

WORLD

ONE-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT

Editor's note: As Feb 24 marks the one-year anniversary of Russia's special military operation in Ukraine, China Daily is reviewing how it has reshaped geopolitics, impacted the global economy and aggravated the energy crisis.



Representatives observe a minute of silence during a meeting of the United Nations Security Council, to mark the one-year anniversary of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, at UN headquarters in New York on Friday. EDUARDO MUNOZ / REUTERS

Fresh round of curbs approved

By CHEN WEIHUA in Brussels
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The European Union has approved its 10th round of sanctions against Russia after long haggling as demonstrations took place across Europe calling for peace talks and an end to the yearlong Russia-Ukraine conflict.

The EU approval was announced by the Swedish presidency of the EU Council on Friday less than two hours before the end of the one-year anniversary of the conflict.

"Our support for Ukraine is stronger than ever," the presidency said in a statement. "With its 10th sanctions package, the EU continues to show decisiveness by adopting several robust measures that hit Russia's economy and military capacity hard."

The new sanctions include expanding export restrictions on technological and industrial products regarded as vital to Russia's economy and military capability, including further export bans worth more than 11 billion euros (\$11.6 billion).

Three Russian banks have been added to the list of entities subject to an assets freeze and a prohibition on making funds and economic resources available to the country.

The new sanctions also step up enforcement and anti-circumvention measures, including a new reporting obligation on Russian Central Bank assets. It also targets Iran's Revolutionary Guard for its alleged military aid to Russia.

The sanctions also ban two additional Russian media outlets, namely Arab-language subsidiaries of Russia Today and Sputnik, which the EU alleges are disseminating disinformation and propaganda.

There was heated debate among member states about whether the new sanctions should include a tougher ban on Russian synthetic rubber and sanctions on the country's nuclear industry, but all issues on which no agreement was reached were dropped from the new sanctions list so it could be adopted by the end of Feb 24, something the European Commission had promised.

Russia says sanctions won't work as protests in Europe call for end to conflict

Ukraine no arena for combat, says envoy

A Chinese United Nations envoy says Ukraine is not an arena for combat between powerful countries, and no one should seek to benefit from the conflict at the cost of the Ukrainian people.

"We call on Russia and Ukraine to resume negotiations without any preconditions," Dai Bing, charge d'affaires at the Chinese Permanent Mission to the UN, said at a UN Security Council briefing on Ukraine.

The Security Council met to discuss Ukraine on Friday, the first anniversary of the start of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. The meeting was attended by about 30 foreign ministers and diplomats.

"Conflicts have no winners," Dai said. Bringing parties to the conflict back to the negotiating table would not be easy but is "the first step toward a political solution," Dai said.

The Ukraine conflict has far-reaching impacts, he said, but "developing countries are not parties to this conflict and should not pay an excessively high price for it."

Some parties have resorted to unilateral sanctions and maximum pressure that "cannot solve any issue, and can only undermine the stability of the global industrial and supply chains and exacerbate the global food, energy, and financial crises," Dai said.

"One country, while stressing sovereignty and territorial integrity on the Ukraine issue, is blatantly interfering in other countries' internal affairs and undermining their sovereignty and territorial integrity."

The UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres also attended the Security Council meeting and called for preventing further escalation of the conflict in Ukraine and giving peace a chance.

The Security Council has debated Ukraine more than 40 times over the past year, and "the guns are talking now," Guterres said. "But in the end, we all know that the path of diplomacy and accountability is the road to a just and sustainable peace."

MINLU ZHANG

All 27 member states must approve the sanctions for them to take effect.

The announcement of the EU sanctions came shortly after the US said it was imposing fresh sanctions targeting more than 100 entities in Russia and elsewhere.

On Friday the US Defense Department announced additional security assistance to Ukraine that includes several new unmanned aerial systems, a counter-unmanned aerial system to bolster Ukraine's defense and electronic warfare detection equipment.

Anatoly Antonov, the Russian ambassador to the United States, said the sanctions would have no impact. Antonov said the new sanctions

were "thoughtless" and designed to make Russia suffer.

