

WORLD

EU seeks unity on Kyiv amid US policy shift

Brussels ups aid, sanctions Russia, as Trump says minerals deal ‘very close’

By CHEN WEIHUA in Brussels chenweihua@chinadaily.com.cn

European Union leaders pledged fresh support for Ukraine on Monday amid strained relations with the new US administration of President Donald Trump.

European Council President Antonio Costa, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, and other European and Canadian leaders gathered in Kyiv to mark the third anniversary of the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Costa said EU accession is key to Ukraine's future, calling it the country's most important security guarantee. The remark came after the Trump administration ruled out Ukraine's NATO membership in a potential peace deal with Russia.

Ukraine was given "EU candidate" status in June 2022, four months after the conflict broke out, as a gesture of EU support. However, many expect the path to full membership to be long.

Von der Leyen said Ukraine could join the bloc earlier than 2030 if it maintains its speedy reforms, adding that membership is merit-based.

"If you would just only set a date, then it would also mean the other candidate countries would ask immediately for a date and not a process anymore," she said.

She also unveiled a \$3.67 billion EU financial aid package to support Ukraine's strained budget and help purchase military equipment from its domestic industry, among other things.

Separately, EU foreign ministers approved the 16th package of sanctions against Russia in Brussels on Monday, targeting its energy, trade, transport, infrastructure and financial services.

Following the meeting, EU top diplomat Kaja Kallas said she is "optimistic" that leaders will quickly agree on additional funding for short-term military aid to Ukraine, though details will be discussed at the upcoming EU summit on March 6.

Ding Chun, director of the Center for European Studies at Fudan University in Shanghai, described the flurry of EU moves as "a stress response by the European political mainstream to the impact of Trump's U-turn on US policy toward Europe and Ukraine."

"They regard it as both a matter relating to European defense and security and a matter to show EU independence from the US," Ding said, adding it is also an effort to unify member states and strengthen the bloc's cohesion.

The dramatic change of US policy prompted French President Emmanuel Macron to travel to Washington on Monday to meet Trump and mend ties, but their stark differences were in full display in front of the media.

**Open disagreement**

Macron openly disagreed with Trump on key issues, including whether to label Russia as the "aggressor". Trump also refused to call Russia's president a dictator, after referring to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky as one.

Trump and Macron did agree on the deployment of European peacekeeping forces once a peace deal is reached.

"They would not be along the front lines," Macron said. "They would not be party of any conflict. They would be there to ensure that the peace is respected."

After the meeting, Trump said Zelensky could travel to Washington this week or next to seal the minerals agreement, which he called "very close", without elaborating.

Macron, in an interview later with Fox News, said he believes a truce in Ukraine is feasible in the next few weeks. A US minerals deal with Kyiv would be one of the best ways to ensure a commitment from Washington, he said.

*Agencies contributed to this story.*

Fatal fall



Emergency responders work at the scene of a bridge collapse at a highway construction site in Anseong, South Korea, on Tuesday. The accident, which occurred about 65 kilometers south of Seoul, killed four people, including two Chinese workers. NHAC NGUYEN / AFP

Japanese investments welcome: China

By JIANG XUEQING in Tokyo jiangxueqing@chinadaily.com.cn

China's economy remains on a trajectory of long-term growth, offering a stable and attractive environment for multinational companies to invest, officials say, highlighting vast opportunities for Japanese enterprises in China.

Speaking at the "Invest in China" foreign investment policy briefing in Tokyo on Tuesday, Chinese Vice-Minister of Commerce Ling Ji pointed to key emerging sectors — healthcare, elderly care, new energy, green development, artificial intelligence, and robotics — as driving forces of China's economy. These fields, he said, present significant market opportunities for Japanese businesses.

Ling expressed hope that forward-thinking Japanese investors would seize the moment to engage in these industries.

Last month, China's composite PMI output index remained above 50, indicating an expansion. Ling called this a sign of recovering market confidence and improving economic expectations.

Currently, China is expanding pilot programs in key sectors such as telecommunications, healthcare, and education, with plans for additional expansion this year.

"China remains committed to

high-level opening-up. No matter the circumstances, regardless of which country closes its doors to China, ours will stay open — and only open wider," Ling said.

Last week, Yasuhiro Sato, chairman of the Japan-China Investment Promotion Organization, visited China as part of a Japanese delegation. He met with Chinese Vice-Premier He Lifeng and engaged in candid discussions with Minister of Commerce Wang Wentao.

Sato said Japanese companies place significant value on the Chinese market, noting that business and personnel exchanges between Japan and China continued to grow last year.

**Boosting travel**

To facilitate further engagement, China reinstated a visa-free policy for Japanese citizens from Nov 30, 2024, to Dec 31, 2025, allowing stays of up to 30 days for business, tourism, family visits, exchange programs, and transit. Sato expects this move to boost Japanese travel to China, further strengthening bilateral exchanges.

