

## Valtonen Urges Trump To Sanction Russia

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Finnish Foreign Minister Elina Valtonen expressed her hope on Friday that former U.S. President Donald Trump will move forward with strong sanctions against Russia if he returns to office, stating it could be a vital step toward ending the ongoing conflict in Ukraine.

In a Reuters NEXT Newsmaker interview, Valtonen emphasised the importance of U.S. involvement, suggesting that renewed sanctions would further pressure Moscow to consider negotiations. “I certainly hope that President Trump will move forward with those sanctions,” she said. “What we do see and suspect now, as well, is that the reason Russia

has again shown some willingness to talk is that the increased arms deliveries are piling up the pressure on Russia to find a way out of the war.”

Her comments underscore growing expectations in Europe for the United States to maintain or increase its economic and political pressure on the Kremlin, especially as the war in Ukraine approaches the end of its third year. The conflict began in February 2022, when Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, triggering sweeping sanctions from Western nations and transforming the security landscape of Europe.

Finland, which shares an 833-mile (1,340-kilometre) border with Russia, has been among the most outspoken backers of Ukraine. The invasion also led Finland to abandon decades of military non-alignment, formally joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 2023. It was a historic shift that reflected growing concern over Russian aggression in the region.

Along with other Nordic and Baltic nations, Finland has consistently called for a firm Western stance on Ukraine, combining military support with economic sanctions. Valtonen’s comments highlight how this position remains unchanged even as the global political scene shifts ahead of the 2024 U.S. presidential election.

Trump, the presumptive Republican nominee, has previously expressed scepticism about long-term U.S. funding for Ukraine. During past campaign events, he has said he would seek to end the war “within 24 hours” by bringing both sides to the negotiating table. However, Valtonen and other European leaders appear to view sanctions as a necessary part of that equation, suggesting that increased pressure, not compromise, could bring Moscow to the table.

While Valtonen did not directly reference the upcoming U.S. election or Trump’s political prospects, her remarks were aimed at shaping the conversation around U.S. foreign policy in the event of a change in leadership. The Biden administration has continued to deliver military aid to Kyiv and maintain economic pressure on Moscow, but European leaders are preparing for all possible outcomes after November.

The effectiveness of sanctions in achieving strategic outcomes remains a point of debate. While they have damaged sectors of the Russian economy and restricted access to Western financial systems and technology, Russia has maintained energy exports to countries such as China and India and has adapted to some of the imposed limitations.

However, Valtonen believes the cumulative effect of sanctions and arms support is now pressuring the Kremlin.

“The time to keep up the pressure is now,” she said. “Russia is not making concessions out of goodwill, it’s reacting to strength.”

She also stressed the importance of Western unity. “This isn’t just about Ukraine,” Valtonen stated. “It’s about the rules-based international order, and whether or not aggression will be allowed to go unpunished.”

The European Union recently adopted its 14th package of sanctions against Russia, targeting energy revenues and restricting certain shipping activities. U.S. lawmakers, meanwhile, passed a foreign aid package earlier this year that includes billions in support for Ukraine, although continued funding remains politically contentious.

Valtonen’s remarks come amid reports that Russian officials have resumed backchannel talks in neutral venues. While the talks remain unofficial and preliminary, some analysts suggest they may signal a shift in tone if not yet in policy.

As Ukraine continues to push for greater air defence systems and long-range weapons from its allies, European leaders like Valtonen are urging Washington to stay the course, regardless of who wins the presidency in November.