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Subject: Russia says U.N. must play top role in postwar Libya (Reuters)

MOSCOW, Aug 25 (Reuters) - The United Nations should play the central role in international efforts to help rebuild Libya once the war between Muammar Gaddafi's loyalists and the rebels ends, Russia said on Thursday.

"We proceed from the position that work in the post-conflict development of Libya must be carried out exclusively under the aegis of the U.N. Security Council," Foreign Ministry spokesman Alexander Lukashevich told a news conference.

Russia echoed a call a day earlier by China, another permanent Security Council member with veto power. Both often emphasise that the council, not Western nations or alliances like NATO, must have the main role on security issues.

Lukashevich criticised the Western-led 'contact group', which includes the United States, Britain and France and has supported the rebels, who have had help from air strikes by NATO nations.

"We believe the role of the United Nations and the Security Council in the political resolution of the Libyan conflict is the central one, and not (that of) quasi-structures such as the international contact group," he said.

Russia appears to be concerned that Western nations that have backed Libya's rebels will have greater influence in the oil-producing North African nation once the conflict is over.

Moscow has not followed the United States and European Union nations in recognising the National Transitional Council as Libya's legitimate government.

Russia and China allowed Western military intervention in Libya when they abstained from a Security Council resolution vote in March, but Moscow has accused NATO forces carrying out air strikes of overstepping their mandate to protect civilians.

Lukashevich also spoke cautiously of efforts by the United States, France and other nations to unfreeze Libyan assets and halt U.N. sanctions that were designed to deprive Gaddafi's government of cash but could now do the same to the rebels.

A U.S. call to unfreeze \$1.5 billion in assets is being discussed by Security Council members, he said, but "so far there is no collectively agreed mechanism for unfreezing Libyan monetary assets," he said.

As for economic sanctions, he said, measures to remove them "must encompass the entire territory of Libya and reach all levels of the Libyan population, and not just ... the National Transitional Council."

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