

Lavrov: Russia Will Protect Economy Against Sanctions Over Ukraine

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov attends a meeting with students at Moscow State Institute of International Relations in Moscow.

Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Monday that any new sanctions from the EU or the U.S. would force Russia to protect its economy, citizens and businesses.

In the case of new sanctions over the Ukraine crisis, he said, "we will first of all start from our own interests — protect our economy, protect our social sphere, protect our businesses and at the same time draw conclusions from the actions of our partners."

Lavrov played down Russia's exclusion from the Group of Eight over its annexation of Ukraine's Crimea, saying the forum had lost much of its significance since the formation of the wider G20.

He said there would be no military intervention from Russia in Ukraine. Moscow denies

the presence of Russian tanks and troops there, despite what NATO and Western governments have said is overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

Speaking to students in Moscow, Lavrov also said Ukrainian forces must pull back from positions from which they can hit civilian targets as they face pro-Russian separatists in the east of the country, and that negotiations taking place on Monday should seek an immediate ceasefire.

"They must leave positions from which they can harm the civilian population," Lavrov said. "I very much count on today's negotiations being devoted above all to the task of agreeing an immediate ceasefire, without conditions."

The talks in the Belarussian capital Minsk will bring together representatives of Russia, Ukraine, the OSCE security forum and separatist rebels in eastern Ukraine.

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