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UN Secretary-General to Meet Putin for Talks on Syria, North Korea

By The Moscow Times

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United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is set to hold talks with President Vladimir Putin and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in Sochi on Friday.

Issues on the agenda include the Syrian civil war and the North Korean crisis, UN spokesman Martin Nesirsky has said.

Last week, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Secretary of State John Kerry announced that Russia and the U.S. would work together to find a political solution to the conflict in Syria, which has claimed more than 70,000 lives since it erupted more than two years ago.

The UN has backed the announcement, which came almost a year after it issued a communique calling for an immediate ceasefire and the establishment of a transitional government that could include officials serving under President Bashar Assad and members of the opposition.

Russia has been criticized for vetoing three UN Security Council resolutions with China that would have stepped up the pressure on Assad's regime.

Tension over North Korea's nuclear program is also set to feature in talks with Russian officials, the UN spokesman said. Kerry and Lavrov discussed the North Korean nuclear program last week.

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