

EU Ministers Agree to Expand Russia Sanctions

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EU foreign ministers held out the threat of imposing farther-reaching sanctions on Russia

The European Union has agreed to step up sanctions against Russia over Ukraine by expanding a list of people targeted with asset freezes and visa bans, and said the bloc could hold an emergency summit next week to adopt further measures.

EU foreign ministers acted on Monday in response to a deepening of the crisis in Ukraine, where pro-Russian separatists ignored an ultimatum to leave occupied government buildings in the east of the country.

"We have agreed ... to expand the sanctions," British Foreign Secretary William Hague told reporters after the meeting in Luxembourg.

Over the next few days, EU officials will work on a list of new names of people they believe played a role in violating Ukraine's territorial integrity.

They will be added to a list of 33 Russian and Ukrainian officials already under EU asset

freezes or visa bans.

The ministers again held out the threat of imposing farther-reaching sanctions on Russia, such as trade and financial restrictions, if Moscow took further steps to destabilize Ukraine.

The EU's executive Commission has almost finished work on preparing those potential sanctions but officials left vague exactly what Russia would have to do to trigger them.

Any further tightening of sanctions will likely depend, in part, on the outcome of a meeting between the EU, the U.S., Russia and Ukraine planned for Geneva on Thursday.

"If it is necessary, there may be a meeting of heads of state and government next week at European level, which may adopt new sanctions," French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius told reporters. "The goal is to show firmness while keeping a dialogue open," he said.

Hague said a decision on whether to hold an extra summit would be taken by EU leaders and would "depend on how the situation develops ... over the next few days".

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