

Beat: Politics

RUSSIA & UKRAINE SWAP 24 PRISONERS AS BIG STEP OF PROCESS OVER FORMAT NORMANDIE

LE DRIAN FOREIGN AFFAIRS MIN STATEMENT

Paris, Washington DC, 08.09.2019, 18:07 Time

USPA NEWS - I welcome the decision of Russia and Ukraine today to exchange seventy detainees on both sides. This exchange includes the twenty-four Ukrainian sailors imprisoned in Russia since the Kerch maritime incident of November 25, 2018, which France has been calling for ever since, and whose families I had met in Kiev on 30 last May. I am especially pleased to know these people back to their loved ones. This is a gesture that reflects the willingness of Russia and Ukraine to resume dialogue. It will help restore an atmosphere of trust between the parties in the Normandy format negotiations. It allows people to hope to see an end to a five-year conflict, which continues to kill dozens of people every month' Le Drian french Foreign Affairs Minister declared in his statement followed the prisoners released announced by Russia and Ukraine's authorities, on Saturday

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France, alongside Germany, will support the efforts of both parties to obtain further concrete progress in the coming weeks. The priority is the consolidation of the ceasefire, the disengagement and withdrawal of heavy weapons, mine clearance and the implementation of urgent humanitarian measures for the benefit of the people of Donbass. France also calls for progress in the implementation of the political and humanitarian aspects of the Minsk agreements, conducted within the Trilateral Contact Group, to secure the release of all prisoners linked to the conflict. The conflict in Ukraine will be at the heart of the agenda of the Council for Franco-Russian cooperation on security issues, which I will participate Monday in Moscow, alongside the Minister of Armies." Stated French Foreign Affairs Minister Jean Yves Le Drian Source French Foreign Affairs Ministry

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Article online:

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-15891/russia-und-ukraine-swap-24-prisoners-as-big-step-of-process-over-format-normandie.html>

Editorial office and responsibility:

V.i.S.d.P. & Sect. 6 MDSStV (German Interstate Media Services Agreement): Jedi Foster P/O Rahma Sophia Rachdi

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