

China: Certain countries must stop 'fuelling the fire' in Ukraine war

China is "deeply worried" that the Ukraine conflict could spiral out of control, foreign minister Qin Gang said on Tuesday, and called on certain countries to stop "fuelling the fire" in an apparent dig at the United States.

The United States has warned of consequences if China provides military support to Russia, which Beijing says it is not doing, according to Reuters.

"China is deeply worried that the Ukraine conflict will continue to escalate or even spiral out of control" Qin said in a speech at a forum held at the foreign ministry.

"We urge certain countries to immediately stop fuelling the fire," he said in comments that appeared to be directed at the United States, adding that they must "stop hyping up 'today Ukraine, tomorrow Taiwan'".

Qin's comments came as Russia's news agency

TASS said China's top diplomat Wang Yi was due to arrive in Moscow on Tuesday and ahead of a "peace speech" President Xi Jinping is expected to deliver on Friday, the first anniversary of the Ukraine conflict.

A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson said Wang's visit to Russia would be an opportunity to further promote ties between the two countries.

Also on Tuesday, China released a paper on the Global Security Initiative (GSI), Xi's flagship security proposal which aims to uphold the principle of "indivisible security", a concept endorsed by Moscow.

Russia has insisted that Western governments respect a 1999 agreement based on the principle of "indivisible security" that no country can strengthen its own security at the expense of others.

On Monday, Wang called for a negotiated settle-



ment to the Ukraine war during a stopover in Hungary.

The same day, U.S. President Joe Biden made a surprise visit to Kyiv in a show of solidarity, prom-

ising \$500 million worth of military aid to Ukraine and additional sanctions against Russian elites to be unveiled in full this week. Russia's Feb. 24 military operation in Ukraine has

triggered one of the deadliest European conflicts since World War Two and the biggest confrontation between Moscow and the West since the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis.



Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang delivers a speech at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs office in Beijing, China, on February 21, 2023.

● ANDY WONG/AP

NEWS IN BRIEF

At least 51 soldiers killed in Burkina Faso ambush

Reuters – At least 51 soldiers were killed when their unit was ambushed in northern Burkina Faso on Friday, the army said on Monday, one of the highest reported death tolls from a single attack since the area became a hotbed of terrorist activity. The soldiers were ambushed in Oudalan Province, in Burkina Faso's Sahel region, which shares a border with Mali. The provisional death toll was revised up from eight reported earlier on Monday after an additional 43 bodies were found, the army said.

Death toll rises to 8 from new Türkiye-Syria earthquake



● AFP

AP – The death toll in Türkiye and Syria rose to eight in a new and powerful earthquake that struck two weeks after a devastating temblor killed nearly 45,000 people, authorities and media said Tuesday. Türkiye's disaster management authority said six people were killed and 294 others were injured with 18 in critical condition after Monday's 6.4-magnitude quake. In Syria, a woman and a girl died as a result of panic during the earthquake in the provinces of Hama and Tartus, pro-government media outlets said.

U.N. torture prevention panel cancels inspection over access issues in Australia

A U.N. torture prevention panel terminated its suspended visit to Australia, saying it continued to face obstacles in getting access to some detention centres in the country.

The U.N. Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture (SPT) on Monday said it had requested several assurances in order to resume its visit but some guarantees were not provided, and it could not decide on a "reasonable timeframe" for a visit, according to Reuters.

"Despite the good cooperation the Subcommittee has with the Australian federal authorities following our initial mission, there is no alternative but to terminate the visit as the issue of unrestricted access to all places of deprivation of liberty in two states has not yet been resolved," SPT Chairperson Suzanne Jabbour said in a statement.

The Australian government "deeply regrets" the decision by the U.N. panel, a spokesperson for Attor-

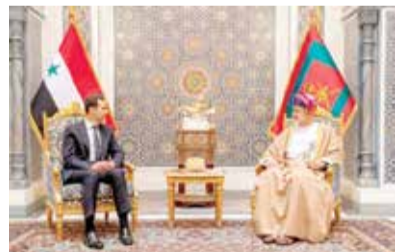
ney-General Mark Dreyfuss said in an emailed response. "This is despite the fact that the SPT carried out successful visits to places of detention across almost all jurisdictions in Australia, and the progress made by Australia in addressing the concerns raised by the SPT," it said. An optional protocol against torture and degrading treatment, which Australia is a signatory to, allows for SPT to visit prisons, police stations and other detention cen-

tres unannounced.

