Russia Fights to Keep Veto Right in UN Security Council

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Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov (C) confers with Russia's Ambassador to the United Nations Vitaly Churkin (R) before addresing the U.N. Security Council during the 69th U.N. General Assembly in New York.

Moscow opposes calls to limit veto rights for UN Security Council members, a Russian diplomat was quoted as saying by TASS news agency Friday.

"We're against any change in veto rights," Russia's envoy to the UN, Vitaly Churkin, said on the sidelines of the 69th UN General Assembly in New York.

He added that "talks about a reform of the Security Council need to continue," but did not elaborate.

A proposal to suspend veto rights in the event of grave crimes against humanity that mandate urgent reaction, pitched in 2013 by France, was revived at a high-profile discussion at the assembly.

Separately, Polish President Bronislaw Komorowski urged a reform of the Security Council in a speech at the assembly.

Komorowski gave no outline for the reform, but explicitly linked his calls to the conflict in eastern Ukraine, where Russia is accused of backing pro-Moscow separatists who are fighting the Ukrainian army.

The Security Council, established in 1946, is the only UN body whose decisions are binding for members.

The council, which hands out mandates on military and peacekeeping operations, has five permanent members: Russia, the United States, Britain, France and China, all of whom can veto a decision.

The council also has 10 non-permanent members, which hold positions for two-year terms, but they have no veto rights.

Russia has repeatedly deployed its veto in recent years to block decisions lobbied by Western powers, including draft resolutions on war-torn Syria and Ukraine.