

Foreign Policy Adviser Says Russia Committed to Peace Process in East Ukraine

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Russia is committed to the peace process in eastern Ukraine and wants further talks on ending the conflict between government forces and separatists, the Kremlin said Friday.

Foreign policy adviser Yuri Ushakov also said Russia respects the will of voters in the east after a separatist leadership election regarded as illegitimate by the West.

But, following Western criticism of Moscow's stance on Sunday's vote, Ushakov said Moscow had deliberately chosen the word "respect" rather than "recognize."

"We support the continuation of the Minsk process and advocate holding another meeting of the Contact Group," Ushakov told reporters, referring to a cease-fire agreement reached at talks in the Belarussian capital, Minsk, on Sept. 5.

"But not everything depends on us. There are a lot of factors," he said.

Ushakov was speaking before Kiev said an armored column including 32 tanks had crossed from Russia into Ukraine on Thursday.

Asked about the Russian government's use of the word "respect" instead of "recognize" for the Nov 2. elections in eastern Ukraine, he said: "These are different words."

"The word 'respect' was chosen deliberately ... We fundamentally respect the will of the voters," he said.

Ushakov said agreements had been reached for President Vladimir Putin to hold face-to-face talks with British Prime Minister David Cameron and French President Francois Hollande during a G20 summit in Brisbane on Nov 15-16.

He will also meet separately with International Monetary Fund chief Christine Lagarde and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe during an Asia-Pacific summit in Beijing on Nov. 10-11, Ushakov said.

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