# *Russian Foreign Minister Says Moscow Will Not Send Troops to Ukraine*



Geneva, April 18 (RHC)-- Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov says Moscow has no plans to send troops to Ukraine as such a move is against the fundamental interests of Russia. Lavrov made the remarks on Thursday, following four-party talks in Geneva among Russia, the United States, European Union and Ukraine to find a diplomatic solution to the turmoil in Ukraine.

Lavrov said: "We have no wish to put our armed troops in Ukraine, on the territory of a friendly state, on the territory where our brothers live. This goes against the core interests of the Russian Federation."

Russia's top diplomat added that the parties at the talks reached an agreement in an effort to resolve the crisis in Ukraine. "We adopted a document, the Geneva Statement of April 17th, where we agreed on immediate initial steps to de-escalate tensions." Lavrov also stated that all parties agreed to work toward establishing a national dialog in Ukraine, respecting the rights of all citizens.

Referring to the agreement reached with U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Deshchytsia and EU foreign policy chief, Catherine Ashton, Lavrov said: "All illegal armed groups must be disarmed and all illegally occupied buildings must be returned to the legitimate owners. All occupied streets, squares and other public spaces in all the cities in Ukraine must be liberated. There must be an amnesty for all protesters, except for those found guilty of a capital offense."

Lavrov also condemned Ukraine's entry ban on Russian citizens. "As to the decision of Ukraine to discriminate against male Russian citizens of a certain age, we have drawn attention to the fact, this is outrageous and is absolutely not in line with the spirit our Western partners wanted to create at this meeting."

Pro-Russia protests gained momentum in the eastern and southern parts of Ukraine after Crimea declared independence from the former Soviet state and formally applied to become part of the Russian Federation following a referendum on March 16th, in which almost 97 percent of the participants voted for joining Russia.

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