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# Press conference: PM Luc Frieden and PM of Sweden Ulf Kristersson (19.03.2025)

# Participants

* Luc Frieden, Prime Minister of Luxembourg
* Ulf Kristersson, Prime Minister of Sweden
* Journalist

# Language

* English

# Transcription

[Luc Frieden]

... And the president of the party that is also a sister party of mine in the European People's Party.

So, there are many good reasons for him, probably, to visit today.

But we are extremely grateful to Prime Minister Kristersson, because it's for the first time in many years, many decades, that a prime minister of Sweden visits Luxembourg, one of the capitals of the European Union.

So, a very warm welcome to you, dear Ulf.

These meetings are important for us, for me, because we are living in extraordinary times.

And you may have seen that, in the past few days, past few weeks, I welcomed quite a number of colleagues here in Luxembourg.

Last week, the Prime Minister of Belgium, the Prime Minister of Netherlands, the Prime Minister of Spain, because I think, in these times of major geopolitical changes, Europe needs to work together, European countries need to consult each other, and we need to move forward together, especially if we share common principles, common values, and between Luxembourg and Sweden, that is certainly the case.

There are so many areas where I see, since I started in this function as Prime Minister of Luxembourg at the end of '23, that we are very much aligned on issues such as multilateralism, international law, competitiveness, making sure that we're on the side of those who are attacked by others...

And therefore, also, today, we talked about Ukraine; obviously about the meetings that we both attended over the past few days, like the meeting last Saturday at the invitation of the British Prime Minister.

And for us, as I have said many times, the war that is being fought in Ukraine, and the the solutions that are being brought to end that terrible war, are of extreme relevance to us.

It's about the basic principles of the UN Charter, of the principles we believe in:

Territorial integrity, sovereignty, respect of international law...

And for a small country like ours, without international law, the law of those who are the most mighty, will decide, and that's not good for us.

We must stand with those who fight for international law, for principles and values.

And therefore, it was very important for us to exchange with Prime Minister Kristersson about the next steps for Luxembourg.

Those steps are not yet completely clear.

We are in full support of Ukraine.

We will make sure that, if peace comes to Ukraine, and we hope peace will come, that it's a just and lasting peace.

We will contribute to the efforts that are required.

But it must be clear what are the rules for participating in such efforts, and therefore, those discussions that are ongoing, are absolutely necessary.

The Luxembourg government has taken no decision, and Luxembourg Parliament has not been asked to support any decision on what the next steps will be, because we first need further clarity, also from our European and possibly American partners.

We also discussed, in this broader context, defence issues.

We believe that it's extremely important that our companies work together.

We can probably not produce and buy everything in Europe, but where that is possible, we should try to cooperate cross-border.

That has always been my view in the civil area, but it's also true in military area, because that's what the single market is all about: that you have companies from one country cooperating closely with companies of another country.

And therefore, I hope that, and I encourage, Luxembourg companies in that segment, to work also with the Swedish companies, who have a very good reputation in all those sectors.

Last year, by the way, there was a visit of a delegation, of a business delegation led by the Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce, to Sweden, that, I am told, was very useful for the Luxembourg companies.

So, there are ways that we want to deepen, and we will certainly encourage both the private sector and the competent ministers to further deepen those ties.

We also touched upon issues like the European economy, the competitiveness agenda.

We believe that it's extremely important that we simplify the regulatory framework, that we create jobs, that we make sure that companies can innovate, can produce, and don't lose and waste too much time with only observing rules.

Of course, rules are necessary, but rules should not be too bureaucratic or such a burden that you can't do the rest.

In that context of cross-border cooperation, I also reiterated that we strongly believe in the Capital Markets Union, or as it is now called, the Savings and Investment Union, because Luxembourg is to some extent the birthplace of the Capital Markets Union, with all the investment funds that we have.

What is the purpose of that? Well to take savings of private people and encourage them to invest in companies, and thereby creating wealth for the investor and creating growth for the companies where these investments are made.

So, we will be constructive in those talks, also in the coming days in the European Council.

But there are many things that still need to be clarified.

So again, Ulf, thank you very much for your visit here today.

You came, by the way a few days too early, because on Saturday, I think, there is a football match between Luxembourg and Sweden, and it would of course have been great to go there together. I'm not sure who will win, because that will be decided...

