

Russia Warns Japan on Islands Dispute as Peace Talks Resume

By [Bloomberg](#)

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Sergei Lavrov and Taro Kono / Russian Foreign Ministry

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov called on Japan to avoid “one-sided rhetoric” as talks resumed on reaching a deal to end a territorial dispute over four islands that’s prevented the countries from signing a peace accord to end World War II.

Negotiations should take place “professionally, without trying to distort agreements that are reached at a particular stage, without forcing conflicting one-sided rhetoric into the public space,” Lavrov told Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono at talks in Moscow on Monday over the islands, known as the Northern Territories in Japan and the South Kurils in Russia.

His remarks came after the Russian Foreign Ministry last week summoned the Japanese ambassador to protest recent comments by his government. The ministry accused Japanese officials of creating tension around the issue and distorting a 1956 offer by the Soviet Union to resolve the dispute by handing back two of the islands seized by its forces near the end of

the war. Russia also criticized the description of 2019 as a “turning point” in the talks.

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Russian President Vladimir Putin and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe have ordered discussions on a peace agreement to be conducted on the basis of the 1956 declaration, Lavrov said.

Abe, who has pledged to do everything he can to settle the dispute, is due to visit Russia later this month for his 25th meeting with Putin since 2012. Kono told Lavrov that Japan expects Putin to visit the country in June.

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