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Baltic States to Skip OSCE Meeting Over Lavrov Invite

By AFP

November 28, 2023



Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. **Russian Foreign Ministry Press Service**

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania said Tuesday that their top diplomats will not take part in an upcoming OSCE meeting in the North Macedonian capital Skopje over the decision to invite Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.

In a joint statement, the Baltic countries' foreign ministers said Lavrov's planned attendance "risks legitimizing aggressor Russia as a rightful member of our community of free nations," adding that they "decided not to attend" this week's meeting in Skopje.

Lavrov said Monday that North Macedonia, which has joined Western sanctions over Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, had agreed to let him attend the annual meeting of the pan-European security body of which Russia is a member.

Russian state media said that Bulgaria, which is an EU member state, informed Moscow it

would allow Lavrov's plane to cross its airspace on his way to Skopje.

On Tuesday, Ukraine said it would "boycott" the meeting over Lavrov's invite, and the Baltic states followed suit.

"Lavrov's attendance trivializes the atrocious crimes that Russia continues to commit," Estonian Foreign Minister Margus Tsahkna said at a meeting of NATO foreign ministers in Brussels.

"Lavrov's place is at a special tribunal, not the OSCE table," he added, explaining the joint move by the Baltic states to skip the meeting.

Last year, OSCE host Poland refused to let Lavrov attend, sparking an angry response from Russia.

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