



To the President of the European Council
To Mr Herman Van Rompuy

To the President of the Republic of France
To Mr François Hollande

We, the undersigned members of the European Parliament, representing different political groups and member states, welcome the French Government's decision to suspend the planned delivery of the first Mistral helicopter carrier to the Russian military. This will help to overcome a certain moral and political inconsistency of the EU policies regarding the Russian invasion of its neighbouring state.

At this point the Russian military activities in Ukraine are gaining momentum with more and more Russian troops and heavy military equipment crossing the border.

The EU's policy so far has been to condemn Russia's violation of Ukraine's territorial integrity and to call for a cessation of violence, including not sending lethal weapons to Ukraine.

In these conditions we sincerely hope that the absolute ban of arms deliveries from EU nations to Russia will be implemented during the next days.

Our special concern has been the pending delivery by the French ship construction company DCNS of the first Mistral assault helicopter carrier to Russia. Even without weapons on board, this would have risked crossing the red line of European values and solidarity.

Suspension of the Mistral deal is a good start but, in the longer perspective, not the best possible solution. The current Kremlin leaders have proved that expansion of the Russian zone of influence by military means and aggression is the core of their foreign policy. Therefore, it is not realistic to count on Russia changing to a peaceful rule-of-law state in the foreseeable future.

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In order to ease the financial and political impact for our French friends, we ask you to consider a positive alternative. The EU, made up of 28 member states should itself procure the Mistral vessels. These two ships could provide a nucleus for a future EU Maritime Rapid Reaction Force. This idea has been supported by the former chairman of NATO Military Committee, General Klaus Naumann. It could alternatively also be used to support Frontex operations to address the flow of illegal immigrants in the Mediterranean.

Such a solution could give the Mistral issue a positive and constructive drive, both by applying the principle of EU solidarity to France and by giving new common answers to challenges for European external and internal security as a whole.

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