

# *Russia Adopts Crimea, Sevastopol as Its Territory*

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Moscow, March 18 (RHC-Agencies) -- Russian President Vladimir Putin and leaders of Crimea signed a treaty on Tuesday accepting the Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol as part of the Russian territory.

The deal, signed during a ceremony at the Kremlin attended by lawmakers, still needs to be ratified by the Federation Council, or upper house of the Russian parliament before it comes into effect.

Russia set the deadline for a transitional period of Crimea's integration into Russia until January 1st, 2015.

During this period, and in compliance with Russian laws, Crimea's integration into the economic, financial, credit and legal systems of Russia and the military service on territories of the Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol will be settled.

Earlier on Tuesday, Putin told a joint session of the Russian parliament that Crimea had always been an integral part of Russia, which could not be changed by "time and circumstances."

As for Sunday's referendum during which an overwhelming majority of Crimeans voted to join Russia, Putin said Crimea acted under the UN Charter, which stipulates the inalienable right of every nation and

people to self-determination.

Putin noted that no clashes have been reported in Crimea before, during or after the Referendum because it was impossible to fight against people's will.

The Russian leader described the situation in Ukraine as 'a mirror of what happened in the world after the collapse of the bi-polar system,' and blamed the current world situation on U.S. hegemony and its use of force against sovereign states, ignoring the UN and the UN Security Council.

"They bring no democracy and freedom, but chaos and violence ... We are cheated repeatedly by the West," he concluded.

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