

Lift Russian Sanctions for ‘Positive Developments’ in Ukraine – OSCE Chair

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Austrian Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz **Matthias Schrader / AP**

Austrian Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz has called on European leaders to begin lifting sanctions against Russia in exchange for “any positive development” in the Ukrainian crisis.

Kurz, a politician for the Austrian People's Party, claimed that the change in policy would “send a clear signal to Russia.”

“My concept is clear. I want to move from the model which penalizes Russia to one which stimulates positive change,” he said in an interview with [Austrian media outlet Oesterreich24](#).

Kurz, who visited eastern Ukraine on Jan. 3 – 4 in his role as chairman of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), said the crisis would be a priority for the organization.

Embed:

After two days in eastern [#Ukraine](#) back in [#Vienna](#). The conflict in and around [#Ukraine](#) is a priority for Austria's [@OSCE](#) chairmanship.

— Sebastian Kurz (@sebastiankurz) [4 января 2017 г.](#)

The OSCE chairman described the scale of the humanitarian problem in the area as “massive.”

“We have about three million people who are dependent on humanitarian aid, and more than two million who have been forced to flee their homes,” he said. “Most of the young men have left, and the elderly and the vulnerable are completely on their own.”

Embed:

Today I met also with Austrian [@OSCE](#) monitors in [#Mariupol](#) - thanks for your work in this challenging environment, you have my full support!
pic.twitter.com/1v3QjzpoMR

— Sebastian Kurz (@sebastiankurz) [3 января 2017 г.](#)

The European Union placed sanctions on a number of Russian banks, companies and prominent individuals in Russian business after the Kremlin annexed the Crimean peninsula in April 2014.

Some 9,700 people are believed to have died in the Ukrainian conflict between April 2014 and Dec. 1 2016, according to the United Nations. Of that number, more than 2,000 are believed to be civilians.

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