

Ukrainian Authorities and Western Countries Dismiss Crimea's Referendum as "Illegal";



Kiev, March 17 (RHC)-- Ukrainian authorities and some Western countries including the United States, France, Germany and Britain have dismissed the referendum as "illegal," saying it violates the country's constitution.

U.S. President Barack Obama said on Sunday that the United States will not recognize the Crimean referendum, vowing to impose fresh sanctions on Russia.

French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius denied the legitimacy of Crimea's referendum, urging Russia to take immediate measures to avoid a "useless" and "dangerous" escalation of Ukrainian crisis.

Three days before the vote took place, German Chancellor Angela Merkel had warned Moscow that Europe could inflict "massive economic and political damage" on Russia if the situation in Crimea escalated.

British Foreign Secretary William Hague said in a statement that the referendum 'was not a legitimate exercise.'

In a joint statement issued Sunday by European Council President Herman Van Rompuy and European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso, the EU leaders said the referendum in Crimea was "illegal and illegitimate" and its outcome "will not be recognized."

A UN Security Council draft resolution, drawn up by the United States and backed by Western countries, called on international organizations to ignore results of Sunday's voting in Crimea. China abstained.

After the vote Liu Jieyi, Chinese permanent representative to the UN, told the Security Council, "China holds an objective and fair position on the Ukraine issue, adding that the vote on the draft resolution by the Security Council would only result in confrontation and further complicate the situation, which is not in conformity with the common interest of both the people of the Ukraine and those of the international community."

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