

Russia Hopeful UN Syria Deal Is Near

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Russia hopes the UN Security Council will approve a resolution this week to support a deal for Syria to abandon its chemical arms, but talks with the U.S. have been rocky, a senior Russian diplomat said on Tuesday.

Speaking before negotiations expected on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov reiterated Russia's opposition to any threat of military action against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's government.

He said Moscow would not accept a resolution stipulating automatic punitive measures if Assad fails to comply with the U.S.-Russian deal, under which he has agreed to give up his chemical arsenal.

"There is no talk of adopting a UN Security Council resolution under Chapter 7 of the UN charter. There can be no talk of any automatic application of sanctions, let alone the use of force," Ryabkov told a meeting in parliament.

Ryabkov also highlighted Russian concerns that Western states want to use the chemical arms agreement as a pretext for eventual military action.

U.S. officials "always mention that plans to punish Damascus remain in force. We draw certain conclusions from that and assume the threat of aggression in violation of international law is so far only delayed — not dismissed fully."

Ryabkov's comments came just hours before U.S. President Barack Obama spoke before the UN General Assembly and called for harsh consequences against Syria if it fails to surrender chemical weapons. Obama also urged Russia and Iran to stop supporting Assad.

"It is time for Russia and Iran to realize that insisting on Assad's rule will lead directly to the outcome they fear — an increasingly violent space for extremists to operate," he said.

"The Syrian government took a first step by giving an accounting of its stockpiles. Now, there must be a strong Security Council resolution to verify that the Assad regime is keeping its commitments, and there must be consequences if they fail to do so," Obama said.

He also seemed to specifically reject President Vladimir Putin's recent criticism of Americans' belief of "American exceptionalism."

"Some may disagree, but I believe that America is exceptional — in part because we have shown a willingness, through the sacrifice of blood and treasure, to stand up not only for our own narrow self-interest, but for the interests of all," he said.

Obama announced that the United States would provide an additional \$339 million in humanitarian aid to ease the Syrian refugee crisis.

The U.S.-Russia deal for Syria to abandon chemical weapons was a rare exception to their disagreements over the conflict. It prompted U.S. President Barack Obama to hold back his request for Congressional approval to strike Syria to punish Assad for an Aug. 21 sarin gas attack Washington says killed more than 1,400 people. Damascus denies it was the perpetrator.

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