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Russia to Cooperate With West and Syrian Opposition Groups — Putin

By The Moscow Times

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Following the G20 summit in Turkey, there has been a decline in tension between Russia and the West in the face of new international threats and challenges, Russian President Vladimir Putin said during the final G20 press conference, Interfax agency reported Monday.

"Life goes forward, things are changing, there are new challenges, new threats, new challenges that are difficult to solve alone ... [we] need to join forces," Putin said.

On the sidelines of the G20 summit, Putin and U.S. President Barack Obama conversed for 20 minutes, which was praised as "constructive" by both Russian and U.S. officials. They spoke mainly on Syria and Ukraine, Putin's aide Yury Ushakov said.

A qualitative breakthrough in bilateral relations cannot be expected from such a brief meeting, Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov said, TASS reported Monday.

At the summit, Putin stressed that joint efforts from all G20 members are needed to defeat Islamic State (IS), and that discussion of Syria's political reforms should be put aside for the moment, TASS reported.

Russia is ready to cooperate with Syrian armed opposition groups in fighting IS, Putin said at a press conference following the G20 summit, the TASS news agency reported Monday.

With Russian air support, some Syrian opposition groups are ready to intensify fighting against IS, Putin said. "If that happens, it could be a good basis for further work on a political settlement," he said, TASS reported.

Putin stressed that the main thing now is "to work together to fight the common threat," and said that a broad anti-terror coalition needs to be created to fight terrorism around the world.

The Russian president's proposals were echoed by France's President Francois Hollande who spoke to the French Parliament — both chambers of which gathered at the Versailles Palace for the first time since 2009. Hollande spoke, among other things, of the need to create an anti-terror coalition that would include Russia, the RBC news agency reported Monday.

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