

Russia Calls On West to Lift Sanctions on Afghanistan

By [AFP](#)

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Members of the delegation of the Taliban movement (banned in Russia) attend the 2024 St Petersburg International Economic Forum. **TASS**

Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov called on the West to lift sanctions on Taliban-led Afghanistan and take "responsibility" for reconstruction efforts in the country, on Friday.

However, Lavrov did not say whether Moscow would lift its own designation of the group as a "terrorist organization."

"We urge Western countries to recognize their responsibility for the post-conflict reconstruction of Afghanistan, lift sanctions restrictions and return Kabul's expropriated assets," Lavrov said.

The Taliban has been under Western sanctions for more than two decades, measures initially imposed to restrict the financing of al-Qaeda and other organizations designated "terrorist"

groups.

Russia's presidential envoy on Afghanistan, Zamir Kabulov, said he hoped a "final decision" on removing the group from Russia's "terrorist" blacklist "will be announced in the very near future," state news agencies reported.

The officials were speaking as Russia hosted an annual diplomatic forum on Afghanistan, involving envoys from the Taliban and neighboring countries in the Middle East and Central Asia.

Moscow has fostered relations with the Taliban since they returned to power in 2021 following the U.S. withdrawal from the war-ravaged country.

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In the 1980s, the Soviet Union waged a decade-long war on the country, a conflict which saw the emergence of mujahideen resistance fighters — many of whom became Taliban leaders. Historians also see the war as contributing to the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Various Russian officials have called for Moscow to remove the Taliban from a blacklist of "terrorist and extremist organizations," a move that could further boost cooperation.

State news agencies reported that the head of Russia's FSB security agency Alexander Bortnikov said Friday that he wanted to see "mutually beneficial" cooperation with Afghanistan's special services.

Afghanistan's Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi was in Moscow for the talks.

Lavrov also said Russia would not accept "third countries" putting military bases in Afghanistan or establishing new military facilities in neighboring countries "under any pretext."

Russia has a major military base in allied Tajikistan, which borders Afghanistan.

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