

# *Russian Foreign Minister Criticizes West's Stance on Ukraine*

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Moscow, April 4 (RHC)-- Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Friday strongly criticized what he described as 'the role of arbiter of fate that the West has assumed in regards to Ukraine.'

Lavrov said the Kiev authorities do not show sufficient independence to carry out much needed transformations in the eastern European nation.

Speaking to reporters during a news conference after a session of the Council of foreign ministers representing Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in Moscow, the top Russian diplomat said that in order to carry out transformations, Ukraine should "engage in a constitutional reform."

Russia urged Ukraine to carry out genuine rather than "cosmetic" constitutional reform, pressing Moscow's call for the former Soviet republic to give more power to its regions, which have many Russian speakers.

Russia argues that constitutional reforms, which Kiev is now undertaking, are happening behind closed doors, without public debate, underlining its fears that the interests of Ukraine's Russian-speaking

community will not be taken into account.

"One needs to deal with real constitutional reform, not just cosmetic, and for that one needs to stop meddling in the internal affairs of Ukraine," Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said at a joint news conference with other members of the Commonwealth of Independent States, a bloc of former Soviet republics.

"Otherwise it looks like the West has taken up the role of arbiter of Ukraine's fate, while the current authorities lack significant independence," he said.

Commonwealth of Independent States Executive Secretary Lebedev said other members of the group hoped Ukraine would remain a member of the group and that the country had taken part in the Moscow talks.

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