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Press Conference Following the Moscow International Conference on Ensuring Russian Gas Supplies to European Consumers

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*January 17, 2009. THE KREMLIN, MOSCOW.
At the press conference following the International Conference
on Ensuring Russian Gas Supplies to European Consumers.*

sian gas to Europe with all parties – those actually involved in this dispute, namely Russia, Ukraine and other countries. These negotiations will continue between Russia and Ukraine. They will be conducted by Prime Minister of Russia Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko.

And the second point, the second reason we had the meeting today and one that, strangely enough, I think may be even more important than the first, is that we need to avoid similar problems in the future. Recently we assumed that the current energy security system in Europe is the best. It

PRESIDENT OF RUSSIA DMITRY MEDVEDEV: Good afternoon dear colleagues!

I would like to say a few words about the meeting that just took place, a meeting in which countries that are consumers of Russian gas participated along with transit countries, a meeting which was devoted to the deliveries of Russian gas to Europe. I think this meeting was very useful. And perhaps most importantly its most obvious benefit was that we were able to directly, openly, and in a completely constructive and friendly manner share our impressions of the conflict and the gas crisis which, unfortunately, exists in Europe today. And we have not only shared our impressions on the situation but also talked about two major things.

First. We talked about how we can reach a decision and achieve the immediate resumption of deliveries of Rus-

turns out that it is not. There are problems that can destabilise the legal regime governing supplies and jeopardise transit and the delivery of Russian gas to European consumers, thus creating uncomfortable conditions that affect the lives of millions of people.

This is not an excuse to simply continue to exchange accusations, but rather an occasion to create an effective mechanism to protect against such occurrences. Incidentally, this of course not only applies to the present conflict and dispute between Russia and Ukraine. It affects a broader set of countries. I also heard a number of ideas put forward by our colleagues on this topic. I hope that these ideas will be represented in the new international documents.

When opening today's meeting I said that existing international instruments are not fully satisfactory and I also

mentioned the well-known Energy Charter, which Russia does not and will not follow. Therefore we need to think about how we can create a solid legal basis. I told my colleagues that I will raise this issue with the G-8 and quite probably during the event which will soon be held in London – I mean the summit of the twenty largest economies. Because the global crisis that unfolds today is a financial crisis, it should not be exacerbated by problems such as this gas conflict, otherwise the situation will become even more difficult for everybody.

I would like to say once again that I appreciate the conversation that took place, the proposals that were made, and the fact that we talked about quite specific things. Following our meeting [with journalists] we will continue our conversation both in a broad format and in a bilateral mode.

That is all I wanted to say to begin with. I am now ready to answer your questions.

QUESTION: Dmitry Anatolyevich, I have one crucial question: when will Russian gas be delivered to European consumers? Did you move forward on this issue? And do you think we will be able to fill the export pipes not on someone else's account, but based on common agreements? Thank you.

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: Thank you.

It is an important question and we will give it a serious answer: we would like this to happen as quickly as possible, literally in the next few days. Why? Because it has already created big problems for a number of states, our partners, and a considerable number of people. As for suggestions, I can tell you frankly that both the Russian and Ukrainian parties made some suggestions during the discussion. I will name them to you. In any case, I believe that some of these proposals can be used to achieve a final agreement.

What does this mean? In order to finalise an agreement on the resumption of deliveries and the operation of Ukraine's gas export system we need to agree on proper controls. So that there is no unauthorised siphoning, or what we are now more rigorously calling the wrongful appropriation of gas, a system that determines how to pay, how to calculate what should be

paid, and what technological regime will be maintained in the pipeline.

As I have already said, we made a proposal several days ago – this issue was discussed in the government cabinet among other places. It is that part of the gas Ukraine needs to fully operate its gas transportation system be acquired by an international consortium of companies – these companies would own that gas, the gas would be put into the pipeline system and, accordingly, the system would become functional. This is one of the proposals.

The second proposal, which will no doubt be subject to review, involves granting a credit to the Ukrainian side so that it will be able to pay for the gas that it needs today. Incidentally, our Ukrainian partners have just expressed their intention to pay up front for a whole bunch of things. Well, this is good, we can only welcome such a position. Now we need to work on some of the finer points concerning more specific details.

There is another idea that has been put forward that I find very interesting. This idea was raised during my conversation with Ukrainian President Viktor Andreyevich Yushchenko. It would involve a state guarantee for Russian gas suppliers that would last for a certain period of time. This sort of government guarantee is a complex instrument in technical terms, but today during the discussion at this meeting something simpler was suggested, namely an irrevocable letter of credit issued by a major bank in a European country, with partial coverage that the Ukrainian side could provide. If the bank issued such a letter without such coverage, that would be very good. The reason for claiming the money from the letter of credit would be the claim of unauthorised gas siphoning sent in by the Russian company, the supplier of gas, and would be confirmed by the group of observers that we have put together with the participation of the European Union. Bearing in mind that our Ukrainian partners have once again today confirmed that they have no intention of siphoning off gas, we hope that if such a letter of credit was to be issued no payment would ever have to be made on it. This letter of credit would simply work to defend the short term interests of the Russian Federation, until we can come to some sort of agreement with Ukraine on the conditions of supply

of gas for Ukrainian consumers, because that is a separate issue.

