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Ukraine's interim Prime Minister Arseny Yatsenyuk says the events in Crimea have created a crisis for all of Europe and urged Russia not to press for separatism in Ukraine.

Yatsenyuk told a news conference following talks with EU leaders that the decree making Crimea part of Russia is illegitimate and Crimea remains an integral part of the country. Any decisions about the future of Crimea must involve the Ukrainian government in Kiev.

He added that the current crisis must be resolved through peaceful means and urged Russia to withdraw its troops from Crimea. Ukraine's armed forces will defend itself if Russian military intervention escalates further into Ukraine's territory.

Yatsenyuk says the Ukrainian economy is being threatened and called on the international community for financial help. Yatsenyuk also defended the legitimacy of the country's interim cabinet.

Ukraine's acting president said on Thursday the referendum planned by the pro-Moscow parliament in Crimea on joining Russia was illegitimate, and declared it a farce and crime organised by the Russian military.

In a short televised address, Oleksander Turchinov said the Ukrainian parliament would start procedures to dismiss the Crimean assembly and block the referendum.