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Checkmate Europe: Russia To Join Asia's Federation

By AFP

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Sergei Savostyanov/TASS

Russia's governing body for chess said Tuesday it had been admitted into the game's Asian federation and will leave Europe as Russian players face restrictions over Moscow's assault in Ukraine.

The shift, finalized by a vote at the Asian Chess Summit in Abu Dhabi earlier Tuesday, comes as other Russian sports federations, including football, are considering a similar switch.

The head of the Chess Federation of Russia hailed the move as a "historic event."

"For the first time, a chess federation, one of the strongest in the world, has moved from one continent to another," the chess federation's president Andrei Filatov was quoted as saying in a statement.

According to the statement, 29 delegates at the summit voted in favour of Russia joining

Asia's federation, with one against and six abstaining.

The switch will take place on May 1.

The Russian-led world governing body of chess, FIDE, suspended Russian teams from chess tournaments in March last year, shortly after President Vladimir Putin sent troops to Ukraine.

But the governing body, headed by Arkady Dvorkovich, a former Russian deputy prime minister, allowed individual players to compete under the FIDE flag.

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Russia has exercised enormous influence in chess since Soviet times, when the game was one of a number of areas of confrontation between the communist bloc and the West. With a brief break when Bobby Fischer took the title in 1972, from 1948 to 2006, the world champion was a player representing the Soviet Union or Russia.

Other Russian sports federations and athletes have faced restrictions in response to Moscow's offensive in Ukraine.

The Russian Football Union, banned from key competitions by European football's governing body UEFA, has also mulled switching to Asia.

In August, Dvorkovich was re-elected as president of FIDE, beating Ukrainian grandmaster Andrii Baryshpolets.

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