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Richard Branson Wants to Solve Ukraine Crisis in Talks With Putin

By The Moscow Times

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Richard Branson wants to discuss the Ukraine crisis with Vladimir Putin.

British tycoon Richard Branson plans to succeed where countless politicians, diplomats and a cavalcade of sanctions have so far failed by marshaling international business leaders to bring peace to Ukraine.

In a statement published Wednesday on his blog, Virgin Group founder Branson called on world leaders to make sure there will be no return to the misery of the Cold War, and pledged the support of the global business community in achieving this goal.

The statement has been endorsed by 15 Russian, Ukrainian and international business leaders, including eBay founder Jeff Skoll, restauranteur Arkady Novikov and Max Levchin, co-founder of PayPal Ukraine.

Branson also on Wednesday told the Kyiv Post that he wants to meet face-to-face with

President Vladimir Putin to come up with a solution to the ongoing crisis in Ukraine.

What started out last November as a street protest movement over former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych's U-turn on an EU trade deal has mutated into a bloody struggle for eastern Ukraine that has cost the lives of more than 2,000 people, including civilians and militants, over the last four months.

The response of international politicians has been a sanctions tit-for-tat that has created a the biggest gulf between Russia and the West since the fall of communism.

Branson said that he would feel "very responsible" if Russia invaded Ukraine and nobody "had spoken out or done anything about it," the Kyiv Post reported.

The billionaire gave a taster of what he would say to Russia's president should the get-together be granted: "President Putin, please don't turn the clock back. We remember when the Berlin Wall fell and how wonderful both Russians and the rest of the world felt about it. ... Let's resolve the issues diplomatically and not militarily. Let's trade together, let's marry, let's go on holidays with each other. Let's work together to resolve conflicts in the world."

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