# Starmer to host coalition call as he says Putin ‘not serious about peace’

AFP- UK premier Keir Starmer will prod fellow leaders Saturday to sign up to a coalition willing to protect any eventual ceasefire in Ukraine, having said Russian President Vladimir Putin was “not serious about peace”.

The British prime minister is expected to tell some 25 fellow leaders during a virtual summit that “now is the time for concrete commitments”, as Putin mulls a US proposal of a 30-day pause to the conflict.

“We can’t allow President Putin to play games with President Trump’s deal,” Starmer said in comments released by Downing Street late Friday, ahead of the call on Saturday morning.

“The Kremlin’s complete disregard for President Trump’s ceasefire proposal only serves to demonstrate that Putin is not serious about peace.

“If Russia finally comes to the table, then we must be ready to monitor a ceasefire to ensure it is a serious, and enduring peace. If they don’t, then we need to strain every sinew to ramp up economic pressure on Russia to secure an end to this war,” he added.

Starmer and French President Emmanuel Macron have been leading efforts to assemble a so-called “coalition of the willing” ever since Trump opened direct negotiations with Moscow last month.

They say the group is necessary – along with US support – to provide Ukraine with security guarantees by deterring Putin from violating any ceasefire.

Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelensky on Friday also confirmed the call and said he had discussed “technical aspects” of how the ceasefire could be implemented with Macron.

“Our teams continue to work on clear security guarantees, and they will be ready soon,” Zelensky said on social media platform X.

Starmer and Macron have said they are willing to put British and French troops on the ground in Ukraine but it is not clear if other countries are keen on doing the same.

– ‘Stop the violence’ –

Macron called on Russia late Friday to accept the proposal for a ceasefire, and stop making statements aimed at “delaying the process”.

The French president also demanded that Moscow stop its “acts of violence” in Ukraine.

Germany on Friday likewise criticised Putin’s response to the US-proposed ceasefire in Ukraine as “at best a delaying tactic”.

“One must seriously question whether there is a genuine interest in working toward a lasting ceasefire and a resolution,” foreign ministry spokeswoman Kathrin Deschauer told reporters.

Turkey has indicated it could play a part in peacekeeping efforts, while Ireland’s Prime Minister Micheal Martin has said Irish troops would not be deployed in any “deterrent force”.

Starmer has said he welcomes any offer of support, raising the prospect that some countries could contribute logistics or surveillance.

“The call is expected to delve further into how countries plan to contribute to the coalition of the willing, ahead of a military planning session being held next week,” the UK government said.

It added that Starmer will say that countries “need to ratchet up economic pressure on Russia, to force Putin into negotiations, in the short term”.

“And be prepared to support a just and enduring peace in Ukraine over the long term and continue to ramp up our military support to Ukraine to defend themselves against increasing Russian attacks.”

British Commonwealth partners Canada, Australia and New Zealand have been involved in early talks and are due to dial in to the summit.

NATO chief Mark Rutte and European Union chiefs Ursula von der Leyen and Antonio Costa are also expected to take part, along with the leaders of Spain, Portugal, Latvia, Romania and the Czech Republic.

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, however, was not expected to attend. She has already rejected the idea of sending Italian troops to Ukraine.

AFP