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Ukraine Calls Russia UN Presidency a 'Slap in the Face'

By AFP

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AP Photo / Bebeto Matthews / TASS

Ukraine on Saturday branded Russia's presidency of the UN Security Council for the month of April "a slap in the face," joining a chorus of outrage from Western countries.

Moscow assumes the presidency as part of its monthly rotation between the Security Council's 15 member states, with ties with the West at their lowest point since the Cold War over Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said Russia's tenure was "a slap in the face to the international community."

"I urge the current UNSC members to thwart any Russian attempts to abuse its presidency," he said on Twitter, calling Russia "an outlaw on the UNSC."

Moscow last chaired the council in February 2022, the same month it invaded Ukraine —

prompting Kyiv to call for Russia's removal from the council.

Russia will hold little influence on decisions but will be in charge of the agenda.

Moscow has said Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov is planning to chair a UN Security Council meeting this month on "effective multilateralism."

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova also said that Lavrov would lead a debate on the Middle East on April 25.

In New York, a UN Security Council diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity, said: "In the case of abuse by the presidency, we will certainly react."

However, "this is not the point. The point is the war in Ukraine and making sure that we put this to an end."

'Insecurity Council'

The United States has also criticized Russia's membership of the Security Council and its status as a permanent member.

"A country that flagrantly violates the UN Charter and invades its neighbor has no place on the UN Security Council," White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre said Friday.

"Unfortunately Russia is a permanent member of the Security Council and no feasible international legal pathway exists to change that reality," she added, calling the presidency "a largely ceremonial position."

The Baltic states also expressed their concern.

Estonia's UN envoy Rein Tammsaar, speaking also on behalf of Latvia and Lithuania, warned the Security Council Friday as it met to discuss Russia's plans to deploy tactical nuclear weapons in neighboring Belarus.

"Isn't it telling that tomorrow, on the anniversary of the Bucha massacre, Russia will assume the Presidency of the UN Security Council?

"This is shameful, humiliating and dangerous to the credibility and effective functioning of this body," he said.

Lithuania's Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis mockingly congratulated Russia on assuming the presidency.

"Looking forward to some energetic discussions on Ukraine's proposal for the destination of your warships," he wrote on Saturday.

The strategic communications division of the Lithuanian foreign ministry tweeted meanwhile that "Russia, waging a brutal war against Ukraine, can only lead #InsecurityCouncil."

In an interview with AFP on Thursday, U.S. Ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield

said she expected Russia to behave "professionally" in the presidency, but expressed doubts.

"We also expect that they will also seek opportunities to advance their disinformation campaign against Ukraine, the United States and all of our allies," she said.

"At every opportunity, we will raise our concerns about Russia's actions," she added, reiterating Washington's condemnation of Moscow's "war crimes and human rights violations" in Ukraine.

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