By the way, I would like to say that in her speech the Prime Minister of Ukraine specifically stated that Ukrainians are fully committed to the transit of gas to Europe and to the agreement on gas deliveries to the territory of Ukraine for Ukrainian consumers, and that they believe that their first priority is to transport gas to European consumers. We hope that this statement will prove to be a guide to action. Here perhaps is what we can say now.

There are a number of important and interesting ideas to be discussed both at the governmental level and at the level of companies involved in this, including the technology issues. In both senses I hope that these talks will enable us to achieve good results.

QUESTION: Will you allow me two questions?

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: One or two? How about one and a half?

QUESTION: Why has Russia not agreed to supply technical gas to Ukraine, as requested, in order to free up gas transit to Europe? And, second, what price concessions is Russia prepared to make for Ukraine?

Thank you.

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: Okay, thanks.

With regard to the transfer of technical gas and furnace gas and all the rest of the gases, I would like colleagues who are present in this room and those who are listening to us today to be aware that any gas, whatever name we give it, is still gas in the end, not some special gas, but its role is to make the system function properly.

How much technical gas does Ukraine now need? Our Ukrainian friends say that they need 21 million cubic metres per day. That is not a large amount, but the problem is that we need a guarantee not only with respect to technical gas but concerning all the gas that will be put into the pipeline. Because the whole transmission system is designed to operate at a certain level and we have to be sure that the gas that goes into the pipeline will reach European consumers, and will not in any way be used for domestic purposes. So the question now is

precisely how to guarantee this, not how to provide technical gas for the system.

By the way, in order to reactivate the transmission system and create the necessary pressure in it, pressure that is still lacking, despite what our Ukrainian partners have sometimes claimed it is not 21 million cubic metres that are needed but a great deal more. Here we are talking about volumes in excess of 100 million cubic metres. But it's not a question of cubic metres or a certain volume. What we need is a mechanism that will allow us to do this in a systematic way. And it seems to me that the proposals that I presented can help resolve this problem. Our Ukrainian partners have said that they are even ready to pay for this technical gas in advance. I don't see any irresolvable issues here.

As for your other question about what price concessions Russia is ready to make: I don't think that it's appropriate to talk about any sort of concessions. With Ukraine we have a special relationship, despite this dispute, which began as a disagreement between companies and unfortunately moved to the political level, forcing us to organise this meeting. For this reason, I don't think that we should be talking about concessions but, on the con-

trary, about how we can work out our differences in a civilised, measured way, based on the European prices that other countries are willing to pay.

During our first meeting with the President of Ukraine, Viktor Andreyevich Yushchenko, in Saint Petersburg, he told me that his goal was a quick transition to the European market price for Ukraine, so that there would be no distortions, no intermediaries, no opaque schemes, none of the problems with which unfortunately we have to deal today. I think this is really the most legitimate and reasonable goal. Ukraine should pay European prices for its gas – this is perfectly normal. That is our position. There is nothing defective in this solution. Our other partners pay these prices and Ukraine is fully capable of paying the same.

QUESTION: Dmitry Anatolyevich, a very quick question. Does Madam Tymoshenko have a mandate to negotiate on any subject in Moscow? Or should we expect that tomorrow someone in Ukraine will say: "Well, whatever you have decided in Moscow, we now think differently"?

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: It is a legitimate and a timely question. As you know, I sincerely hope that Prime

Minister Yulia Vladimirovna Tymoshenko, who attended our meeting, has all the necessary administrative authority to represent Ukraine. Normally a prime minister, by virtue of their position as "ex officio," as lawyers like to say, is always able to perform certain actions. I hope that this holds true today and that the powers of the Prime Minister of Ukraine have not been curtailed or limited in any way.

In our telephone conversations with the President of Ukraine, the President told me one key thing, namely that the position of the President and the Prime Minister on the gas issue are absolutely identical. We shall see.

QUESTION: Dmitry Anatolyevich, what percentage of the consortium will the participants constitute? You haven't talked about the structure that the consortium will assume.

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: Do you mean how much will be private capital?

QUESTION: I was thinking of all the participants. And my second question is: did you discuss today the question of returning Ukrenergo to the status of delivery supplier? Thank you.

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: Thank you.

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As for the consortium, I think that the question of how much each of them will have depends on the companies that make up the list of participants and what they agree on. I would have thought – and I'm just thinking out loud here – that in general we would be talking about equal shares, but that is a matter of commercial agreement. The main thing is that our Ukrainian partners have agreed that a certain amount of gas to deal with controversial legal problems will temporarily belong to a consortium of large companies in the gas sector, major energy companies. If they agree to this, the companies will have no problem coming to an agreement about their share of the project.

