



**European Commission -
Speech**
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**Welcome address by Commissioner Kubilius in the high-level conference
"Road to URC – Security and Defense Dimension" (via VTC)**

Brussels, 27 April 2026

Good morning to everybody.

Good morning, Prime Ministers, Dear Donald, Dear Yulia

Good morning also to the participants of the conference and the people of Rzeszów.

I would really like to congratulate you on this very important event.

It's a pity I am not able to participate. But allow me to share some thoughts about these very important events, both in Rzeszów and Gdansk.

While preparing for the forthcoming Ukraine Reconstruction Conference at the end of June in Gdansk, it's worth to remember that this will be a very important strategic event.

Because of different reasons: a lot is happening globally, Ukraine is fighting the war for the fifth year, the Ukraine Reconstruction Conference became the most important regular international event where all the most important issues related with Ukraine are debated, not only just "reconstruction" *per se*.

Let's remember: immediately after the Ukraine Recovery Conference there will be the NATO Summit in Ankara.

In such a context we need to look into the forthcoming Ukraine Recovery Conference. And we need to make it a great success, both for Ukraine and for the whole of Europe.

And for that reason, it should concentrate on some very important and big issues, related with Defence and Security which at the moment demand big and strategic answers.

The Conference can discuss those possible answers.

The first big question from my point of view - European military assistance for a just peace in Ukraine.

As you know during the last year there were a lot of new EU instruments to support Ukraine's defence.

The last one – the Ukraine Support Loan, with 60 billion euros for the support of Ukraine's defence.

It can become a breakthrough, because this is the first time that EU institutions (in addition to Member States) are providing such a strategic support.

But besides the Ukraine Support Loan there were also such important instruments as SAFE loans, which can be used also to support Ukraine; also Brave Tech EU - for partnership among Ukraine and EU start-ups, in order to work together for front line needs; The Ukraine Support Instrument from EDIP in order to support Ukraine and EU defence industry integration; And the last European defence industrial instruments - like EDPCI's and SEAP's, where Ukraine can participate on equal footing with other European Union members and can help European defence industry to learn a lot from Ukrainian experience and to assist development of pan-European defence capabilities.

So we, Europeans, can be proud how much we did and are doing to support Ukraine's defence. Because we understand: Ukraine is defending Europe.

But exactly because of the fact that Ukraine is defending Europe, we always need to ask ourselves: is it enough how much we are supporting Ukraine and what we have done up till now?

Is it enough for Ukraine to achieve a just peace?

Which is possible only if the formula "Peace through strength" will be implemented. With enough military strength on the Ukrainian side.

And that strength can be created with European financial assistance, which would create the possibility for Ukraine to start to prevail on all the different front lines: on the ground near Pokrovsk; with deep strikes on Ust-Luga and the air-defence of Ukrainian cities.

So that is why we need to ask – is our assistance enough for such a goal to be achieved?

This is the only way how just peace can be achieved.

That is why in the planning of our assistance we need to move from the formula "we shall stand with Ukraine as long as it takes" to the formula "we shall stand with Ukraine as long as it will start to prevail and just peace will be achieved".

And both sides, Ukraine and EU, we need to have very clear agreed strategy: Ukrainians need to provide a clear plan what is needed for them to prevail, and how much it will cost, and the EU and all the partners need to present how to finance such a plan.

It's obvious that it will cost more than we are providing up till now, but we need to remember that not providing such a support to Ukraine, it will cost much more. First of all to Europe, not only to Ukraine.

That is the kind of message the Gdansk Ukraine Reconstruction Conference needs to send to the whole world, because there is no need to have a strategy on reconstruction of Ukraine, if there is no European strategy for a just peace in Ukraine to be achieved.

The second big question - integration of Ukraine as a vital interest of the European Union.

After just peace will be established, the Reconstruction of Ukraine will be very much related with the parallel process of Ukraine's integration into the European Union.

It's obvious that the entire Reconstruction process will be very much related and would be much more effective with the possibility for all the participants of reconstruction to operate in Ukraine in the same legal European environment, based on the European *acquis communautaire*.

That can be achieved if in the nearest future Ukraine would be able to join the European Union Single Market, as the first step into full integration.

That would be the road along the famous Romano Prodi formula for the integration of neighbours: first of all: "everything, but institutions", the full integration - later on.

Immediate joining of the Single Market by Ukraine would be the first stepping stone on the longer way of integration, and the integration process similar to how Sweden, Finland and Austria became members of the Union in the beginning of 1990s.

We often look at the integration of Ukraine as some kind of humanitarian assistance to Ukraine, which we Europeans can give to Ukraine if Ukraine learns the rules of good behavior.

The whole process always creates the perception that Ukrainians very strongly want to join the Union and are fighting and are dying for that right, but we, Europeans, are only lukewarm to that perspective.

Why is this so?

