

# RUSSIA, NATO LAY OUT STARK DIFFERENCES ON UKRAINE CRISIS

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

The NATO allies warned Russia on Wednesday that they would not compromise on the alliance's right to defend its eastern members to avoid further conflict in Ukraine, but invited Moscow to further talks on calming security concerns.

Speaking after talks with Russian envoys at NATO headquarters in Brussels, alliance Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg warned: "There are significant differences between NATO allies and Russia on these issues."

Gen. Stoltenberg said it would be impossible for the 30 NATO members to agree to Moscow's core demands for a new security order in Europe, and in particular added that Russia would have no veto on Ukraine's right to eventually join the alliance.

President Vladimir Putin's government has issued a series of demands for the West to rule out accepting new members like Ukraine, Georgia or Finland on its eastern flanks and demanded limits on allied deployments in former Soviet allies that joined NATO after the Cold War.

Gen. Stoltenberg said it was "positive" that the two sides had been able to sit down together, reviving the NATO-Russia Council platform, and that NATO members had invited Russia to agree to a series of talks to discuss arms control and "many other issues to prevent a new armed conflict".

"Russia was not in a position to agree on that proposal. They didn't reject it either, but the Russian representatives made it clear that they needed some time to come back to NATO with an answer," he said.

## Future members

The West defends NATO's 'open-door policy' towards potential future members, while Moscow is demanding a cast-iron guarantee that the alliance will not expand further towards its territory.

Russia denies that its massive troop build-up around Ukraine is a threat, but the deployment has forced Washington to engage with Moscow to head off fears of an all-out military confrontation.

After the meeting, US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman tweeted: "In today's NATO-Russia Council, I reaffirmed the fundamental principles of the international system and of European security: Every country has the sovereign right to choose its own path."

Just ahead of the talks, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said: "The continuation of NATO's open-door policy and the further advancement of NATO towards our borders is precisely what, from our point of view, threatens us."

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