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Countries Call for UN Tribunal on MH17

By Anna Dolgov

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An Emergencies Ministry member walks at a site of a Malaysia Airlines Boeing 777 plane crash near the settlement of Grabovo in the Donetsk region, in this July 17, 2014 file photo.

Five countries have asked the UN Security Council to establish an international tribunal to prosecute those responsible for the downing of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 over Ukraine last year, members of the group said Tuesday.

The tribunal would be "the best means of ensuring justice for the victims and their loved ones" and a warning to those who "threaten international peace and security by endangering civil aviation," the foreign ministries of Australia and Belgium said in identical statements.

The request to the UN Security Council to establish the tribunal comes from the five countries conducting an independent investigation into the crash, the statement said. Along with Australia and Belgium, the Joint Investigation Team includes Malaysia, the Netherlands and Ukraine.

Malaysia distributed a draft resolution on the tribunal last week, but diplomats said they feared the proposal could run into a veto from Russia, which has already declared its opposition to the plan.

“This idea does not suit us in general and in principle, due to several circumstances,” Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Gennady Gatilov said last week, news agency TASS reported.

“First, the investigation is still going on, no final conclusions have been reached,” Gatilov was quoted as saying. Another reason for Moscow's objections is that “in all other analogous situations, no tribunals were created,” he said.

No date for a Security Council review of the proposal has been set, though diplomats have said the issue might be discussed next week. July 21 will mark the anniversary of the council's first resolution on the MH17 crash.

Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 crashed on July 17 in a region of eastern Ukrainian controlled by Russian-backed separatists. All 298 people on board were killed.

“In the immediate aftermath of the MH17 disaster, the Security Council adopted Resolution 2166, which demanded that those responsible for the incident be held to account and that all States cooperate fully with efforts to establish accountability,” Australia and Belgium said in their statement.

Ukraine and Western governments blame pro-Russian forces in eastern Ukraine of shooting down the plane with a Buk missile. Moscow and the separatists have rejected the accusations.

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