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From: Sullivan, Jacob J <SullivanJJ@state.gov>
Sent: Friday, June 29, 2012 8:13 PM
To: H
Subject: Fw: Trip Clip - Update - Reuters - Russia, U.S. divided on Syria after talks (Quinn)

Lavrov spinning after meeting.

From: Nuland, Victoria J
Sent: Friday, June 29, 2012 07:44 PM
To: Sullivan, Jacob J; Reines, Philippe I; Gordon, Philip H; Schwerin, Daniel B; Merrill, Nicholas S; Yehl, Ashley C; Hof, Frederic C; Jones, Beth E
Subject: Fw: Trip Clip - Update - Reuters - Russia, U.S. divided on Syria after talks (Quinn)

From: PA Clips [mailto:paclips@state.gov]
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Subject: Trip Clip - Update - Reuters - Russia, U.S. divided on Syria after talks (Quinn)

Russia, U.S. divided on Syria after talks
Reuters
Friday, June 29, 2012 4:48 PM EDT
By Liza Dobkina and Andrew Quinn

(Adds U.S. and Russian comments)

- * Lavrov says sees chance to find common ground
- * U.S. official says differences remain
- * Meeting on Syria starts in Geneva on Saturday

ST PETERSBURG, Russia, June 29 (Reuters) - Russia said after talks with the United States that there was a chance of world powers finding common ground at a crisis meeting on Syria on Saturday but a U.S. State Department official said differences with Moscow over the conflict remained.

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said he had sensed a change in tone at talks on Friday evening with U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, a day after Washington rebuffed calls by Moscow for changes to international mediator Kofi Annan's plan to set up a national unity government in Syria.

But, making clear differences remained over Annan's peace plan, Lavrov warned that it would be counterproductive to try to impose the outcome of the political transition process in advance at Saturday's talks in Geneva.

"We have a very good chance to find common ground at the conference in Geneva tomorrow," Lavrov told reporters after meeting Clinton in Russia's second city, St Petersburg.

"I felt a change in Hillary Clinton's position. There were not ultimatums. Not a word was said that the document we will discuss in Geneva cannot be touched (changed)," he said.

The U.S. State Department official, speaking on condition of anonymity after the meeting in St Petersburg, said later that Clinton and Lavrov still intended to attend the talks out of respect for Annan.

But the official said: "There are still areas of difficulty and difference."

Discussing the chances of an agreement being reached on Saturday, the official said: "We may get there, we may not."

The foreign ministers of the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council - Russia, the United States, China, France and Britain - will attend Saturday's talks.

Turkey, Kuwait, Qatar, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Arab League chief Nabil Elaraby will also take part.

Annan will seek backing for a proposal that does not explicitly stipulate that President Bashar al-Assad must step down, but does call for a unity government that would exclude figures who jeopardise stability.

Diplomats said Russia proposed changes on Thursday to Annan's plan for a national unity government, despite initially supporting it, but the United States, Britain and France rejected the amendments.

(Writing by Timothy Heritage, Editing by Gleb Bryanski and Michael Roddy)

Harry Edwards • Press Officer • Press Desk • U.S. Department of State

2201 C St, NW Rm 2109, Washington, DC 20520 | 📞 BB: 202.431-9158 | ✉️: edwardshq@state.gov