



## Nato chief urges 'step up' in support for Ukraine

Vladimir Putin victory would lead to bloc's members spending 'trillions' more on defence, says Mark Rutte

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**Graeme Wearden and John Collingridge in Davos**

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The head of the Nato military alliance has called for a "step up" in support for [Ukraine](#), to put Kyiv in the strongest position to achieve a sustainable peace deal with Russia.

Speaking on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in [Davos](#), Mark Rutte warned against scaling back support for Ukraine, saying it was essential to "change the trajectory of the war".

Rutte said a bad end to the Russia-Ukraine war would lead to Vladimir Putin "high-fiving with the leaders of North Korea, Iran and China". If Ukraine were to lose the war, he added, Nato members would need to spend trillions more on defence.

He was speaking after Donald Trump [threatened Russia with taxes, tariffs and sanctions](#) if a deal to end the war in Ukraine is not struck soon.

A peace deal must be sustainable, Rutte said, avoiding a repeat of the Minsk peace talks in 2014 which were followed, eight years later, by the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Rutte told attendees at a breakfast organised by the Victor Pinchuk Foundation that "there is a commitment that Ukraine will become a member of Nato".

But Trump's new envoy for special missions, Richard Grenell, pushed back against Rutte, a former prime minister of the Netherlands, demanding that European Nato members increase their military spending.

Grenell predicted "a big buzz-saw in America" if the Nato secretary talked about adding Ukraine to Nato when "the American people are the ones that are paying for the defence".

"You cannot ask the American people to expand the umbrella of Nato when the current members aren't paying their fair share, and that includes the Dutch, who need to step up," said Grenell.

Rutte conceded that Grenell had a point, and agreed that Europe was "underspending in terms of defence", as Trump has often said.

Rutte agreed that the situation needed to change, and warned that not all members have reached the target of spending 2% of GDP on defence, which he said was already too low.

"We are safe now, but Nato collectively is not able to defend itself in four or five years if we stick to the 2%," he said.

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Leaders of several states neighbouring Russia and Ukraine urged Nato members to increase their defence spending and ensure any peace deal was sustainable.

Finland's president, Alexander Stubb, insisted that Ukraine must become a member of the EU, and in the long run, a member of Nato. "That is the only way in which Putin has lost this war, and lost this war big time," Stubb said.

The president of Poland, Andrzej Duda, said: "We should launch such a strong measure to force Vladimir Putin to ask for peace negotiations. I do not want to beg Vladimir Putin to sit at the table. I want Vladimir Putin to beg Ukraine and allies of Ukraine how to end this war."

Edgars Rinkēvičs, the president of Latvia, said sanctions on Russia should continue even if a peace deal is struck.

"We must make sure that Russia does not regroup, does not get back some economic power. So even if there is a kind of deal, sanctions, economic pressure should continue," Rinkēvičs added.

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