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## Western sanctions allow Russian, Chinese businesses to expand cooperation – official

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Western sanctions imposed on Russia for its position on Ukraine allow Russian and Chinese businesses to expand their cooperation, but punitive measures are not the reason for more active interaction, the head of Russia's North Caucasus republic of Ingushetia said Monday.

"The sanctions only make it possible for us to expand the sphere of activity," Yunus-Bek Yevkurov said in Beijing at the international investment forum Karat-Global.

"It is extremely unpleasant and dishonest when different states, imposing sanctions, violate international and human agreements," he said.

"China has always been and is a strategic partner for the Russian Federation," Yevkurov said.

He said Russian regions have long received clear directives for expanding ties with China in all economic spheres.

"I find it very pleasant that businessmen and tourists from the People's Republic of China (PRC) come to Ingushetia more and more often," Yevkurov said.

The first international forum Karat-Global opened in the Chinese capital on Monday. It is

designed to provide an open site for the two countries' entrepreneurs to establish business ties.

The West, inspired by the United States, subjected Russian officials and companies to the first batch of sanctions, including visa bans and asset freezes, after Russia incorporated Crimea in mid-March after a coup in Ukraine in February.

New, sectoral, penalties against Russia were announced in late July over Moscow's position on Ukrainian events, in particular, what the West claimed was Russia's alleged involvement in hostilities in Ukraine's embattled southeast.

Russia responded with imposing on August 6 a one-year ban on imports of beef, pork, poultry, fish, cheeses, fruit, vegetables and dairy products from Australia, Canada, the EU, the United States and Norway.

Moscow has repeatedly dismissed Western allegations that it could in any way be involved in hostilities in the east of Ukraine.