

Lavrov 'Appreciates' Greece's Stance on Anti-Russia Sanctions

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Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov (R) and his Greek counterpart Nikos Kotzias walk into a hall during a meeting in Moscow on Feb. 11, 2015.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov praised Greece's stance on sanctions Wednesday, saying the country understood how counterproductive their use was in dealing with Russia.

Greece's new left-wing government ruffled feathers in the European Union by taking a softer stance toward Russia over the conflict in Ukraine, but fell into line when it agreed to extending existing sanctions against Russia last month.

At a joint news conference with Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Kotzias, Lavrov said: "We appreciate the stance of the Greek government, which understands the complete counterproductivity of attempts to speak this language with Russia."

Lavrov added that Moscow would consider a request for financial aid if one came from Athens. A Greek official said earlier that Russia had offered support.

The 28-member EU put off the implementation of another round of sanctions against Russia to give diplomacy a chance as the leaders of Russia, Ukraine, Germany and France are due to meet later on Wednesday to try broker a peace deal.

Kotzias said Athens had told other EU members that the bloc should not see its ties with Russia "through the prism of Ukraine" and should come out with a "positive agenda" instead.

Speaking via an official translator, Kotzias said Russia had a role to play in seeking a solution to the conflict in east Ukraine and expressed hope a significant deal would be reached at the summit in the Belarussian capital, Minsk.

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