New South Wales, Australia's most populous state, in October 2022 blocked the panel from visiting its prisons, saying the state maintained high standards at its jails and Australia was a sovereign country. Dreyfuss then said the decision by New South Wales was disappointing. The U.N. delegation was also prevented from visiting correctional facilities in Queensland state prompting it to suspend its 12-day visit.



New chapter in Syria-Arab world ties



Syrian President Bashar al-Assad (L) meets Oman's Sultan Haitham bin Tariq al-Said in Muscat on February 20, 2023.

● SANA

The Syrian government led by President Assad has sent a message to the world with prudence and far-sightedness that Damascus is ready to welcome Arab and Western states back again. This has already happened in the wake of the Daesh defeat as some Arab and European countries have shown interest in normalizing relations with Damascus.

The wave of Arab countries returning to Syria in the past weeks, especially after the magnitude 7.8 earthquake jolted the country on February 6, has become more vivid, while normalization of ties with Syria has been a hot topic over the last two years.

The temblor, though leaving a trail of death and destruction, has become an opportunity for Arab countries to send aid to Syria as a goodwill gesture and visit the country after years of having no diplomatic relations.

These developments suggest some Arab countries have admitted their policies on Syria had been wrong and are now turning back from the wrong path they had taken. At the same time, it shows the stability of the legitimate government of Assad and Syria's political system, which fought the Daesh terror group and foreign interference that sought for years to oust it. A new chapter has opened for Syria and the Arab world, and it is hoped that the past experience will have good lessons for the future.

Putin blames West for war in Ukraine

Putin accused the U.S.-led NATO alliance of fanning the flames of the conflict in the mistaken belief that it could defeat Moscow in a global confrontation. "They intend to transform a local conflict into a phase of global confrontation. This is exactly how we understand it all and we will react accordingly, because in this case we are talking about the existence of our country," Putin said.

He also said Moscow was defying the West's attempts to ruin Russia's economy through an unprecedented package of sanctions, saying trillions of dollars were at stake for the West, but Russia's income flows had not dried up. Russian president also delivered a nuclear warning to the West over Ukraine, suspending a landmark nuclear arms control treaty, announcing new strategic systems had been put on combat duty and warning that Moscow could resume nuclear tests.

Putin said Russia would achieve its war aims.

"The elites of the West do not hide their purpose. But they also cannot fail to realise that it is impossible to defeat Rus-

sia on the battlefield."

Cautioning the United States that it was stoking the war into a global conflict, Putin said that Russia was suspending participation in the New START Treaty, the last major arms control treaty between Moscow and Washington.

Signed by then-U.S. President Barack Obama and his Russian counterpart, Dmitry Medvedev, in 2010, the treaty caps the number of deployed strategic nuclear warheads that the United States and Russia can deploy. It was due to expire in 2026.

"I am forced to announce today that Russia is suspending its participation in the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty," said Putin.

Russia and the United States have vast arsenals of nuclear weapons left over from the Cold War and remain, by far, the biggest nuclear powers. Between them, they hold 90% of the world's nuclear warheads.

The New START Treaty limited both sides to 1,550 warheads on deployed intercontinental ballistic missiles, submarine ballistic missiles and heavy bombers. Both sides met the central limits by 2018.

U.S. blamed for tensions in Korean Peninsula

AP – The United States and its allies urged the U.N. Security Council on Monday to condemn North Korea's ballistic missile launches, but China and Russia blamed the U.S. for escalating tensions with stepped-up military exercises targeting Pyongyang. At the emergency meeting, U.S. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield told the council that the United States will propose a presidential statement, saying at a minimum all 15 members should be agreeable to condemning the North's unprecedented missile launches.