

Lavrov Says Russia Wants Dialogue With Ukraine's Next President Poroshenko

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Monday that Russia was ready for dialogue with Petro Poroshenko, Ukraine's next president, but warned the Kiev authorities not to step up armed operations against separatists in the east.

Echoing remarks by President Vladimir Putin in the past few days, Lavrov said the key to resolving Ukraine's crisis was genuine dialogue between Kiev and the east — where pro-Russian separatists have rebelled against the national leadership.

"As the president has said more than once, we are ready for dialogue with representatives of Kiev, we are ready for dialogue with Petro Poroshenko," Lavrov told a news conference when asked about Sunday's presidential election in Ukraine.

His remarks signaled that the Kremlin believes acceptance of the election, at least for the time being, represents Russia's best chance for a role in influencing Ukraine's future.

"Taking into account the expression of will that has taken place, which we respect, we will be prepared to establish pragmatic, equitable dialogue on the existing foundation — by which I mean the fulfillment of all existing agreements, including in trade and the gas sector," he said.

Lavrov did not directly question the legitimacy of the election, in which millions of potential voters in the east were unable to cast ballots, but he left the door open for such criticism by saying the campaign was "not without problems".

"Far from all candidates were able to go the distance ... Many had to quit the race, in some cases physically fearing for their lives in the face of threats," Lavrov said after talks with South Sudan's foreign minister.

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