European External Action Service (EEAS)

EU-Western Balkans Summit: Press remarks by High Representative/Vice-President Kaja Kallas upon arrival

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I am happy to be here for the [European Union-]Western Balkans Summit.

The Western Balkans is an extremely important region for the European Union.

They belong to Europe geographically, so it is very important that we also advance in our relationship.

We have different cooperation points. Today we are going to discuss the Growth Plan, which is a very good piece of legislation.

We also had today a signing of the security and defence agreement with Albania.

We have one already with North Macedonia, so there is a lot of room for cooperation.

It is also clear that the Commission, together with the Commissioner for Enlargement [Marta Kos] and me, we want to see real advancement in the enlargement process during these five years of mandate that we have.

So, we are willing to work for this.

Of course, in the evening we will also discuss Russia's hybrid activities and war in Ukraine and what we can do more.

I see that there is the wish for some really short and fast solutions, but we are in this situation where Russia does not want peace, and that is a problem.

In order to have the best solution, we need to support Ukraine as much as we can.

The stronger they are on the battlefield, the stronger they are also around the negotiation table – and that is also in the interest of Europe.

Thank you.

Q&A

Q. First question on Ukraine. What exactly are the security guarantees that the European Union can give them? And if you're not talking about this right now, what is the strategy right now? Because otherwise Trump will decide in January.

Well, all the [European Union] Member States have signed the security guarantees with Ukraine, so it is a question for the Member States – which kinds of security guarantees they are giving to Ukraine, what they really comprise, what is the tangible thing there. Of course, what we can decide and talk on our level is what we can do together – for our own defence, the flagship projects, what we can do. Also, what we can do in order to help Ukraine, together. So, this is not only considering what is the outcome of the United States elections and the new administration, and what they are doing, but what we are also doing ourselves despite of that [outcome].

Q. What can the European Union do to pressure again the attack on [inaudible] children?

Well, of course, we are not going to discuss that today, but we are going to have discussions on the Middle East tomorrow. I think it is very important that we are –together with the regional partners when it comes to Arab countries, Türkiye, but also United States and European Union – [in agreement] on the basic principles that the new leadership of Syria should also follow what we want to see in order for Syria to develop.

Q. Can you comment about the latest threat coming out from Dmitry Medvedev? He's saying that the major allies sending help in Ukraine and military aid, they are legitimate targets.

Well, Russia is always threatening, and it is meant to scare us. So [based on] what we see, and the threats we have heard before, so I think the only response we can have is not to be afraid.

Q. Migration will be one of the topics today. Do you think the Syrian refugees should return to their homeland?

No, it is not going to be a topic today. I mean, today we have the Western Balkans Summit, so we are discussing the cooperation and what we can do with Western Balkans, and also we are discussing the Russian hybrid threats and actions in this regard.

Thank you very much.

Link to video: https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/video/I-265609

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