

Kremlin Says Foreign Ministers to Discuss Ukraine in September

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Foreign ministers Laurent Fabius of France, Frank-Walter Steinmeier of Germany, Pavlo Klimkin of Ukraine and Sergei Lavrov of Russia (L-R) walk in a park ahead of their talks in Berlin, Germany, August 2014.

Foreign ministers of Russia, Ukraine, Germany and France will meet by the middle of September to discuss the conflict in Ukraine, Kremlin adviser Yury Ushakov told reporters Monday.

Over the weekend, Moscow, Berlin and Paris backed a bid for a new cease-fire in eastern Ukraine, where fighting between Kiev forces and Russia-backed rebels has killed more than 6,500 people since unrest erupted in the industrial region in April 2014.

The West accuses Russia of driving the rebellion and slapped sanctions on Moscow, aggravating an economic crisis caused by negligence in economic reforms and low oil prices.

"Leaders of France, Germany and Russia discussed holding a new meeting of the Normandy format. For now they have agreed that some time by mid-September the foreign ministers

will hold another meeting in this format," Ushakov said.

"Then we expect leaders of the four countries to hold a phone call and we will see what they agree as to where and how to meet in person," he said.

Fighting intensified in east Ukraine in recent weeks, with Kiev blaming the separatist rebels and Moscow saying the Ukrainian authorities were at fault.

Russia accuses Kiev of not delivering on the provisions of a peace deal brokered by Germany and France in the Belarussian capital Minsk, including on a constitutional reform that would give the rebel-held areas wide autonomy.

Ukraine's parliament on Monday backed granting a so-called "special status" to the separatist-minded east, but divisions in the pro-Western ruling camp and violent street protests suggested the changes would face a rough ride to become law.

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