As the West has ramped up pressure on Russia, Dmitry Polyanskiy, the country's first deputy ambassador to the United Nations, accused the West on Sunday of "cowboy" methods and "arm twisting" of some countries during a vote of the UN General Assembly last week demanding that Russia withdraw its troops from Ukraine.

The General Assembly called for a "comprehensive, just and lasting peace" and for Russia to withdraw its troops, with 141 votes in favor, 32 abstentions and seven objections.

"The methods of achieving the result are again 'cowboy,'" Polyanskiy said.

A number of representatives from developing countries complained to the Russian mission about pressure from their Western colleagues who are allies of Kyiv, he said.

"According to our calculations, almost 30 pairs of arms were twisted." While there is no end in sight to the Russia-Ukraine conflict, protesters in European capitals rallied at the weekend to demand peace in Ukraine.

Thousands of people demonstrated in Berlin on Saturday to condemn the government's supply of arms to Ukraine and called for peace talks to end the conflict.

Sahra Wagenknecht, a lawmaker of The Left party in Germany, said there was no place for neo-Nazis at the rally, but that anyone who wanted peace "with an honest heart" was welcome. She accused the German government of seeking to "ruin Russia" and said Moscow should be made an "offer" so peace talks could resume.

Some participants at the rally held banners with the slogan "Americans go home".

The author Alice Schwarzer, with Wagenknecht one of the organizers, said that it was time to look beyond Left and Right. The two women have launched a petition said to have garnered over 645,000 signatures.

Protesters jeered whenever Schwarzer and Wagenknecht mentioned the name of German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock, who has pushed for arms supplies to Ukraine.

Berlin police put the number of protesters at 13,000 at the Brandenburg Gate but organizers said 50,000 people had taken part.

A similar protest under the banner of Europe for Peace and Solidarity was held on Sunday afternoon in the center of Brussels, where both EU and NATO headquarters are located. Participants called for "active peace diplomacy".

"All diplomatic means must be deployed to initiate a de-escalation and bring the warring parties to a cease-fire with a view to talks leading to a just and lasting peace," the organizers said in a position statement.

Agencies contributed to the story.

Arms quandary has allies at loggerheads

By JULIAN SHEA in London
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A year after the Ukraine conflict began, it has lasted longer than anyone could have foreseen. It has developed in ways no one could have foreseen, and its future lies in a direction no one can confidently predict.

Inevitably, an event of such significance has drawn in an increasing number of countries, initially offering humanitarian aid, but as time has passed, more with promises of military support for Kyiv.

As individual countries and organizations such as NATO and the European Union become more involved, the potential for the conflict to spread further grows, lighting fires under more countries' relations with Russia, and leading some people to question the wisdom of hardware support for Ukraine.

It has also exposed divisions among supposed friends and highlighted the frailty of nominally united fronts.

For obvious historical reasons, German military involvement in other countries is hugely sensitive, and when Chancellor Olaf Scholz finally agreed to send tanks, he stressed "with everything that we do, we must always make very clear that we will do what is necessary and possible to support Ukraine, but at the same time to prevent an escalation of the war to a war between Russia and NATO".

Such a move was fodder to Russian President Vladimir Putin, who in a speech to mark the 80th anniversary of the World War II Battle of Stalingrad, the pivotal confrontation in Nazi Germany's failed attempt to defeat the Soviet Union, drew comparisons to encourage Russians to back their country. "It's unbelievable but true," he said. "We are again being threatened by German Leopard tanks."

The newly elected president of the Czech Republic, former NATO general Petr Pavel, backs giving

Ukraine every support available. "When it comes to conventional weapons, I really can see no reason for any limits," he said. "Ukraine cannot fight a tough opponent like this without armored technologies, unmanned aerial vehicles, artillery and longer-range rockets, but maybe also super-sonic aircraft."

In neighboring Austria and nearby Hungary, however, the attitude is different. The countries have adopted a joint policy against military involvement, with Hungary's Defense Minister Kristof Szalay-Bobrovniczky tweeting: "Shared history, shared present. We have common views regarding security issues as well. We both agree on avoiding escalation."

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban is widely regarded as one of Putin's biggest sympathizers in Europe, and speaking to Hungarian public radio in January, he said there was huge international pressure on his country to get involved — "they hit, beat, kick and bite us" — which he would resist.

