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Ukraine, Russia Leaders Sound Optimistic Note

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MILAN — Russian and Ukrainian leaders sounded optimistic after marathon, Europe-brokered talks Friday, signaling progress on both a definitive peace settlement in Ukraine and a gas dispute that threatens to disrupt supplies to Europe this winter.

While Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Ukrainian counterpart Petro Poroshenko stopped short of declaring a breakthrough, they both spoke with renewed confidence.

Putin offered praise for Poroshenko's move to give more powers to the east and supported the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe monitoring of the truce with drones. Putin also voiced confidence that the issue of Russians who have joined the insurgency in eastern Ukraine could be settled.

Both leaders said they reached consent on the basic guidelines of a gas deal to prevent possible supply disruptions in the winter.

As part of an overall peace deal, Europe is seeking full compliance with a month-old cease-

fire, clear border controls and local elections in eastern Ukraine in compliance with Ukrainian law, and not under auspices of the rebels.

Putin told reporters both sides shared blame for violations.

"The line of division must be fully drawn. It would make it possible to finally put an end to shootings and civilian deaths," Putin said. "The Ukrainian side knows that. We will try to find solutions."

Poroshenko said using technology such as video cameras and radar to monitor the border "will make it possible to determine who is responsible for violating the cease-fire."

Drones will be provided by Germany and France in the first stage, with other countries joining later under the OSCE umbrella, the Ukrainian leader said.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who participated in two of the joint meetings and bilaterals with each of the leaders, acknowledged some progress but said basic differences remained.

"We are closer together on some questions of detail, but the central point is whether the territorial integrity of Ukraine is really respected," Merkel said after a morning of talks.

British Prime Minister David Cameron said Russia needed to get its troops and heavy weapons out of Ukraine.

"Vladimir Putin said very clearly that he doesn't want a frozen conflict, he doesn't want a divided Ukraine," Cameron said. "If that is the case, Russia has to take actions to put in place all that has been agreed."

Putin and Poroshenko were pictured at a breakfast meeting shaking hands, as they had a month ago in Minsk, Belarus, when they reached a deal on a cease-fire that has reduced but not halted the hostilities in eastern Ukraine.

The fighting in eastern Ukraine between pro-Russian rebels and government troops began a month after Russia annexed the peninsula of Crimea, killing more than 3,600 people, according to the United Nations. The West, in return, imposed economic sanctions, which Putin is eager to see lifted.

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