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'No Decisions' on Ukraine Without Kyiv and Europe, Says Zelensky

By AFP

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Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky delivers a speech during the 61st Munich Security Conference (MSC) in Munich, southern Germany on February 15, 2025. **Thomas Kienzle / AFP**

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Saturday insisted that no decisions should be made on ending Russia's war on Ukraine without Kyiv and Europe, as the United States pushes to open talks with Moscow.

“No decisions about Ukraine without Ukraine, no decisions about Europe without Europe. Europe must have a seat at the table,” Zelensky told the Munich Security Conference.

U.S. President Donald Trump blindsided Ukraine and its European allies by agreeing this week to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin to start talks on ending the conflict.

Zelensky has urged Washington to come up with a “common plan” to confront Russia but suggested there was no joint stance after a meeting with U.S. Vice President J.D. Vance on

Friday.

“We cannot just agree to a ceasefire without real security guarantees, without pressure on Russia, without a system to keep Russia in check,” Zelensky said.

Zelensky said that security guarantees needed to include powerful sanctions on Russia and measures to build up Ukraine's army.

He said Kyiv was “open” to proposals to deploy European troops as peacekeepers on the ground but that he still needed to “discuss details” with his counterparts on the continent.

The Ukrainian leader said Washington appeared to be “preparing the atmosphere” for the dialogue between Trump and Putin.

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But he warned that Putin would seek to use Trump as a “prop in his own performance” — possibly by trying to get him to Moscow for Russia's Victory Day parade in May, to celebrate the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II.

“We must apply pressure together — to make real peace,” Zelensky said.

“Putin cannot offer real security guarantees, not just because he is a liar but because Russia in its current state needs war to hold power together,” he said.

The Ukrainian leader said Kyiv was still “in the process” of discussing a possible deal with Washington on granting access to rare earth deposits in return for security support.

In a broader message to Europe, Zelensky issued a rallying cry for the continent to "act for your own sake" as questions hover over U.S. backing in the face of the threat from Russia.

“Europe needs to come together and start acting in a way that no one can say no to Europe, boss it around, or treat it like a pushover,” he said, calling for a European army to be created.

“I really believe that the time has come that the armed forces of Europe must be created,” Zelensky said. “Let’s be honest, now we can’t rule out that America might say no to Europe on issues that might threaten it.”

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