

Russian president signs Georgia peace plan

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SOCHI, August 16 (RIA Novosti) – Russian President Dmitry Medvedev signed on Saturday a French-brokered plan on resolving conflicts in Georgia, aggravated following Tbilisi's assault on its breakaway South Ossetia on August 8.

"The Georgian-South Ossetian conflict issue was considered during a meeting of the [Russian] Security Council, and the president informed those attending that he had just signed the plan based on the six principles," a presidential press secretary, Natalya Timakova, said.

The plan contains the main principles to resolve the conflict in South Ossetia, worked out at the August 12 meeting between Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and French President Nicolas Sarkozy.

These are renouncing the use of force, halting all military action, providing free access to humanitarian aid, the return of Georgian Armed Forces to their bases, the return of Russia's Armed Forces to their positions prior to combat and the start of international discussions on the future status of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and on ways to ensure their security.

The six-point deal, altered to meet Russia's demands, is widely seen as leaving Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili in a far weaker position than before his costly attempt to seize control of South Ossetia through a military offensive, which left at least 1,600 civilians dead, by Russia's estimates.

The plan was signed by Saakashvili on Friday evening and earlier by the leaders of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which have been seeking secession from Georgia since the 1990s.

However, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Saturday that the document signed by the Georgian president differs from the peace plan worked out by the Russian and French presidents.

"We are somewhat bewildered by the fact that the document signed by Saakashvili differs from the document worked out by the presidents of Russia and France, so the issue is still to be specified via diplomatic channels," Sergei Lavrov said.

He said the document signed by Saakashvili lacks the introductory clause.

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