

Russia Not an Option for Aid-Seeking Greece, Tsipras Says

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The head of radical leftist Syriza party Alexis Tsipras speaks to supporters after winning the elections in Athens on Jan. 25, 2015.

Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras ruled out seeking aid from Russia and said on Monday that he would pursue negotiations for a new debt agreement with European partners but met little sign of compromise from Germany.

As the new Greek government continued a diplomatic offensive to replace its current bailout accord with the European Union, European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund "Troika," Tsipras said he was not looking for any new backers.

"We are in substantial negotiations with our partners in Europe and those that have lent to us. We have obligations towards them," he said at a news conference in Cyprus during his first foreign visit as prime minister.

"Right now, there are no other thoughts on the table," he said, when asked whether Greece would seek aid from Russia, which has suggested it could be willing to listen to a request

for support from Athens.

Greece, unable to borrow on the markets and facing pressure to extend the current support deal when it expires on Feb. 28, is looking for a bridging agreement that would give it breathing space to propose a new debt arrangement, including a package of economic reforms.

However, Tsipras repeated calls already made by his finance minister Yanis Varoufakis for the troika mechanism to be dismantled and replaced by direct negotiations between Athens and its EU and IMF partners.

"I believe that this would be a mature and necessary development for Europe," he said but met an immediate rebuff from Germany, which said the troika controls were agreed as part of the bailout and should remain in place.

"The German government sees no reason to scrap this mechanism of evaluation by the troika," finance ministry spokeswoman Christiane Wirtz said in Berlin.

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