

Brussels Forum

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Press conference

Ms. Anne McGinn: We can all fit on the stage? Good evening, everyone. Thank you for joining us for the ninth Brussels Forum. We're joined tonight by the minister of foreign affairs of Lithuania, Mr. Linkevičius. We just heard from the acting foreign minister of Ukraine, Andrii Deshchytsia. Also, behind me, we have the chairman for the Parliament of Georgia, Davit Usupashvili. And then chairman of the Ukraine Democratic Alliance for Reforms, Vitaliy Klychko. And then Kurt Volker, former U.S. Ambassador to NATO. So the gentlemen have some opening statements, brief statements, and then we'll open the floor to questions.

Mr. Linas Linkevičius: Good evening. Just few words. When we started this partnership program before Lithuanian presidency, in July last year, there were some skeptics saying that it's very difficult, challenging, and probably this program will be over soon. They were right, partly, because there were a lot of challenges. We know what we're talking about. But I'm really clearly saying now, and also in presence of these friends, gentlemen here, we are really continuing with all these difficulties, just one remark to you just to share with you.

It's clearly now it obvious to many of us that the choice of the countries. It's not enough just to respect that choice, but sometimes it's important also to defend that choice. And sort of the problem of those partners, but sometimes also it's matter of fact, for us it's important. So I have no doubt that we'll continue.

Maybe there will be difficulties ahead, but we are optimists, and we will have very good future in cooperation together.

Mr. Andrii Deshchytsia: Good evening. We did expect that Ukrainian prime minister would be here today with us. But unfortunately, he left to Ukraine early today after signing the association agreement to take a situation in Ukraine--actually, not only in Ukraine but around Ukraine. And really, what is, we feel, that the deployment of Russian troops in our eastern borders and the intensity of activities in Crimea needs special attention. But what's happened today, I think it's very important for Ukrainians, for Ukrainian state but also for Europe. It is a signing of the political part of the Association Agreement. It's a very good sign in what directions Ukraine has to go. Thanks.

Mr. Davit Usupashvili: Well, we in Georgia, we are expressing our solidarity to Ukrainian people so many times during last several months. And we were sharing the sufferings, we were watching from Georgia. And

today, finally, I heard the reason not to express solidarity but to congratulate to our friends in Ukraine. We'll be signing this really important document, out of which the (inaudible) wider Europe becomes irreversible. And believe us, the Ukrainians, we Georgians are not jealous that you were first signing this document because we will follow. The most important thing is to continue our part together, that we need to stay together and we need to prove that Eastern Europe is just Europe, and Europe is the gathering of free nations, free countries, free citizens. And these problems we are witnessing now in Ukraine and in Georgia are temporary problems.

And today, during this conference, we heard the many encouraging words that the world, democratic world, is ready to respond. Unfortunately, that was not the case in August, 2008. If that was the case, probably our Ukrainian friends would not suffer now, but better later than never, as it is said. And therefore, I am full of optimism now and we are sharing the feelings of Ukrainian people today. Thank you.

Mr. Vitalii Klychko: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Today is very important day for Ukraine. Today, we signed the political part of Association Agreement with European Union. Almost four months ago, hundreds of thousands, millions of the people go to the street around Ukraine. We are about to demonstrate we

want to live with European standard of life. It's enough to live with corruption, enough to live without rules, enough to live without (inaudible) and actually, today, we sign Association Agreement. Everybody understand right now is very difficult time for Ukraine.

Intervention, literal intervention from Russia. In this difficult time, we need support. Support of friends of Ukraine, support of everybody who see Ukraine as modern European country. And, yes, of course, from us, from Ukraine, defend our future but with the help of our friends. And that's why I want to say thank you very much for everybody who supports Ukraine, but was a help. We can go over this very difficult part of our history and we go out from deep economical and political crisis in Ukraine. We want to build modern European country and we do that. Thank you.

Mr. Kurt Volker: Thank you. Just three quick points. One of them is I want to congratulate the German Marshall Fund. What we've seen at the conference thus far today, and I'm sure we'll see it tomorrow as a remarkable degree of unity between the Europeans and Americans, east Europeans about what is going on, what this crisis is. A level of outrage at Russia's invasion of Ukraine, outrage over its annexation and a

determination that this cannot stand in a Europe of the 21st century.

Second point. The crisis is not over. We can't talk about it today as if it's now behind us and we're cleaning up. We've seen Russia take Crimea. We worry that Russia will try to take other parts of the Ukraine or will try to see places like Transnistria join the Russian Federation or South Ossetia or Abkhazia. So this crisis is not over and needs active crisis management.

And that's the third point, is that despite the unity that we see, we need to see stronger action from the transatlantic community to deter that kind of Russian activity. We need to be bolder, we need to be stronger, we need to be faster. Thank you.

