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China says sending weapons to Ukraine will not bring peace

Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyy vows to keep up the fight ahead of the war’s one-year anniversary as Western countries pledge to send more military aid to Ukraine.

A Leopard 2 tank is pictured during a demonstration event held for the media by the German Bundeswehr in Munster near Hanover, Germany [File: Michael Sohn/AP]

23 Feb 2023

China has told the United Nations that one year into the Ukraine war, “brutal facts offer an ample proof that sending weapons will not bring peace” – a statement that comes just days after the United States and NATO warned Beijing against giving Russia military support.

“Adding fuel to the fire will only exacerbate tensions. Prolonging and expanding the conflict will only make ordinary people pay an even heftier price,” China’s UN Deputy Ambassador Dai Bing told the UN General Assembly on Thursday.

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The comments came hours before the General Assembly adopted a resolution calling for a “comprehensive, just and lasting peace” and demanding Russia withdraw its troops and stop fighting.

The resolution was adopted with 141 votes in favour and 32 abstentions. Six countries joined Russia to vote no.

Western powers have provided Ukraine with billions of dollars in weapons since Russia launched its full-scale invasion on February 24, 2022. The United States and NATO have in the past week accused China of considering supplying arms to Russia and warned Beijing against such a move. China has dismissed the accusations.

Dai was speaking at the UN a day after China’s top diplomat Wang Yi visited Moscow and pledged a deeper partnership with Russia. China and Russia announced a “no limits” partnership shortly before Russia invaded Ukraine.

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The European Union’s top foreign affairs official Josep Borrell met with Wang in Munich last week. He said he asked Wang about the possibility of Chinese military support for Russia.

“He was very clear and assertive,” Borrell told reporters at the UN on Thursday, noting that the pair have had a good personal relationship for many years.

“I can only repeat what he told me: China is not providing arms for Russia and it will not provide arms to Russia because it’s part of their foreign policy not to arm parties in a conflict,” he said. “We have to remain vigilant.”

China’s Ambassador Dai said, “We stand ready to continue playing a constructive role in resolving the Ukraine crisis, and bring about peace at an early date.”

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Since Moscow invaded its neighbour, Russian President Vladimir Putin has repeatedly hinted that Russia could use a nuclear weapon if threatened.

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“Nuclear weapons cannot be used, nuclear war cannot be fought,” Dai said. “All parties should join together against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, prevent nuclear proliferation and avoid a nuclear crisis.”

(Al Jazeera)

‘Not broken’

Meanwhile, Group of Seven ministers discussed new sanctions on Russia and the White House said it will announce “sweeping” new sanctions.

As Western leaders promised to step up their support for Kyiv on the eve of the one-year anniversary of the invasion, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy vowed to keep up the fight.

“We have not broken down, we have overcome many ordeals and we will prevail,” Zelenskyy said on social media. “We will hold to account all those who brought this evil, this war to our land.”

‘More weapons and quicker’

The prime ministers of Poland and Denmark said after meeting in Copenhagen that Western European countries should be faster and more generous in supplying Ukraine with weapons.

“I would like them to be exactly like Denmark and Poland. A longer version is to be more generous in terms of weapon delivery and more quick,” Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki told reporters.

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Poland, a key ally of Ukraine, has been instrumental in convincing European allies to donate heavy gear to Ukraine, including tanks, a move opposed by several countries until recently.

“Let’s be frank. If not for the United States, Poland and the United Kingdom, probably Ukraine would not have survived the first couple of weeks or the first couple of months,” Morawiecki said. “It’s just strengthening the NATO alliance. Some sceptical countries should no longer be sceptical.”

Speaking on the eve of the anniversary of the start of the war, Morawiecki and his Danish counterpart Mette Frederiksen stressed the urgency of delivering support to Kyiv as Europe could not allow Ukraine to be defeated.

“We need to be aware that we don’t have a lot of time. So we need to speed up our financial support, our military help, we need more donations and we need to work very closely together to make sure they have the capacities they need,” Frederiksen said.

Sweden is preparing to send Ukraine the advanced Archer artillery system, but support in the Swedish parliament has been growing to additionally contribute some of the country’s around 120 Leopard tanks.

“We are open to that and we are in close dialogue with above all Germany about it,” Swedish Minister of Defence Pal Jonson was quoted by TT as saying.

Spain to send tanks

Elsewhere in Europe, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said the government will consider supplying Ukraine with four more Leopard 2 A4 tanks in addition to the six ones already promised. The decision will be made “in the coming weeks,” he added.

The first group of Ukrainian troops is already being trained on the use of Leopard 2 tanks in Spain, Sanchez said during a joint press conference with Zelenskyy in Kyiv.

According to Sanchez, Spain aims to “synchronise the delivery of the Leopards with the finalisation of the training”.

“Ukraine has never posed any threat to Russia; we are helping a country that is defending its people that were attacked,” emphasised the prime minister. “We must understand that Putin violates all fundamental laws, violates the territorial integrity of Ukraine. Therefore, this struggle is absolutely legal, it must receive our joint assistance.”

It was Sanchez’s second visit to Ukraine since Moscow started its all-out war against the country.

United States President Joe Biden, right, and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy talk during Biden’s recent unannounced visit in Kyiv, Ukraine [File: Ukrainian Presidential Press Office/AP]

Germany calls for coordination

Regarding the question of whether to arm Ukraine with warplanes, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said this “currently makes no sense”.

His comments came in an interview with ZDF public television, in which he was asked to address growing calls for Western powers to supply arms.

Scholz, who earlier faced criticism for perceived foot-dragging over sending Ukraine tanks, said other countries’ difficulties in meeting Ukraine’s demands vindicated his decision to move in lockstep with them.

In January, Germany agreed to send, and allow other countries to send, heavy battle tanks to help Ukraine in a potential offensive against Russian troops in its east. Despite this, deliveries have been slow because of donors’ limited supplies.

“Maybe this is an indication of why it’s so important to coordinate with each other, with the US, for example, and to prepare these decisions carefully so they work,” Scholz said.

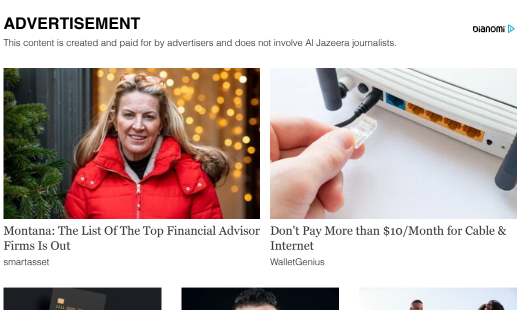
Ukraine is now asking for warplanes, though Germany does not have any of the F-16 fighters that have been mentioned in this context.

Speaking on the eve of the first anniversary of Russia’s invasion, Scholz said he feared that the conflict could become “a very long-lasting war”, but added that Germany and the west would support Ukraine for as long as needed.

Russian President Vladimir Putin would eventually have to understand that his war aims – which Scholz noted had several times been revised down since the start of the conflict – were unachievable.

Scholz, who will head to India on Saturday in a bid to rally support for Ukraine against Russia, said he was not deterred by signs that many large, emerging countries were reluctant to condemn Russia.

“There are only a few countries on Russia’s side,” he said.



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