

Naryshkin Snubs 'Russophobic' Council of Europe

September 27, 2012

The  **Moscow Times**

State Duma Speaker Sergei Naryshkin said Thursday that he would skip a meeting of European lawmakers next week because of “Russophobic” attitudes among them.

Naryshkin, a member of the ruling United Russia party, was to have been a prominent speaker at the Oct. 1-5 session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, France.

“But as the session’s opening was nearing, we felt that key strategic proposals of mine would not be heard by a number of leaders of the Parliamentary Assembly and a number of Russophobic delegations,” Naryshkin said in televised remarks.

“I came to the conclusion that it will be possible for me to address a PACE session [only] when conditions are suitable,” he said.

The European Union’s foreign policy chief, Catherine Ashton, said this month that Russian authorities had been “chipping away” at fundamental rights and freedoms since Vladimir

Putin's return to the presidency in May.

RIA–Novosti reported that the rest of the Russian delegation will take part in the PACE session, which is due to discuss Russia's adherence to its obligations as a Council of Europe member, including human rights, pluralistic democracy and the rule of law.

Russia has made some "very positive steps," but some measures introduced raise serious concerns, PACE said in a document posted on its website.

Also on Thursday, Anvar Azimov, who serves as Russia's point man on visas with the EU, complained that the European Union was trying to politicize talks on visa-free travel by linking the issue to Russia's human rights record.

(Reuters, MT)

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