[Ulf Kristersson]

On the on the Council meeting... [laughter].

[Luc Frieden]

But there are probably many other reasons for you to come here.

[Luc Frieden]

I also saw that the Philharmonic Orchestra of Stockholm is coming next week to Luxembourg.

So... but that shows you also that it's a lot going on between countries that are geographically maybe a little bit further apart.

But we have a vibrant Swedish community also in Luxembourg, and you see sport, art, culture... we work together and that is the purpose of all of this.

And I would end by disclosing something here to the Luxembourg media.

I spent my holidays last year, my summer holidays, in Sweden.

It's a beautiful country and I can only encourage my fellow countrymen to explore the beauty of Sweden. I enjoyed it very much.

Thank you.

Prime Minister.

[Ulf Kristersson]

Thank you so much, Prime Minister. Thank you so much.

Thank you, dear Luc, and thanks for having us here today, in between the meeting with Keir Starmer, last Saturday, and the Council meeting starting tomorrow.

So, we had a lot to discuss on what had been said, and a lot to discuss on what is going to be said the coming days.

Thank you so much. And the better the match ends, the sooner I will come back.

Well, honestly, I could make it very easy for me, myself, by simply echoing everything you said.

Basically, we have exact the same views on all these important current affairs right now, dominated of course by the developments in Ukraine, dominated also on what we still know too little about, namely what happened during the talks today, still going on between the President Trump and President Zelenskyy.

But I normally say to fellow Swedes: how this war ends will define the security situation in Europe for a generation to come.

So, it is of that importance.

Everything else is being dwarfed, in comparison, basically.

Still, I think we need to point a few things: Sweden and Luxembourg, we share a longstanding tradition of cooperation in very many fields.

Of course, also sharing values in terms of democracy, innovation, an open economy in both countries, very dependent, and happily dependent, on cooperating with other countries.

We also share cooperation in terms of green technologies, the digital transformation, defence and financial services.

In Sweden, Luxembourg is extremely well known for its advanced financial services.

Perhaps... I don't know, if Sweden is well known in Luxembourg for our achievements.

I normally don't brag, but I normally try to point out the fact that we discuss Capital Markets Union or Saving and Investments Union.

It's worth mentioning, from our point of view, that the capital markets in Sweden have, for the last ten years, it has actually ended in more IPOs uh in Sweden than in France, Germany, Spain and the Netherlands combined.

That does not say that we are perfect, but it's that we have cultivated some kind of fertile ground for a vibrant capital market, not least in the tech sector.

I think a core issue for us both is, of course, the support for Ukraine, and we have a strong commitment for Ukraine.

And I think the coming days will say a lot about how optimistic or pessimistic we will be in that regard.

What Russia is doing now, is actually threatening all of European security and the rules-based order. So, keep supporting Ukraine militarily, economically, politically, is of extreme importance right now.

The competitiveness agenda is...

I think, the good thing is that competitiveness is basically at the forefront of the agenda right now, and having it there is actually a precondition for creating result.

But having it on the agenda is not a sufficient precondition for reaching results.

I think, investing in research, cutting red tap, is on the top of the of the Commission's list right now.

It is also... When you promise to do that, it really demands results to cut some 25% of red tape for big industries in Europe...

It's really... It's a promise worth to be followed up.

To strengthening the single market, and to broaden it to areas normally not being covered is also extremely important.

I think the Capital Market Union is a good test for that, and I think we can both provide some good examples to other big countries.

You don't need to be a very big country to be a very successful country.

And that, I think, we have proven that, and I think the discussions to come will be very important for us both.

Finally, on defence, it's quite obvious that the discussions the last weeks have really underlined the need for Europe to step up; step up in terms of our own defence investments.

We had the last Council meeting, the last regular Council meeting on stepping up defence investments, not least helping the countries that are lagging behind but also making us still cooperating in a Transatlantic way, but making us less dependent on the US.

In the long run, it's quite obvious that American taxpayers are not willing to take that big part of the responsibility for European security.

I think that point has been made quite frankly, honestly.

In terms of investments and in terms of defence, it's also important to develop and to strengthen the European defence industries.

We have a pretty big one rooted in Sweden, but as all major industries nowadays, they are very dependent on international cooperation.

