

'WE COULD NOT AGREE MORE': BLINKEN ON PM MODI'S MESSAGE TO PUTIN

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The U.S. was quick to back India's recent and more explicit expression of disdain for Russian President Vladimir Putin's attack on Ukraine, and Secretary of State Antony Blinken was the latest U.S. official to echo PM Modi's message to Mr. Putin that now was not the time for war.

"We could not agree more," Mr. Blinken said, during a joint press event with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, held at the State Department on Tuesday. The Secretary was referring to Mr. Modi telling Mr. Putin in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, on September 16, that this was not the era for war.

"One person has the ability to stop this aggression tomorrow," Mr. Blinken said. "And that's Vladimir Putin."

The Secretary went on to repeat his message from his address to the UN Security Council last week. "And as I said last week, if Russia stops fighting, the war ends, if Ukraine stops fighting Ukraine ends."

"I think it's very important though that voices as consequential as India's make themselves heard," Mr. Blinken said, adding that it was for this reason that he thought Mr. Modi's comments were "so significant" as was Mr. Jaishankar's "strong, clear" support for the U.N. Charter articulated during his UNGA speech last week.

Mr. Jaishankar indicated during the press conference on Tuesday that there were several ways in which India was involved in trying to help the conflict situation. The Minister said he was in touch with his G20 and Security Council counterparts. He indicated India had been approached to "weigh in with Russia" at a "particularly delicate moment" about the Black Sea grain initiative (a UN-facilitated programme in July to get Ukrainian food grains out to the world).

"I had a meeting with the Prime Minister of Ukraine. He did mention some very specific concerns which he thought merited our attention, where he thought we could be of some use," Mr. Jaishankar said, referring to his meeting on September 21 with Denys Shmyhal.

Mr. Jaishankar also said he had been discussing another set of issues with UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, and indicated that India was involved, even if not with the overarching prospect of peace, about ameliorating or solving particular issues that had emerged from the conflict. Mr. Jaishankar said he did not want to go into specifics.

One person can stop this aggression tomorrow. And that's Vladimir Putin, says Antony Blinken

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