

EU to Call On Russia to Help Stabilize Ukraine

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BRUSSELS — EU leaders will urge Russia at a summit this week to do more to stabilize Ukraine, according to a draft statement seen by Reuters, but diplomats expect no change in sanctions on Moscow in the near future.

The leaders' call comes days before Ukraine holds parliamentary elections on Oct. 26 in a vote that is to bring pro-Western and strongly nationalist lawmakers to office, something Moscow is unlikely to welcome.

"The Russia Federation should respect Ukraine's national sovereignty and territorial integrity and contribute to the political stabilization and economic recovery of Ukraine," EU leaders will say.

They will also call on Russian authorities to "exercise their influence" to ensure pro-Moscow separatists uphold a faltering cease-fire in eastern Ukraine.

Ukraine and the rebels reached the cease-fire agreement in the Belarussian capital Minsk on

Sept. 5, the first step toward ending the worst standoff between Moscow and the West since the Cold War ended.

The EU has gradually tightened sanctions on Russia following its annexation of Ukraine's Crimea region in March and its support for separatists in eastern Ukraine.

The conflict is still claiming about 10 lives a day despite the cease-fire, the United Nations said this month.

The statement by EU leaders, who meet on Thursday and Friday, will say that the status of economic sanctions against Russia for its support of the separatists is closely tied to what happens in eastern Ukraine.

EU diplomats said leaders will not discuss adding or removing sanctions against Russia at the summit.

EU ambassadors will next week review economic sanctions imposed in July but, again, diplomats expect no easing.

EU leaders will also welcome elections in Moldova as another step in strengthening ties with Europe, in what officials told Reuters is a call to the former Soviet republic to defy Russian pressure.

Moldova holds parliamentary elections on Nov. 30.

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