

Japan's Abe Pledges to Improve Soured Ties With Russia

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Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe addresses the 69th United Nations General Assembly at United Nations Headquarters in New York.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said he wants to improve relations with China, South Korea and Russia, while acknowledging difficulties facing ties with his country's Asia-Pacific neighbors.

"Quiet efforts are needed" if Abe is to achieve his goal of meeting Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of a November Pacific Rim meeting in Beijing, Abe told a news conference in New York on Thursday evening.

The news conference was broadcast live in Tokyo.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said Japan must work to "remove obstacles" in their relationship.

"We hope that the Japanese side can show sincerity and take concrete actions to improve

bilateral ties," she said at a daily briefing.

Abe, who came to office in December 2012, visited all the leaders of Southeast Asia in his first year, but he has not been able to meet bilaterally with the leaders of China or South Korea — countries angered by territorial disputes with Japan and Abe's approach to Japan's wartime past.

He has met Russian President Vladimir Putin five times, but ties have recently been strained as Moscow annexed Ukraine's Crimea region and pro-Russian rebels fought Ukrainian forces in eastern Ukraine.

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