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EU Warns Serbia Over Close Ties With Moscow After Deputy PM Meets With Putin

By AFP

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Serbian Deputy Prime Minister Aleksandar Vulin met with Russian President Vladimir Putin. **Kristina Kormilitsyna / POOL / kremlin.ru**

Brussels on Thursday warned Serbia that keeping strong ties with Moscow was "not compatible" with its aspiration to join the bloc after a top government official met with Russian President Vladimir Putin earlier this week.

Serbia's Deputy Prime Minister Aleksandar Vulin described his country as an "ally of Russia" when he met with Putin on the sidelines of the Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok on Wednesday.

"Maintaining or even increasing the ties with Russia during the time of its illegal aggression against the Ukrainian people, is not compatible with EU values and is not compatible with the

EU accession process," the bloc's foreign affairs spokesman Peter Stano said.

Serbia was granted EU candidate status in 2012 and has been waiting for membership since. As part of the accession process, countries are expected to align their foreign policies with the EU, Stano said.

"We expect Serbia to avoid deepening its ties with Russia," he said at a press conference in Brussels.

Serbia has historically close ties with Moscow and relies heavily on Russian gas. While it condemned Russia’s invasion of Ukraine at the United Nations, Serbia has refused to impose sanctions on the Kremlin.

Vulin, in comments broadcast by Russian state television, said that "Serbia will never join NATO, will never impose sanctions on Russia and will never allow any anti-Russian actions to be carried out from its territory."

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