I will have a brief meeting with the European Investment Bank later on today, to just stress what quite a few countries have conveyed to them, that it is extremely important that they are forward-leaning, also in helping private investments reaching the defence industry, and that there are obstacles to that, today, that need to be removed.

We had, a few years ago, a very ongoing discussion saying that sustainability in investments also includes not taking part in investments in defence industry; as if they to some extent were not sustainable.

I think today the Ukrainian friends of ours have taught us that it's not sustainable not to have a defence industry.

Finally, we are very happy new allies to NATO.

We are extremely grateful for the support we got and we received from Luxembourg and other experienced NATO allies.

And we are now integrating in a very rapid pace into all the NATO structures.

And I think we proved that we have always belonged to the NATO, basically, but now we do also belong in a formal sense.

So I really look forward to deepening the partnerships in all these areas in the years ahead.

Thank you so much. Thanks.

[Luc Frieden]

Thank you, Ulf.

We take one or two questions, but very short, because we have another programme.

Yes, please.

[Journalist]

Okay, I try to make it really quick and brief.

Mr PM Kristersson, I want to know if Sweden is ready to deploy peacekeeping troops in, you know, on EU scale, into Ukraine?

And I have a second question for Mr PM Frieden.

It is confirmed that last week the Army Chief of Staff Steve Thull paid a visit to Paris.

So can you give us more details on this visit, because as far as I know it was about talkings about sending peacekeeping troops to Ukraine also.

And maybe one small addendum: how can the cooperation in the military sector work out for Luxembourg in Sweden?

As you mentioned, Sweden has a very strong defence industry, like SAAB, and has very capable fighter jets like the Gripen; and maybe there will be some cooperation in this area?

[Ulf Kristersson]

Thank you so much.

Well, also the Swedish Chief of defence was present, took part of the Paris meeting last week, and we will also take part of the meeting in London tomorrow. Our default position is always that, yes, we start with a yes. We would like to provide capabilities.

So that's always our default position in joint efforts.

But then we always... [inaudible], during the right preconditions of course...

And I think we still have question marks that need to be solved and to be clarified.

Obviously, we need to have a a clear mandate for European troops or for European forces.

You need to have a clear idea on how you... The command for these.

We have to have a clear position on backstops.

We need to know the American position on taking part, or at least supporting European efforts.

So, I think there are quite a few questions that are not...

Still don't have the necessary answers yet.

But our default position is always that, of course, if we can provide help in these situations, we are always willing to do that.

[Luc Frieden]

I can concur totally with what Prime Minister Kristersson just said.

I can confirm that the Luxembourg Chief of Defence attended the meeting in Paris.

But attending a meeting does not lead automatically to any political conclusion.

It is clear that most of the chiefs of defence that attended that meeting, like the one that will take place this week in London, were those whose Prime Ministers attended the same meetings at the political level.

So, I think, for Luxembourg, we are in a process of listening.

We stand by Ukraine and of course we want to help making sure that Europe is a safe continent after the end of this terrible war of aggression by Russia of Ukraine.

And therefore, we have asked our military to be in these meetings – because we are part of the European family – to listen carefully and to report to the political leadership.

And we will take it from there. And the preconditions that Prime Minister of Sweden just said are exactly the same for us.

We need to know exactly what would be the role of such soldiers, of such armies, and then to see in which way we could, or could not, participate.

But again, in Luxembourg, that will also go through a process that would need a decision by the Government, a consent by Parliament.

So we have quite a procedure.

We are not yet there.

But I think it's normal that we attend these meetings because, again, it is about the future of Europe.

This is about Ukraine, but it's also about the future of Europe.

And we are part of Europe.

And we know that our freedom depends, and depended in the past, on NATO and on Europe.

And we can only be prosperous and free if we are part of a bigger ensemble.

And that's why we are in the European Union. We are in NATO.

On the second question:

I mean that is quite obvious, that we have, in Luxembourg, a number of companies that are subcontractors to industries abroad.

I mean that is true for the auto automotive sector, that is true for other sectors.

And so, we could very well imagine that there are also subcontractors for the European defence industry, that could cooperate with Sweden, be it in the area of space satellites or in other areas.

So, we are exploring this right now together with the private sector, but I see, I think, that there can be ways to cooperate further in the future.

Second and last question?

If that is not the case, we thank you very much.

Have a nice day and enjoy the sun.

[Ulf Kristersson]

Thanks.