Ms. Anne McGinn: Okay. I'd like to open the floor to some question. We have mics in the back of the room. I'd like to start off with (phonetic) from (inaudible) and then go to Irena Summer from NA Enterprise (inaudible).

Male: I have a question for the Ukrainian Foreign Minister. You signed the Association Agreement today. Do you think it's a diplomatically smart move to do that, or is that just going to antagonize Russia more and deepen this crisis and make it harder to find a diplomatic solution?

Mr. Andrii Deshchytsia: I think it's first of all, we agreed to sign this Association Agreement a few weeks ago, before Russia started an invasion. So it will, in any case, shouldn't provoke Russia because Russia has already invaded Ukraine.

Secondly, it was a choice of the Ukrainian people and those (inaudible) people who've been protesting against postponing signing procedure. And thirdly, this Association Agreement is the result not of only three weeks' work, this Association Agreement was on the table for years. As it happened that we signed it today. But during the last few years, Ukrainians and Europeans have been working hard to make it happen.

And if Russia did not protest against this for years, why should Russia protest it now? But it's one thing. The other thing from the other point of view, it's up to Ukrainian people to decide where Ukraine want to go and has to go. And the European choice was supported by the overwhelming majority of the parliament when the parliament wrote it for the program over in Ukrainian government.

Moreover, in the Ukrainian legislation, the membership in the European Union was supported by many previous governments. So it's the choice of Ukrainian people for many years.

Ms. Anne McGinn: Next question here and then to (inaudible).

Female: Yeah, hello (inaudible) I have my first question for all of you. Because all time of being here, political solution is the best way. Yes, this is the best way. But my question is, do you have a Plan B if Russia will not stop? And what can be a Plan B, because I would like to have clear answer.

And the second question is about political part of the Association Agreement. And my question is for both ministers. How do you see the real implementation of this document and what kind of procedure this part of document still needed? Do they have some kind of certification and how then will be the (inaudible) thank you.

Mr. Linas Linkevičius: I'll try to take a small point. First of all, with regard to Association Agreement, political parties were set. But it should be clear that Association Agreement is single instrument, including the CFTA, which is very important. And I know that Ukrainian friends already have a meeting, so-to-say, plan how to do it because this is, as a single mechanism, is very, very useful. And, of course, with regard to the CFTA implementation, we should really take it as a necessary step to start structural reforms, to place the process as irreversible and also, again, consider this is as a single. So let's consider this as a single instrument. At the same time, this

signing has a big political support and a boost to Ukraine.

Let me also refer a bit, although I was not asked, but the question, what (inaudible) asked is very typical question. It reminds me a bit, questions to Lithuania in 1990 when we declared our independence and we also asked not to provoke Soviet Union at that time.

So indeed, our task is to make a choice. Our task, of course, not to be aggressive. Our task, to be constructive, but it's not our task to make everyone happy, especially when somebody is aggressive. So this is also an important note and I believe we shouldn't accuse Ukrainians that they did what they had to do.

Mr. Andrii Deshchytsia: I will briefly answer on the second question, as we are planning to elaborate an action plan together with the European Union. And we do expect will--that the next week, the European Commissioners will come, the commissions will come to Ukraine and we will make this plan together. It will not be the plan that we will be making on our own and they will be making on their own, so we will make it together.

And for the implementation of what was signed today and how we can reach the stage to implement the other chapters of the association agreement, which were not in force--which are not in force at this moment.



And for the first of your question, the answer is very straightforward. We will defend our land. The Plan B.

Ms. Anne McGinn: We're going to do two--I'm sorry, sir.

Mr. Vitalii Klychko: Regarding Plan A. We tried to find solution in diplomatic way. If doesn't work--I just return from military base in the Ukraine. I spoke with officers, with soldier, with people in the street and everybody, every mood. We have to defend, is Plan B, our country, our unity, our independency and we are ready for that. It's our Plan B. And we expect support from the people from the country who support also independency. And we know the country, United States, Great Britain and Russia was the country guarantee of Budapest agreement in 1994. And Russia broke the agreement and we expect reaction from another country for that. Thank you.

Mr. Davit Usupashvili: Well, about the Plan B. In August, 2008, Georgia responded with Plan B. It started with this one, with Plan B and we ended where we ended. And that's an unfortunate lesson that one country, single country in military confrontation with Russia, is not in very good positioning. On the other hand, the war between nuclear powers should be excluded. Therefore, I would say between Plan A and Plan B, something A-minus, B-plus, and I do not thing that the

measures and tools are exhausted and there are no other things which democratic world can use.

And we heard today very important statements heard by Secretary General of NATO. And I believe that this will work and we all will do everything to avoid the bigger disaster. At the same time, of course every single citizen of Ukraine (inaudible) Georgia and every other country is ready to sacrifice for its homeland. But we politicians are here in order to avoid that Plan B.

