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## **JAPAN'S PRO-US STANCE STANDS IN THE WAY OF DEVELOPING RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA, SAYS LAVROV**

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Japans pro-American stance stands in the way of taking Russian-Japanese relations to a new level, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov stated on Thursday during his speech for the Association of European Businesses.

"The agreement between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe means that we need to take our relations to a qualitatively new level. This is the number one priority of economy, politics and the sphere of security, where we encounter many problems, including Japan prioritizing a military alliance with the US in the security area," the minister said.

The US has declared Russia "a key adversary, if not the enemy", while Japan continues to coordinate its actions on all international platforms with the US, "even on issues where Russia votes the opposite way". "This definitely creates difficulties in taking the relations to a qualitatively new level," Lavrov stressed.

He also noted that despite stable dialogue being established between the Russian and Japanese foreign ministries, "there are not as many points of convergence [between Moscow and Tokyo], taking into account Tokyos pro-American stance."

"We would wish for more when it comes to the economy. Our leaders have agreed on joint economic activity on the so-called four islands, five areas have been established, but they are not that impressive," he continued. "So far, we have few joint high-tech projects, partly because of Japanese foreign partners holding back cooperation in these areas, as weve gathered from our Japanese neighbors."

At the same time, the Russian foreign minister confirmed Moscows commitment to develop Russian-Japanese relations. "Our aim is to take the relations to the level of true partnership, and it remains in place. The difficulties we have mentioned present a significant obstacle, but we are

committed to move towards a new level outlined by our president and the Japanese PM," Lavrov noted. "In this context, the countries will be able to resolve problems of any difficulty level."

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