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WE NEED ACTIONS NOT WORDS FROM RUSSIA, GERMAN FOREIGN MINISTER SAYS

Berlin.—German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said yesterday that Russia must take concrete steps, such as troop withdrawals, to de-escalate tensions over Ukraine. “Every real step towards de-escalation would be cause for hope,” Baerbock said at a news conference with her Spanish counterpart after Russia said some troops were returning to base following exercises near Ukraine.

Moscow has not said how many of the roughly 130,000 troops massed along the Ukrainian border it plans to withdraw and NATO said it had not seen any evidence of a drawdown, prompting a mixture of cautious optimism and scepticism from the

West. “It is now up to Russia to embark on the path of de-escalation and underpin it with very concrete steps such as troop withdrawal,” Baerbock said.

Spanish Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares echoed her sentiment, saying that, if confirmed, any partial withdrawal of Russian troops would be “excellent news” and that it was up to the Kremlin to make the next move:

“We must not underplay the huge tension on the Ukrainian border right now ... The ball is in Russia’s court.”

He said war was not inevitable and that diplomacy remained the best solution to the crisis.

“We can’t stop foreigners buying homes on the island,” says Balearic President

- Armengol hits back as Minorca MP demands to know what the government is doing to make homes more affordable for young people.
- Non-Spanish home buyers have been blamed for driving up property prices.

Palma.—Balearic President, Francina Armengol, dismissed suggestions in parliament this week that her government should be doing more to limit the sale of homes to foreigners who have been blamed for driving up property prices.

Armengol said it is a free market and all are welcome to buy homes across the Balearics.

She was reacting to a question from the Nationalist Member of Parliament, Josep Castells, who is calling for measures to be taken so that there is more affordable housing. A recent report suggested that a young person would have

to work for 16 years in the Balearics before they could afford to buy a home compared to the national average of seven years. A recent report from the College of Notaries said that 56,000 homes in the Balearics had been bought by non-Spaniards in the last 10 years.

The average price has increased by 40 percent during this period.

Increase

Armengol has admitted that foreign buyers had helped increase property prices but she added that there was little that her government could do.



56,000 homes sold to foreigners in last decade.

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