Mr. Kurt Volker: I'll just add one point to what's already been said. I think the key word that should be on everyone's lips is deterrence. What we see right now is Russia using military force to impose its objective. And we see the United States and the European Union seeking to use other means, sanctions, in particular, to impose costs on Russia for doing that, and get it to stop and perhaps reverse. And thus far Russia is not taking those particular steps very seriously. I think what we need to be thinking of is not just imposing costs, but being willing to rise to the challenge at increasing rate in order to deter Russia from taking the further steps and consolidating what it has already done.

Mike Champion: Mike Champion from the Bloomberg View. I just spent--I just came from a weekend (inaudible) and Mr. (inaudible) I know that you were

there recently, too. And I came away with the impression, put Russia aside for the moment, but there is a vacuum, there. And it is a vacuum in which (inaudible) understandably and does not want to impose its right because it will back fire. And there--the local authorities or the old local authorities, the old Yanukovych family loyalists and so on who are there and the governor--the new governor is doing his best, but there is a vacuum. I worry that if you wait between now and let's imagine you win the presidency. Until towards the end of the year, there will be no representation for those people because you will have a government from, basically the (inaudible) party. You will have the party of regions these people in (inaudible), they feel that--you know, they didn't like Yanukovych that much, but it was their party and they feel they are no longer represented.

So how do you fix that? How do you get them involved because that's a long time to leave a vacuum open to leave ill wishers to do ill?

Dr. Vitaliy Klychko: Thank you for the question. The war is starting. It started a long time ago. Media war. Media war against the Ukraine and right now the Russian media (inaudible) information right now is (inaudible) people, radicals, nationalistic people, extremist, the people who don't like Russians. I didn't--I wasn't (inaudible) and was in the east region

of Ukraine and give the question to the people. I look like radicals. I look like nationalists. I hated Russians. I am Russian-speaking Ukrainian. My mom--my mother is Russian. My father is Ukrainian. My wife is half Russian, half Ukrainian. And we don't want to fight against Russia, but any way we will defend our country. We defend our independency, our unity, first point.

The second point is very important to talk to the people, to explain him. The--the politician can't bring the live standards to the people whether they're east or west Ukraine, south or north Ukraine or central Ukraine. Everybody has the same problems, but politicians try to use the old populist question of language, nationality, religion, history. It's work. It's work but it is very important right now to talk to the people and let--let--why--right now in all media in Ukraine, united country. And we talk about it and we know we can change the mood. But if you was in (inaudible), it's funny. We--I meet there. So many political tourists from Russia. They go around to those Russian flags and they (inaudible) for Russia. I told, guys, with all respect, Russia is multicultural country with a lot of problems, a lot of languages, a lot of nations. Go to Russia and fix your problem. We can do it at--without the help.

Main point to talk to the people to change their opinion and we can do that all together.

Mr. Andrii Deshchytsia: If I'll add only to this. So I think that what we need in Ukraine obvious more decentralization of powers and more powers to the local government including in Eastern Ukraine, and I think that we need to meet the needs of the people, of these people, local people in eastern Ukraine, but not only the needs they probably have been very publically [sic] about the use of Russian language. It's--but also the social, economic and internationally need that has to be improved and living standards that has to be improved and not only in Easter Ukraine, but all around the country.

Male: Mr. (inaudible), I have a question to you concerning the last events of the summit today. As you know, heads of estates decided also about the energy security of EU, and it has been concluded that the main point, that the old EU Congress will try to avoid Russian pipes and to try to avoid the dependence of Russian energy climate, like gas and fuel. So they--it has been described the picture that the main point would be on the (inaudible), Turkmenistan through the sea up to the other. So I ask Mr. (inaudible), okay. Mr. (inaudible), now that our pipe, our energetical [sic] system is the main system of the whole Europe, if the (inaudible) would be empty, what Ukraine would--

will do. How you can protect us in this case? This-- it's a test question. You've got it. Yeah. It's-- because we can be one-to-one of the.

And the second question, sir. The second question is concerning that you told (inaudible) that we don't have any means and any tools to cooperate with NATO to be protected by NATO because we don't help just from your conference. But I should remind you that we signed that agreement partnership for ship--for partnership for peace, and the second (inaudible) so you didn't tell it. And so we're at the last point of negotiations between--yeah, negotiations between NATO and Ukraine it was the distinctive dialogue about protect, etcetera. So we can somehow to provide further dialogue about our playing full membership.

