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Russia's Lavrov Arrives in South Africa for BRICS Summit

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Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov (C). **Jacoline Schoonees / DIRCO / 15th BRICS Summit / flickr**

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Tuesday arrived in South Africa, where he will head Russia's delegation at the annual BRICS summit this week.

Lavrov was greeted by a group of dancers and musicians upon disembarking his plane in Johannesburg on Tuesday morning and was seen briefly dancing along with the performers.

The Kremlin confirmed last month that President Vladimir Putin would not attend the summit in person after the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued a warrant for his arrest and a botched mutiny by the Wagner mercenary outfit created a domestic crisis.

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South Africa, which has not condemned Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, faced a diplomatic dilemma in hosting the Russian leader, who was indicted by the ICC over the illegal

deportations of Ukrainian children.

Putin explained the decision to appear at the summit virtually by saying he did not think his "presence at the BRICS summit was more important" than his "presence here in Russia right now."

On the eve of his arrival to South Africa, Russia's Foreign Ministry published an essay in which Lavrov denounced the "colonial and racist manners" of "Western elites" and championed BRICS as a symbol of "honest inter-state communication."

"Russia has consistently stood for strengthening the position of the African continent in a multipolar world order," he wrote, adding that Moscow would support African nations in "their aspirations to play an increasingly significant role in resolving" global issues.

The BRICS summit to be held in Johannesburg on Aug. 22-24 is a key event for Putin, as it fits with his strategy of seeking to display a formidable counterweight to Western hegemony.

South Africa is the current chair of BRICS, which in addition to Russia includes Brazil, India and China.

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