters. So far, we have not been able to convince two of the European countries to also agree to this, but we continue trying.

Q. On Ukraine, how far to discussions on sending European peacekeeping troops in case of a ceasefire?

First, there has to be peace and so far, Putin and Russia do not want peace. So, there we cannot have peacekeeping missions. But the discussions, – what are the security guarantees for Ukraine – these are ongoing.

Q. Trump is trapped in a Russian disinformation bubble. Do you think the current Trump administration is acting in the interest of the free world or acting in the interest of Russia?

If [we] look at the messages that come from the United States, then it is clear that the Russian narrative is there, very strongly represented.

Thank you.

Link to the video: https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/video/I-268031

Continuation doorstep

Today we are discussing of course the sanctions to Russia and also the defence initiative, what more can we do regarding helping Ukraine militarily. I put forward a new defence initiative and I hope that it gets also support.

Of course, today we are not discussing our own defence. We are discussing this in the extraordinary European summit that has been called for the 6th of March

and that is where we discuss this.

Q&A

Q. High Representative about this plan for Ukraine. How can you guarantee that your plan with Ukraine is plan A and not B?

We are supporting Ukraine and if Ukraine is standing firm, then any plan without Ukraine or Europe will just not simply work. That is why we need to be taken into account.

Link to the video: https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/video/I-268032

Source: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/foreign-affairs-council-press-remarks-high-representative-kaja-kallas-upon-arrival_en