Because up till now we don't understand that Ukrainian integration into the EU is our strategic vital interest. And that it is directly related with our strategic interest in the nearest future to become defence-ready and ready to deter the possibility of Russian aggression.

We need to understand that if day X would come and Putin would decide to go with a new aggression against EU or NATO member states in the nearest years (as our intelligence services are predicting), then we, Europeans – Balts, Poland or Finland, we shall face a battle tested Russian army, with the ability to use millions of drones, with a "war economy" and ability to outproduce the European defence industry. Russians now are much stronger than they were in 2022.

On European or NATO's side we do not have such an experience. That creates the temptation for

Putin to test us.

On our side only Ukraine has such a battle tested, experienced military force. And battle tested, very innovative defence industry.

That is why we, Europeans, need to understand our vital interest: to have Ukrainian defence capabilities in the nearest future to be fully integrated with European defence capabilities.

European capabilities now are rapidly growing up and need to be ready to defend Europe with much less American presence in the defence of the European continent.

With Ukrainian defence capabilities fully integrated with European ones we would become much stronger in European defence.

We have no time to waste. It would be a big strategic mistake from our side not to seek such an integration.

How to achieve such an immediate integration?

Let's be realistic: NATO membership for Ukraine for the time being is not available; full membership of the European Union is a complicated process, which cannot guarantee quick integration of defence capabilities.

Those are the reasons why the most effective instrument could be to look for some new instrument, which would concentrate specifically on the integration of all the European defence capabilities.

That is why we need a European Defence Union - which would allow to integrate defence capabilities of Ukraine, the United Kingdom, Norway with those of willing EU Member States.

Such an integration would be also a strong security guarantee for Ukraine after just peace will be established.

Such a security guarantee is an essential prerequisite for the reconstruction of Ukraine to be successful.

Integration of Ukraine into the Single Market and into a European Defence Union at the same time and in the nearest future could be a clear part of the European strategic approach towards Ukraine.

And such a strategic approach should be one of the strategic initiatives to be debated in Gdansk.

The third question: why is Ukrainian prosperity vitally important for sustainable peace on the whole European continent?

Quite often we can hear from Europeans that the integration of Ukraine should be postponed, maybe delayed, because Ukraine with its strong economy and strong agriculture can be too strong a competitor for European farmers or business.

We can understand some of those concerns. They were very similar when Poland and Baltic States, all of us we were joining the European Union back in 2004.

At that time "old Europe" was complaining about the forthcoming integration of "new Europe" and economic challenges. At that time the leaders very clearly saw the big geopolitical benefits of enlargement and moved ahead.

That created the basis for the growth of our prosperity. Because we joined the much richer single market of the European Union.

In 2000, when Lithuania, my country, started negotiations for our integration, our GDP per capita in PPP terms was reaching only 35% of the EU average, now the same parameter is around 95%.

We became as rich and prosperous as the average European.

The same will happen with Ukraine - with integration towards the EU Ukraine in 20-25 years' time will become a new "economic tiger" of Europe. Like we became.

Why is the success of Ukraine so important for the future of sustainable peace on the European continent?

We need to remember, that authoritarian Russia and authoritarian Belarus under the Putin and Lukashenko regimes are the only reason why there is no peace on the European continent.

And the reason why especially the whole region in the neighbourhood of Russia is economically, financially, demographically suffering, being a "frontier region".

Authoritarian Russia is a permanent threat. Not only to its democratic neighbours, but towards the whole of democratic Europe. And beyond.

What is our strategy towards aggressive Russia? How do we stop aggressive Russia? How can we influence the transformation of our aggressive neighborhood?

All of us here, who are members of the EU, have experienced the same success - with the integration towards the EU we became successful and prosperous countries.

Our success inspires others to travel the same road: Ukraine, Moldova, Balkan countries.

And in the same way, the success of Ukraine can inspire ordinary Russians to demand the return to normality.

So that is why the title of our strategy towards Russia should be called the "strategy for the success of Ukraine".

The success of Ukraine is what we can deliver. Through our financial support to Ukrainian defence, to Ukraine's ability to prevail on the front lines and in such a way to achieve a just "peace through strength".

And through our support towards Ukrainian membership of the EU, which in 20-25 years will make Ukraine a "economic tiger". And will create conditions for a modern reconstruction of Ukraine.

And such a success story of Ukraine can really also create the inspiration and possibility for Russia to transform itself.

Even if the chance of Russian transformation is almost zero, it's worth trying.

Because a normal, non aggressive Russia would be the best security guarantee for Europe. And the success of Ukraine is also the best strategy for the benefit of the whole of Europe.

Our countries will also massively benefit from Ukraine that's at peace, prosperous and free.

Since the future of the European continent now is decided in Ukraine, Ukraine's success will be the success of the whole European continent. With the possibility of real peace on the European continent.

So let's work together towards this noble goal!

And a new start for such a strategy of "Success of Ukraine" should be given in Gdansk!

Slava Ukraini