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Kiev ready to sign ceasefire plan with pro-Russians: President

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Ukraine has expressed readiness to sign a Moscow-backed ceasefire plan with pro-Russia forces in the country's restive east.

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko said on the sidelines of the NATO summit in Wales on Thursday that the draft deal would be signed later on Friday at a meeting between representatives of Kiev, Moscow, pro-Russia forces and the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in the Belarusian capital of Minsk.

Poroshenko expressed “careful optimism” that the peace talks brokered by the OSCE would produce a ceasefire to end the crisis in the European country.

"Tomorrow in Minsk a document will be signed providing for the gradual introduction of the Ukrainian peace plan," Poroshenko said.

"It is very important that the first element provides for a ceasefire," he said, adding that he was ready to order a ceasefire in eastern Ukraine if a deal is signed.

Meanwhile, the leaders of pro-Russia forces in eastern Ukraine also said they were ready to issue orders to silence the guns once a deal is made with Kiev.

Russian President Vladimir Putin earlier outlined a seven-point peace plan that calls for an end to the operations by the Ukrainian armed forces and pro-Russia forces that has claimed the lives of some 2,600 people so far.

Ukraine's mainly Russian-speaking regions in the east have witnessed deadly clashes between pro-Russia protesters and the Ukrainian army since the government in Kiev launched military operations in mid-April in a bid to crush the protests.

Violence intensified in May after the two flashpoint regions of Donetsk and Lugansk held local referendums, in which their residents voted overwhelmingly in favor of independence from Ukraine.

Western powers and the Kiev government accuse Moscow of having a hand in the crisis in eastern Ukraine, but Russia denies the accusation.