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Press release

Russia must admit it is part of the conflict, MEPs tell Duma foreign affairs committee chair

[10-02-2015 - 10:08]

Russia must acknowledge it is directly involved in the conflict in Ukraine and the interna-tional law must be restored, Foreign Affairs Committee MEPs told Alexey Pushkov, Chair of the State Duma Committee on International Affairs on Monday evening. In the debate, they also questioned Mr Pushkov on why his country has not respected its obligations under the September Minsk protocol.

"The European Parliament has always considered relations with Russia to be important," said Elmar Brok (EPP, DE), Chair of the EP Foreign Affairs Committee, stressing the need for peace in Europe: "We do not want to go back to the situation of the last century with wars again and again", to "go back to the ravages of the past." However, "the misperceptions we could have had are no ground for attacking the sovereignty of a country", he stressed.

Low intensity conflict vs. "big problem for the European security"

"This war can go on for a long time at a low level of intensity" but it can also "enlarge itself and start to really represent a big problem for the European security," Mr Pushkov told MEPs, referring to the possibility of deliveries of arms by the US to Ukraine. "There is no military solution to the war," he said and welcomed the plan presented by Chancellor Merkel of Germany and President Hollande of France.

Status of Donbas crucial

Within the political solution, "the status of (Eastern Ukrainian) territories is crucial," Mr Pushkov underscored. "This area has to have a special status" and Ukraine "cannot remain a unitary state," he said. "Donbas must remain part of Ukraine" but people there "have to be given guarantees of security," he also told MEPs and suggested that if the EU and its member states were to guarantee the ceasefire on the side of the Ukrainian government, then Russia could "exercise its influence" over the "insurgents".

Respect for international law

In the debate, many MEPs pointed to Russia's responsibilities in putting an end to the violence in Ukraine. Many criticised its failure to respect the Minsk agreement and expressed doubts as to whether a new agreement could be very different from the text of the September protocol. They also wondered whether there were any legal arrangements between Russia and the separatists in terms of arms deliveries and criticised Russia for not respecting its commitments under the Budapest memorandum on security assurances to Ukraine, the Helsinki Final Act and other international treaties.

Some MEPs pointed to the Russia's refusal to guarantee access to its territory to Members of the European Parliament, while a minority referred to what they see as an US intervention in Ukraine and its influence over the EU policy vis-a-vis Russia.

"Russia must accept it is part of the conflict," said Mr Brok, adding that "there has been an annexation, Russian soldiers and weapons are in Ukraine." He concluded that "to have the

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Directorate for the Media
Director - Spokesperson : Jaume DUCH GUILLOT
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Press switchboard number (32-2) 28 33000

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peace in Europe we have to have the international law applied".

Note to editors:

EP foreign affairs MEPs are set to meet Volodymyr Groysman, Speaker of Ukraine's Verkhovna Rada, on 24 February in Brussels.

The plenary of the European Parliament debates the latest developments in Ukraine with the EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini on Tuesday 10 February in the afternoon.

Contact

Václav LEBEDA
BXL: (+32) 2 28 32971
STR: (+33) 3 881 73839
PORT: (+32) 498 98 33 27
EMAIL: foreign-press@europarl.europa.eu
TWITTER: EP_ForeignAff