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Italian PM Says EU Should Talk to Russia Over Ukraine

By AFP

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Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni arrives at a New Year's press conference in Rome on Jan. 9. **Filippo Monteforte / AFP**

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni said Friday the European Union should resume high-level dialogue with Russia as Brussels seeks to end the Ukraine war, urging the appointment of a special envoy.

"I think the time has come for Europe to talk to Russia," the far-right leader told a New Year's press conference.

"Because if Europe decides to participate in this phase of the ongoing negotiations, talking with only one of the parties involved... the positive contribution it can make is limited."

She said she agreed with French President Emmanuel Macron, who said in December that it would be "useful" for Europe to re-engage with Russian President Vladimir Putin over the

war in Ukraine.

With EU-Russia contacts effectively suspended since Moscow's February 2022 invasion, Washington has taken the lead in the negotiations to end the conflict.

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That has left Europe's leaders desperately seeking to mold U.S. President Donald Trump's efforts.

Meloni said it was difficult to know who on the EU side would be involved in the talks.

"We've had this problem since the beginning of the negotiations. There are many voices speaking out, many formats exist," she said.

"This is why I've always been in favor of appointing a special European envoy on the Ukraine question... someone who would summarize, allow us to speak with one voice."

She said, however, that it was too soon to talk about welcoming Russia back into what is currently the Group of Seven (G7), but was previously the Group of Eight (G8) developed nations.

"Today it would seem impossible to me that, say, Russia would join the G7," she said.

Meloni has been a staunch supporter of Ukraine since the war began.

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