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# Tusk Warns Greece to Back EU Policy on Russia

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Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras (L) poses with European Council President Donald Tusk ahead of a meeting at the EU Council in Brussels on Feb. 4, 2015.

European Council President Donald Tusk urged Greece's new Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras on Wednesday to support common EU foreign policy approaches, a week after Athens questioned a call for new sanctions on Russia.

"We agreed on the importance of unity within the European Union with regard to other key challenges facing Europe," Tusk said in a statement following their meeting in Brussels, which coincided with indecisive talks on sanctions among EU diplomats.

A former Polish premier who has taken a tough line against Moscow's actions in Ukraine, Tusk did not mention Russia. But the confrontation is at the top of EU priorities along with the euro zone economic problems Tsipras discussed in Brussels.

The "importance of unity" on Russia among member states has become a mantra for EU

officials concerned about the difficulty of achieving unanimity behind punitive measures intended to change Moscow's approach.

After its election on Jan. 25, Tsipras's radical left-led government complained about EU plans to tighten sanctions following a flare-up in fighting in Ukraine and appeared ready for a closer relationship with Russia. However, it backed an extension of existing sanctions agreed by the EU on Thursday.

Envoys from the 28 EU states met on Wednesday to discuss extending the list of people subject to visa bans and asset freezes in the bloc.

Diplomats said divisions around the table meant there would further discussion before a final decision to be taken by foreign ministers meeting on Monday.

Some governments are pushing for more senior Moscow officials to be added to the sanctions list while others would rather restrict penalties to separatists in eastern Ukraine.

Greece, which shares Orthodox Christian culture with Russia, has long been among those anxious not to alienate Moscow.

Tsipras will join fellow EU leaders at a summit chaired by Tusk in Brussels on Feb. 12.

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