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Russia, U.S. Reach Agreement Over UN Draft on Chemical Attacks in Syria

By The Moscow Times

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Residents walk past damaged buildings in a rebel-controlled area of Aleppo, Syria.

KUALA LUMPUR — U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said on Thursday he had reached an agreement with his Russian counterpart on a draft UN resolution aimed at identifying the perpetrators of chemical weapons attacks in Syria.

"We also talked about the UN Resolution and indeed I believe reached an agreement that should try to see that resolution voted on shortly, which will create a process of accountability which has been missing," Kerry told reporters after meeting Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on the sidelines of a regional forum in Malaysia.

Diplomats say the United Nations Security Council is likely to vote on Friday on a U.S. proposal to ask UN chief Ban Ki-moon and the global chemical weapons watchdog to assemble a team of investigators to lay blame for toxic gas attacks in Syria.

Attributing responsibility for chemical weapons attacks would pave the way for action by the 15-member Security Council. The body has already threatened consequences for such attacks, which could include sanctions.

Officials say Kerry and Lavrov reached an agreement on the draft resolution during talks in Malaysia on Wednesday.

Russia — which has veto power on the UN council — is a Syrian ally and has protected President Bashar al-Assad's government from any UN action during the four-year civil war. The United States began discussing the draft resolution with Russia several months ago.

Several diplomats, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that if no objections to the draft were raised by any council members by Thursday morning, then a vote would likely be scheduled for Friday.

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