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Trump's UN Ambassador Condemns Russia for Ukraine 'Aggression'

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The new U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Nikki Haley, addresses a Security Council meeting of the United Nations,, Feb. 2, 2017. **Richard Drew / AP**

President Trump's ambassador to the United Nations has launched a scathing attack on Russia for escalating violence in eastern Ukraine.

In her first address to the UN since her appointment last month, Nikki Haley condemned Russia's "aggressive actions" in the Donbass region.

The former Republican governor said that sanctions on Moscow would stay in place until the Crimean peninsula was once more under Ukrainian control.

"We do want to better our relations with Russia," Haley said on Thursday. "However, the dire situation in eastern Ukraine is one that demands clear and strong condemnation of Russian actions."

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> pic.twitter.com/VW4UTZjRXg
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> — Nikki Haley (@nikkihaley) February 2, 2017

Her words will disappoint Kremlin officials, who hoped that sanctions would be weakened or even scrapped under the new administration.

Trump's first phone call with Russian President Vladimir Putin this week was described by the Kremlin as "positive and constructive."

Trump asked for Putin to convey his wishes of happiness and prosperity to the Russian people, while the Russian president said that all “warm feelings” were mutual.

Haley is not the first official endorsed by Trump to urge a more cautious approach to relations with Moscow.

In his congressional hearing, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson warned officials that Washington would need to “be clear-eyed” about any relationship with Russia, "Russia today poses a danger. It invaded , including Crimea, and violated the laws of war,” he said.

Tensions remain high in eastern Ukraine after heavy artillery fire returned to districts on both sides of the frontline on Jan. 29. At least one civilian in the the Ukrainian-held town of Avdiivka was killed, with scores more injured.

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