European External Action Service (EEAS)

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

2026-01-29 · Brussels, Belgium · EEAS Press Team

Check against delivery!

Good morning, everybody.

Today we have a very packed agenda.

First, we start with the global outlook for 2026. We see the international rules-based order under very much strain. We also see transatlantic ties not being the same that they were, and still we have threats, like Russia's war going on in Ukraine. We have instability in the Middle East. There is a lot to discuss.

Then, we talk about Ukraine. Of course, we see the talks also in Abu Dhabi, but on the Russian side, there are only military personnel present who do not have a mandate to agree on anything, which means that they are definitely not serious about peace. It is the opposite. They are bombing Ukrainians, trying to bomb and freeze them to surrender, and that is why we are also discussing the energy support that we can give them, because it is a very hard winter and Ukrainians are really suffering. There is a humanitarian catastrophe coming there. Also positive is that we are going to blacklist Russia on the money laundering list, because they are using the means to fund this war. I think any mean to pressure Russia into real negotiations is good, and we are going forward with this.

Then we are talking about the Middle East. Of course, the main topic is Iran. We are putting new sanctions on the list, and I also expect that we agree on listing the Iran Revolutionary Guard on the terrorist list. This will put them on the same footing with al Qaeda, Hamas, Daesh. If you act as a terrorist, you should also be treated as a terrorist. It is clear what we see: the death toll in the protests that were in Iran and the means that were taken by the regime are really severe. That is why we are also sending a clear message that if you are suppressing people, it has a price, and you will be also sanctioned for this.

And then, of course, in the Middle East, we also talk about Syria, we talk about Gaza, and what we can do there.

In the end we also have a discussion about the Great Lakes, what is happening there and what more can we do to bring stability to the region.

Thank you.

Q&A

Q. What specific new sanctions are you talking about? What can we expect?

On Iran, we have a few listings of the concrete persons who have conducted the violence against peaceful protesters and a few entities as well. But, in addition also, I expect that we will list the Revolutionary Guard as a terrorist organisation.

Q. Is the EU going to push new sanctions on Syria after the recent attacks on the Kurds? And are there any efforts of the EU to mediate between the groups?

Yes, we are in contact with our regional partners. And of course, what is going on, especially in the north part of Syria, is of big concern, especially because there are the camps in Syria. I have been in touch also with the Iraqi Minister, how they see this movement there - we will discuss this. Right now, we do not have many proposals on the table. It is more like how we can really steer this into the right direction.

Q. On the IRGC listing, how do you respond to the concerns that it might affect Europeans embassies' abilities to function in Iran?

These risks have been calculated. The diplomatic part is out of this revolutionary guard listing. The interactions with the Foreign Minister are not under this. The estimate is that the diplomatic channels will remain open, even after the listing of the Revolutionary Guards.

Q. Question on Ukraine please. Do you believe that the United States could give Ukraine security guarantees only in exchange of territory concessions?

My worry is that we have seen a lot of concessions also on the Ukrainian side, but that is blurring the picture, because Ukraine is not the one who is doing the aggression. It is Russia who is doing this. We should put more pressure on Russia so that we would see concessions on the Russian side. On the security guarantees, it is very important that we give tangible security guarantees. We will also talk about this today: what more can we do on the European side. But it is true that also Americans have to be part. If the Ukrainians are making very hard concessions, then they are making this in order to have peace for the rest of Ukraine, and then it has to be very clear that there is peace for the rest of Ukraine that Russia does not just attack again.

Q. The US, Ukraine and Russia are meeting on Sunday again. Will the Europeans be involved or watching from sidelines?

Again, if we look at these talks, then who is representing Russia is the military personnel who does not have any mandate to agree on peace as such. Clearly, Russians are not serious

about this. And for us, it is important that that we really see, that we push Russia into really having negotiations. Right now, they are just pretending to have them. We see them increasing their attacks on Ukraine because they cannot make moves on the battlefield, so they are attacking civilians. In October, the number of civilian targets had been 93%. I think right now it is much, much more. Russia is targeting hospitals, schools, apartment buildings, critical infrastructure, energy infrastructure, in order to bomb and freeze Ukrainians into surrender. And we really have to be very clear eyed about this.

Q. High Representative, about the situation that you are talking about that the Russians, they are not serious, but the Americans are serious, they sent Kushner and Witkoff. Anyway, are you worried that you will find yourself in a situation where all files on the table, whenever you disagree with the Americans, concerning Greenland or trade or any other files?

We have of course, still a lot of cooperation with the Americans, and we are in close contact when it comes to the Middle East, when it comes to also Ukraine in this. It is clear that for any deal to work, it has to have Europeans on board, because this war is here, and we have seen now that Americans have not supported Ukraine for almost over a year already. Europeans are doing this so that Ukraine can defend themselves. For us, it is very important that the principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty are respected. We see, of course, that international law is under much strain, not only in Ukraine, but also by other powers. And this is what we will also discuss over breakfast with the ministers.

Q. What do you think about the idea of President Zelenskyy to create some army of Europe? And army of Ukraine would be the base of this army [inaudible]?

Every European country has an army, and 23 countries armies are also part of NATO structures. I cannot imagine that countries will create a separate European army. It has to be the armies that already exist. We need to see how that works in practice. For me, it is understandable that in military, you have to have a very straight and understandable chain of command, so that whenever something happens, it is clear who gives orders to whom. If we create parallel structures, then it is just going to blur the picture. You know, in times of trouble, the orders, might just fall between the chairs.

Q. On the Prosperity Plan for Ukraine, of course the EU is involved, or at least the European Commission in the development of this plan, but do you know something? Will the EU be part of this agreement or is it just [inaudible] of how it will work?

Yes, the European Commission is working on the Prosperity Plan, and also Commissioner Kos will inform Ministers about this today. Of course, Ukraine's prosperity is very much interlinked with Europe, because they are geographically in Europe. Clearly, we have a role there.

Q. Yesterday, Georgian Dream announced much more restrictive laws against NGOs, journalists, media also political actors. In this situation, how can you support Georgian

people as media and civil society? Because this law will be adopted in near stages.

I expect some of the ministers also to raise this issue. And what we have done before, as we are supporters of human rights and fundamental freedoms, also press freedom is one of those. We definitely expect that we will make steps towards those who are conducting this.

Watch the video.

Source: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/foreign-affairs-council-press-remarks-high-representative-kaja-kallas-upon-arrival-6_en