"This year marks the Year of the Snake. Just as a snake sheds its skin to grow, I hope Japan-China economic relations will continue to develop, embrace challenges, and evolve," he said.

At Tuesday's Tokyo briefing, officials from China's Ministry of Industry and Information Technology and the Department of Commerce of Liaoning Province outlined their efforts to promote foreign investment.

Representatives from development areas in Liaoning, Shandong, and Zhejiang provinces promoted local investment opportunities, seeking to expand collaboration.

Masayuki Sarumaru, chairman of Japan's manufacturing company YKK Corp, said the company has been operating in China since 1992.

"We have a continuous investment in new machinery and expand our manufacturing in China," Sarumaru said, adding YKK will further invest as needed to support manufacturing expansion.

Tanioku Shinji, executive officer and director of ASEAN & South Asia Business at Daiwa House, attended the briefing out of interest in policies, especially those aimed at promoting real estate investment.

Currently, he is involved in the condominium business in Changzhou and Suzhou, both in Jiangsu province.

"Many say the real estate market downturn will be prolonged, but to be honest, I remain hopeful — perhaps optimistically — that the situation will improve," he said.

UN calls for end to conflict in Ukraine

By MINLU ZHANG at the United Nations minluzhang@chinadailyusa.com

The United Nations Security Council passed a resolution on Monday calling for "a swift end" to the Russia-Ukraine conflict and urging "a lasting peace" as the world observed the third anniversary of the crisis.

The resolution, proposed by the United States, was approved with 10 in favor, none against, and five abstentions from Denmark, France, Greece, Slovenia and the United Kingdom. It also mourned the loss of lives in the conflict, without blaming Russia.

"Despite differences in positions, dialogue is always better than confrontation, and peace talks are always preferable to war," Fu Cong, China's permanent representative to the UN, said at the Security Council meeting.

"China supports all efforts dedicated to peace, including the consensus reached between the US and Russia on initiating peace talks.

"China expects all parties involved, as well as relevant stakeholders, to engage in the peace process at the appropriate time, seeking a fair and lasting resolution that addresses mutual concerns. The goal should be to reach a binding peace agreement accepted by all parties," he said.

Fu said that since the conflict is taking place on European soil, "Europe has a responsibility to contribute to peace". He called on all parties to "jointly address the root causes of the crisis through negotiations and to establish a balanced, effective and sustainable security framework to ensure long-term stability in Europe".

The ambassador reiterated that China's guidance on the Ukraine issue is that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries should be respected; the purposes and principles of the UN Charter observed; the legitimate security concerns of all countries given due regard; and all efforts conducive to the peaceful settlement of the crisis supported.

**Diplomatic mediation**

China has dispatched special envoys to engage in diplomatic mediation, maintaining contact with all relevant parties, including Russia and Ukraine, Fu said. It has also partnered with Brazil and other Global South countries to initiate the Friends of Peace group to "build and strengthen momentum for peace".

Earlier on Monday, the UN General Assembly also approved two draft resolutions on Ukraine.

One proposed by Ukraine and co-sponsored by European countries demanded an immediate withdrawal of all Russian troops from Ukraine and condemned Russia's role.

It was passed by 93 countries, while 18 opposed and 65 abstained. Both the US and Russia voted against the resolution.

The US declined to endorse it, and at the last minute introduced its own competing version, urging its allies to support it instead. The US one was approved by 93 countries, opposed by eight, while 73 abstained.

Yoon faces last impeachment hearing over martial law decree

SEOUL — South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol faced his final impeachment hearing on Tuesday before judges decide whether to remove him from office over his martial law declaration.

Yoon's brief suspension of civilian rule plunged his country into political turmoil, and he was removed from office by parliament in December.

After weeks of impeachment

hearings at the Constitutional Court in Seoul, Tuesday's proceedings began at 2 pm.

In its opening remarks, Yoon's defense team cited a 2024 US Supreme Court ruling, Donald Trump versus the United States, arguing that Yoon cannot be punished for "exercising his core constitutional powers".

That ruling "should be considered in the context of impeachment pro-

ceedings", Yoon's lawyer Lee Dongchan said.

In response, opposition lawyer Lee Gum-gyu spoke about his son, an active duty soldier, who, he said, would have been forced to participate in Yoon's martial law.

"As a citizen and a father, I feel a sense of rage and betrayal toward Yoon, who tried to turn my son into a martial law soldier," he told the court.

In his final statement, Yoon said

the country was facing an "existential crisis" when he declared martial law.

"It was an urgent plea for the people, as the sovereign power of this country, to recognize the situation and take action to overcome it together," he told the court.

Tuesday's session is Yoon's last before the eight judges go behind closed doors to decide his fate. A verdict is expected in mid-March.

The 64-year-old is being held at the Seoul Detention Center after he was arrested over a separate criminal case, charging him with leading an insurrection, for which he could be sentenced to life in prison or even face the death penalty.

The former prosecutor is the first sitting president to face a criminal trial, which began last week.

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