

Scholz warns Russia of 'serious consequences' if it invades Ukraine

Chancellor Olaf Scholz warned Russia of "serious" economic and political consequences should it ramp up military aggression toward Ukraine, while adding that Germany and its allies were ready for dialogue with Moscow and wanted peace.

With Russia holding military exercises in Belarus and the Black Sea following its troop buildup near Ukraine, the stand-off has raised fears of a war in Europe, sending energy costs soaring across the continent, which relies on Russian gas supplies.

"What is at stake at the moment is nothing less than preventing a war in Europe. We want peace," Scholz told reporters at a meeting with Baltic state leaders in Berlin on Thursday (10 February), calling for Russia to de-escalate.

"Further military aggression by Russia against Ukraine would have very serious political, economic and strategic consequences for Russia," he said. "At the same time, we are ready for serious talks with Russia, for a dialogue on European security issues."

The Kremlin denies accusations by the United States and its allies that it was planning to invade its neighbour.

Scholz met Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas, Lithuanian President Gitanas Nauseda and Latvian Prime Minister Krisjanis Karins, leaders of the Baltic States who want Germany to play a bigger role in efforts by the NATO military alliance to boost defences against Russia in Eastern Europe.

The leaders discussed "real help to Ukraine", such as economical, financial as well as "moral" support, Nauseda said in a video statement after the meeting.

"Scholz is well versed in the situation, takes seriously the threats that are emerging at the Ukrainian border and undoubtedly sees how they are linked with the security of the Baltic region," Nauseda said.

Before the meeting, Latvian Prime Minister Karins urged Germany to take “a leading role to lead the European Union and NATO through these difficult times.”

“Our focus is on supporting Ukraine,” said Kallas. “De-escalation cannot come at gunpoint and at the expense of Ukraine.”

Scholz is under pressure from the United States to halt a completed pipeline to bring Russian gas to Germany in case of a Russian military incursion into Ukraine.

Scholz has not mentioned the Nord Stream 2 pipeline project in the context of consequences he said Russia would face. He had previously said that all options were on the table.

During Scholz’s inaugural visit to Washington on Monday, US president Joe Biden emphasized that Nord Stream 2 should end if Russia invaded Ukraine.

Source:

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