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**RUSSIA TO INK PEACE TREATY WITH JAPAN ONLY WITH [ ] NEIGHBORLINESS' PROVISION**

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22.02.2019

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Russian News Agency (22 February 2019)

Russia is ready to sign a peace treaty with Japan at any time if the document stipulates a provision on good-neighborly relations, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said on Thursday.

Addressing a meeting of the Association of European Businesses (AEB), Lavrov said: "As President Putin has proposed at the Eastern Economic Forum, we would be completely ready to draft and sign a peace treaty right now, but not a peace treaty in a sense that such treaties are signed right after world wars, because the state of war between us was terminated with the adoption of the 1956 Declaration, and so we would like already now to prepare a treaty from the position of many decades of the coexistence and cooperation in a whole number of spheres that would fundamentally stipulate the foundations of our good neighborly and friendly relations."

However, the Russian Foreign Minister said that Japanese colleagues "have a different approach to the peace treaty."

Russias top diplomat said that the signing of a peace treaty envisages Tokyos complete recognition of the outcome of the World War II.

"The signing of the peace treaty cannot be concluded without an obligatory recognition of the outcome of the World War II as it had been stipulated by numerous documents, but - most importantly - stipulated by the UN Charter," the Russian minister said.

"It [the UN Charter] states that everything that the victor powers did must not be subjected to doubts therefore it is simply impossible to deviate from this wording," he said. "As of now, we do not see Japans readiness to confirm what it signed for upon entering the United Nations."

Since the mid-20th century, Russia and Japan have been holding consultations in order to clinch a peace treaty as a follow-up to World War II. The Kuril Islands issue remains the key sticking point since after WWII the islands were handed over to the Soviet Union while Japan laid claims to the four southern islands.

In November 2018, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe held a meeting on the sidelines of the ASEAN summit in Singapore and agreed that the two countries would accelerate the pace of the peace negotiations based on the 1956 Joint Declaration. The document ended the state of war and said that the Soviet government was ready to hand Shikotan Island and a group of small islands called Habomai over to Japan on condition that Tokyo would take control of them once a peace treaty was signed.

However, after Japan and the United States had signed the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security in 1960, the Soviet Union withdrew its obligation to hand over the islands. A Soviet governments memorandum dated January 27, 1960, said that those islands would only be handed over to Japan if all foreign troops were pulled out of the country.

Russia has pointed out on numerous occasions that the document does not clarify handover conditions and thus required further clarification.

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