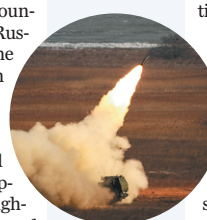
Klaudia Tanner, Austria's defense minister, told the Euractiv news website that her country was "certainly not politically neutral when it comes to Ukraine," but added that it was "important to emphasize that... we are militarily neutral according to our constitution".

Zoran Milanovic, president of NATO and EU member state Croatia, also said he opposes "sending any lethal arms in there" as it prolongs the conflict.

Further away from the front line, in France, President Emmanuel Macron, one of the first leaders to promise tanks to Ukraine, has refused to rule out sending aerial support.

Regional observers say the conflict between Russia and Ukraine dates back as early as 2014, but it was only events in February last year that brought it to the attention of the wider world. One year on, it remains in the spotlight of world politics.

Weapons in focus



From top:

Patriot surface-to-air missile system. JANEK SKARZYSKI / AFP

Leopard 2A6 tank. FEDERICO GAMBARINI VIA AP

HIMARS rocket system. ANDREA ALEXANDRU / AP

F-16 fighter jet, which Ukraine has constantly asked the West for. DOD / POLARIS



A badly damaged residential building is seen through a broken window in Vuhledar, Donetsk, on Saturday. EVGENIY MALOLETKA / AP

Wary of power plays, Africa advocates dialogue

By OTIATO OPALI in Nairobi, Kenya
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Despite pressure from the United States, many African countries have refused to follow it and its Western allies in taking sides in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, instead calling for dialogue rather than supplying weapons.

Bintu Sakor, a Senegalese researcher of civil wars and post-conflict dynamics, said some analysts have interpreted this neutral stance as a sign of Russian influence or evidence of growing anti-West-

ernism, which assumes that Africa is a political monolith.

In considering how to approach the conflict, individual African countries have weighed both the short and long-term impact of the conflict on the continent's geopolitics, she said.

The conflict "has exposed the weaknesses of political and economic structures in Africa, and the most severe direct impacts of the conflict worrying Africans are on the region's food and fuel insecurity and internal conflict patterns," Sakor said.

Sanctions imposed on Russia by Western states at the onset of the conflict have not only led to a fertilizer shortage, hitting global food security due to reduced agricultural production and thereby increasing prices, but also negatively affected the export of Russian fertilizers to global markets including Africa, she said.

The Ukraine conflict "has caused extreme price shocks and disruption to the supply chains of various commodities across Africa, ranging from wheat to crude oil," Sakor said. "Closures of ports such as in the

Black Sea has been heavily felt by African countries, which have seen an unprecedented surge in prices of food and fuel."

Food exports

In June, Senegalese President Macky Sall and Moussa Faki Mahamat, chairperson of the African Union, flew to the Russian Black Sea resort of Sochi to discuss with President Vladimir Putin how to free up obstacles limiting food exports from both Russia and Ukraine to Africa.

Sakor said this shows the growing influence and presence of big new

players in Africa, allowing African countries to have multiple political and economic levers on the international stage. Countries can now make decisions that are independent of former colonial powers and the West.

As a consequence of the conflict in Ukraine, she said, there is also likely to be a rise in conflicts in fragile African states that are vulnerable to external shocks. That is why it is in Africa's best interest to see the conflict end peacefully, she said.

Since the conflict started in February last year, many countries have refrained from taking sides in the crisis. In the early days of the conflict, 17 African countries declined to back a UN resolution condemning Russia's

role. These countries included South Africa, Angola, Senegal, South Sudan, Tanzania and Zimbabwe.

In a debate on the conflict in March, Floyd Shivambu, a member of South Africa's Parliament, said: "We should support NATO's expansionist and imperialist agenda," he said.

Ahmed Shaik Emam, a South African politician, said it would be unfair to blame Russia as the country is doing all it can to protect its sovereignty, which is constantly encroached upon by NATO.

Sakor said the Ukraine crisis should not be used to arm-twist African countries into taking sides but should be viewed as an opportunity for countries to reduce their reliance on imports.