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Russia Considers UN Vote on Crimea Annexation a 'Victory'

By Anna Dolgov

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Russian Ambassador to the UN Vitaly Churkin speaking at a UN General Assembly meeting on Thursday.

The United Nations has overwhelmingly passed a resolution condemning the Russian annexation of Crimea while Moscow's envoy to the UN praised the vote as a "victory" after a handful of countries, such as North Korea, Venezuela and Syria chose its side.

The 193-member General Assembly voted 100 to 11 to denounce the Crimean referendum — a balloting that paved the way for the absorption of the peninsula into Russia — as illegal. Another 58 countries abstained, while the remaining 24 did not vote.

The 10 votes that Russia mustered against the resolution came from Armenia, Belarus, Bolivia, Cuba, Nicaragua, North Korea, Sudan, Syria, Venezuela and Zimbabwe.

"The result is rather satisfying for us as we have won a moral and a political victory," the Russian Ambassador to the UN Vitaly Churkin said, RIA Novosti reported. "It clearly shows

that Russia is not isolated."

Diplomats had earlier predicted that no more than 80 to 90 countries would support the resolution against Russia which, as a permanent member of the Security Council, wields considerable power at the UN, the Associated Press reported.

"By passing today's #UN resolution, world made clear that borders are not mere suggestions," U.S. Ambassador to the UN Samantha Power said in a Twitter message.

"Propaganda can't make right what world knows is wrong," she added in another message.

Following the unexpectedly strong rebuke to Moscow at the world body, Ukraine's Foreign Minister Andriy Deshchytsia said the vote sent "the message that the world is united and Russia is isolated."

"This support [for Ukraine] has come from all corners of the world which shows that this [is] not only a regional matter but a global one," he said.

The resolution says that the March 16 referendum "has no validity," calls on all countries and international organizations to withhold any recognition of its results, and urges parties to "pursue immediately a peaceful resolution of the situation," according to a statement published on the UN website.

General Assembly resolutions are non-binding, however, so no party will be obliged to take any action.

Churkin said that "the fact that almost half of the members of the United Nations refused to support this resolution," was a sign of support for Russia, Associated Press reported.

"So it's a very encouraging trend and I think this trend will become stronger and stronger," he said.

Lobbying for the resolution ahead of the vote, Churkin called the draft document "confrontational in nature" and said it would be "counterproductive" to challenge the results of the referendum.

Russia's veto on the UN Security Council does not extend to the General Assembly, so Moscow was unable to block the resolution.

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