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# Russia to Discuss Syria With U.S. and UN in Geneva

By The Moscow Times

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Envoys of the United Nations, Russia and the U.S. will discuss preparations for the upcoming international conference on Syrian political settlement at a meeting in Geneva on Wednesday.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Gennady Gatilov said Russia expects to reach an agreement on the format of the conference, expected to take place later this month.

"The purpose of the trilateral (RUS-US-UN) meeting in Geneva is to discuss the format of the international conference on Syrian settlement," Gatilov said in his Twitter. "It is necessary to jointly ensure implementation of Geneva communiqué by both Syrian government and opposition in order to reach agreed solutions."

A diplomatic source, who requested anonymity, told RIA-Novosti that the participants will also discuss the list of participants and Moscow's proposal to invite Iranian representatives to the conference.

Russia's delegation to Wednesday's meeting will include Gatilov and Russian president's special envoy on Middle East affairs, Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov.

The US envoys to the meeting are Under Secretary for Political Affairs Wendy Sherman and acting Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Beth Jones. The UN will send its peace envoy to Syria Lakhdar Brakhimi and Under Secretary General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman.

Martin Nesirky, a spokesman for the U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said the UN chief "would wish to see progress made there [in Geneva] in the push for a political solution."

"When you have such a deep-seated conflict, and now extremely divisive conflict, in Syria, it is not easy to switch track and to engage in political dialogue," Nesirky told journalists. "The Secretary-General certainly hopes that there will be progress made there in Geneva towards the international conference that has been advocated and is obviously long overdue."

U.S. Department of State spokeswoman Jennifer Psaki said the U.S. expects no breakthroughs to be made during the meeting.

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov announced in early May after a Moscow meeting with U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry that the two countries had decided to hold an international conference aimed at facilitating a solution through political dialogue to the Syrian crisis, in which more than 80,000 people have died since fighting broke out between government forces and rebels in March 2011.

The conference is designed to be a follow-up to last summer's international meeting in Geneva that drafted a peace roadmap for Syria.

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