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U.K. Minister Hague Says EU Ready for More Russia Sanctions If Required

By The Moscow Times

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Britain's Foreign Secretary William Hague leaves following a cabinet meeting at Downing Street in London, U.K.

LUXEMBOURG — British Foreign Secretary William Hague warned Russia on Monday that the European Union was ready to impose tougher sanctions over the crisis in Ukraine if it is not satisfied with Moscow's response to Kiev's peace plan.

Speaking before a meeting in Luxembourg of EU foreign ministers, Hague said leaders of the bloc's 28 states would weigh Russian actions at a summit in Brussels on Friday.

The EU has drawn up plans to impose a range of economic penalties on Russia but has held back from imposing them because of concerns among some member states about antagonizing their major energy supplier.

"[President Vladimir] Putin should be in no doubt that in the EU we are ready to take those

measures," Hague told reporters. "A lot of work has gone on on preparing wider sanctions on Russia."

"By Friday we will be able to see how Russia is responding to the peace plan," he said.

The U.S. has already threatened sanctions on Russia's financial, defense and high-tech industries as more Russian military material has flowed into Ukraine, and has intensified talks with Europe over imposing similar measures.

"The idea here is to deny Russia the kinds of investment and next-generation technology that it needs to continue to grow," a senior U.S. administration official said last week.

The EU has so far imposed several rounds of sanctions against Russia over its actions in Ukraine, focusing largely on targeting individuals accused of destabilizing Ukraine and involved in Moscow's annexation of Crimea.

Also in Luxembourg, EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton said sanctions would be on the agenda this week, including during talks with Ukraine's new Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin on Monday, but stopped short of saying whether she supported any new measures.

"That is what the Council [ministers] will have to discuss today ... But we need to base it on our discussions with the Ukrainian foreign minister," she told reporters.

Sweden's Foreign Minister Carl Bildt said there were various points of view within the EU but the option of tougher sanctions remained on the table.

"At the end of every meeting I have attended on this issue we have reached an agreement on a position that I consider rather strong," he told reporters.

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko wants Putin's unqualified backing for a 15-point peace plan he announced Friday.

This will include the signing on June 27 of an association agreement with the EU that contains a free-trade deal as well as a series of talks with separatist rebels and a seven-day unilateral cease-fire.

Former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych refused to sign that agreement last November, prompting an uprising that brought him down and led to Russia annexing Crimea in March.

As part of their wider response to Russian actions, EU foreign ministers approved on Monday new rules prohibiting the imports of goods originating in Crimea into the EU.

In preparation for the Friday summit, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier announced plans to travel to Kiev to meet Poroshenko on Tuesday.

"We hope and expect that Russia is willing to cooperate," he told reporters in Luxembourg.

See also:

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