



By: Tomorrow's Affairs Staff

NATO ministers in Bucharest: more weapons for Ukraine; membership later



Although NATO doubled down on Tuesday on its commitment to grant Ukraine membership one day, it is not realistic that Ukraine will become a member of the Alliance any time soon. What is much more certain is that NATO members will increase the supply of weapons to Ukraine, in order to help it defend itself against Russian aggression.

Ministers of foreign affairs of the 30 NATO members are meeting on Tuesday and Wednesday in Bucharest, at the symbolic place where they declared in 2008 that they wanted to accept Ukraine and Georgia as members. "NATO's door is open", NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said before chairing the meeting in Bucharest. "Russia does not have a veto" on countries joining, Stoltenberg said. "We stand by that, too, on membership for Ukraine".

However, AP concludes that Ukraine will not join NATO anytime soon. With the Crimean Peninsula annexed, and Russian troops and pro-Moscow separatists holding parts of the south and east, it is not clear what Ukraine's borders would even look like.

Many of NATO's 30 allies believe the focus now must solely be on defeating Russia, and Stoltenberg stressed that any attempt to move ahead on membership could divide them.

"We are in the midst of a war and therefore we should do nothing that can undermine the unity of allies to provide military, humanitarian and financial support to Ukraine, because we must prevent President Putin from winning", he said.

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Ukraine agrees with such an approach, and its foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba, is demanding that NATO countries urgently need to boost weapons production. In an interview with POLITICO last Monday, the Ukrainian politician said it would not be possible to win on the battlefield in the longer term without

investing in manufacturing more weapons. "While we are fighting the battles of today, we have to think how we will be fighting the battles of tomorrow", Kuleba said.

"Faster, faster and faster", Kuleba said. "We appreciate what has been done but the war goes on." "In a nutshell", he said, "patriots and transformers is what Ukraine needs the most."

Stoltenberg confirmed that deliveries of such sophisticated missile systems are under consideration. Some ministers made pledges of military support for Ukraine, others for financial and nonlethal aid.

Slovakia said that it was providing 30 armoured personnel carriers and more artillery. The US announced \$53 million to buy electrical parts for Ukraine's battered electrical grid. The network has been attacked countrywide since early October by targeted Russian strikes, in what U.S. officials call a Russian campaign to weaponise the coming winter cold.

Estonia's foreign minister, Urmas Reinsalu, went a step further than most, calling on his NATO partners to pledge 1% of their GDP to Ukraine in military support, saying it would make "a strategic difference".

Most NATO allies, however, are struggling to spend 2% of GDP on their own defence budgets.

However, we can expect a lot more talk about Ukraine's NATO bid in the run-up to, and possibly during, the next NATO summit, slated to take place in the Lithuanian capital, Vilnius, in July 2023. The host hopes that Volodymyr Zelenskiy himself might make an appearance, especially as he has not left Ukraine since the war began in February.