Mr. Andrii Deshchytsia: With NATO you probably misunderstood. The--what I was saying was the intensive dialogue and cooperation with NATO on the basis of the existing legislation. And we are not talking about the military presence of NATO in Ukraine. So--but we are talking about militarily and political cooperation with Ukraine and about the assistance from NATO. So it's probably, of course, misunderstood by you. But with the gas supply, we have to start implementing and not talking the t--not talking about the--okay, oil, gas, we have to start implementing the projects on the diversification of natural resources to Ukraine and of

supply of natural resources to Ukraine and also about the alternative sources of energy. But we have to start this. And one thing that is very important, therefore, I think for the European audience, that Russia is not giving gas to Europe. Russia is selling gas to Europe. And this money that then--which European nations or governments are paying--or private companies are paying to Russia goes to Russia, and then the Russia subsidizes the military arsenals in Russia. The (inaudible) is used against Ukraine and against Europe. So it's a circle that we might break.

Ms. Anne McGinn: Ian Traynor in back and (inaudible).

Ian Traynor: Oh, hi. Ian Traynor from the Guardian, a question for the two foreign ministers and perhaps for comment from Mr. Volker as well. The association agreement with the European Union was ready for full signing in November in (inaudible), why today is it only partly available for signing in your view?

Mr. Andrii Deshchytsia: Okay. Where is the (inaudible) was a free trade agreement. It was not signed today because we need some time to improve economic situation in Ukraine and to make sure that the Ukrainian enterprises and people will not be affected with this free trade zone, but the other side, probably (inaudible) will tell more there. European Union unilaterally agreed to take away the bars and tariffs

for Ukraine products for--which might be exported to the European market. So I think it's we need simply some time to stabilize economy in Ukraine and then we will be ready to implement this part of the association agreement.

Mr. Linas Linkevičius: Oh, just--just one word about lifting tariffs. It was said by Andrii, it is indeed true, but also it is true that this is--as we understand, will be immediate addressed. So it's not a big pause between these--the three leaders. It should take place quite in foreseeable future and with--also to say that in the analysis and it was upon respect of our Ukrainian friends. So that--but never the less having said this I would remind you that this is considered as a single instrument anyway.

Female: How this works. Oh, it's really quick. Well, except that I am trying to understand (inaudible) question. Do you all consider that Crimea is gone? I mean, because, Kurt, you mentioned that this is an active crisis that means maintaining, but, I mean, nobody is talking about actually anything that would make Russia reverse. You are just talking about trying to deter it from going forward. Is it, as people have said, a fait accompli? Is there any way to get Crimea back? Does--or is it gone for good? And if Russia annexes (inaudible) and demands stronger transit



rights, what will you do? Because the rest of it was too complicated?

Mr. Andrii Deshchytsia: Tell the truth.

Dr. Vitaliy Klychko: I will tell them. I don't give you a direct answer, but in my answer you will find the answer. It is different to believe to take right now the Crimea back. I don't see exactly a way right now, but the way--what we have to do right now, I know. In a very short period of time we have it to change Ukraine economy, destroy corruption, make reform and to make high social standards in Ukraine rebuild our infrastructure. This will be good example for everyone in Crimea who was in (inaudible) a referendum. Thank you for your help. And it will be a good example for that to show they make a mistake. We can do that and we have good example like Poland, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic. They make good steps and win in good way. It's my personal opinion this will be very clearly in good way. We need for that--not so much time. A couple of years we want (inaudible)--many of the Ukrainians want to change and want to live in modern European democratic country.

Mr. Andrii Deshchytsia: I will answer on your second question, first. It happened that I have (inaudible), yeah. And it's yours. It happened that I have an experience of dealing with the protracted conflicts in the OSCE area. My previous position was a

special representative of the OSCE chairperson-in-Office for Conflicts, so last year I'll been traveling to Nagorno-Karabakh, Ossetia, Abkhazia, Transnistria. I learned a little bit how to avoid mistakes, but situation in Transnistria is a big concern. It's not only for Ukraine, not only for Moldova, but it's a big concern and should be a big concern for Europe. If Russia decides to connect Transnistria with the Crimea and Abkhazia, making a corridor which will create a very destabilizing zone in Europe. We all have to think about this and look on the map and avoid this.

In answering your question about the Crimea, it's not gone. At least for Ukraine it's not gone. We consider Crimea as integral part of Ukraine, and nobody believe that in 1961 when the Berlin Wall was erected that it will be destroyed in one day or night--in how many, 30 year? Maybe. I believe that it will take less time to destroy the escalation and military presence in Crimea, and I hear a very--I hope and believe and wish to have one of these Brussels Forums in the Crimea--to clarify, in the Ukrainian Crimea.

Ms. Anne McGinn: Well, on that point--Brussels Forum in Ukraine--gentlemen, thank you so much. They're very late for dinner, so we're going to let them go. We do have an on-the-record session tonight, Night Owl, on "Is Europe Losing its East?" You'll see everyone except the acting foreign minister.