I would like to stress again that, if the idea of a consortium does not work, then it seems completely plausible to use letters of credit as an alternative. This is a simple and transparent financial instrument, one that does not even require the issuing of state guarantees to cover the amount stipulated. The question is whether our Ukrainian partners can agree on this with one of the European banks. If they have any difficulties, we are ready to help them, including in the negotiations. Ukraine certainly has the necessary collateral to cover such a modest sum. I think the amount in question would be somewhere around a billion dollars.

QUESTION: You have already talked in general terms about supplying gas to Europe. I would like to clarify some points regarding the signing of agreements between Ukraine and Russia on gas supplies.

When can Naftogaz and Gazprom actually start specific negotiations? It would seem that concrete negotiations on this topic have not yet been conducted.

Do you expect this to happen after the issue of the delivery of gas to Europe is finally resolved?

Thank you.

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: Thank you.

I want to return to a previous question.

I didn't get a chance to answer the second question, the one dealing with RosUkrEnergo.

I have made my position very clear in the media, as have my col-

leagues. I believe that we can trade with our Ukrainian partners without intermediaries of any kind, in particular without intermediaries who have caused the Ukrainian public, and not only Ukrainian, to have a number of doubts. So I think that in the future we can work without any intermediaries whatsoever, including the one that you mentioned.

At the same time it is not a secret that it was the Ukrainians who kept insisting that one well-known intermediary should take part in the talks. What its position in this situation will be I do not know. The problem is that some participants in the negotiations insisted on the need to work through the mediators and kept referring to instructions from the top, and the other negotiators said that these middlemen were an unequivocal evil requiring unconditional and immediate elimination. Our position is simple: we do not need intermediaries. And even within the framework of the campaign in question, as you know, the Russian side was represented by the largest natural gas concern.

Now, returning to the question asked by our Ukrainian comrades about the agreement between Naftogaz and Gazprom. I would put it this way. These negotiations are ongoing, they have not been interrupted. The problem is that they haven't produced results. I would like them to do significantly better in this regard. During my last telephone conversation with the President of Ukraine, I felt that our Ukrainian partners were not in any great hurry to take up these negotiations again. It was said that we need to urgently resolve the issue, which is true and absolutely correct. But the question of reaching an agreement on prices for the current year and for the future will take time. Of course it will, but the longer the talks drag on, the more problems will build up in our relations concerning this question of gas.

I am sure that we will soon resolve the issue of gas transit. Of course we need to solve the issue of gas prices for Ukraine, and for that we should sit at the negotiating table, look the truth in the face, look at what current prices are, use the European pricing formula, find an acceptable mechanism to ensure our mutual interests, and sign the relevant agreements. I do not think that this will be all that difficult, especially since a number of coun-

tries, whose economic situation is substantially worse than Ukraine's, have agreed to use the European pricing formula and to pay for Russian gas what European consumers pay. I think that Naftogaz and the Ukrainian economy can take advantage of the same opportunities, despite the fact that all of us today are in a less advantageous financial position.

But in what sense are the European prices good? They are good in the sense that even if today they seem quite high, given the dynamics of oil prices during the year they are sure to decline and decline quite seriously. If we fix the price at whatever level, U.S. \$250–300, this is the price that must be paid until the end of the year. But we can see today the dynamics of oil prices. The formula for calculating the price of gas changes more slowly for well-known technological reasons, but ultimately gas prices will be significantly lower than they are today, by a factor of 2 or even 2.5. For this reason the whole world is using this equitable system, and that is what we and our Ukrainian partners must do.

QUESTION: Dmitry Anatolyevich, I also have one and a half questions. Do you think that the current crisis has impeded or accelerated the process of building alternative routes, that is, North and South Streams? And what about the suggestion that Europe will seek alternative suppliers?

And the half-question: we have heard various leaders express the view that this crisis is a final gift for you, that is, for Russia, from the outgoing U.S. administration. What is your opinion?

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: All right. If we are talking about gifts, then of course this is not the perfect gift for anyone, especially for Europeans, for the ordinary people who in their everyday lives either receive or do not receive gas. I am not a fan of conspiracy theories so I will not talk about someone's "hand" or influence, but I would say the following: we really have to think about optimizing our gas supply routes, and this is true even without regard to what happened today. Both the North Stream and South Stream projects are related to this idea. They would ensure much better energy security for European consumers because one pipeline is

good, but to have more pipelines is better. And this is true not just in light of potential conflicts, such as the one we have now, but simply for technological reasons. Therefore the construction of bypass routes and the diversification of supply routes is a very important goal, and I believe that we must therefore continue to work on this.

But the problem goes beyond the crisis and the dispute that we are discussing here. It is simply our duty to deliver the relevant volumes of gas to European consumers, to do so properly and in a timely fashion, regardless of political considerations, regardless of who is in power in a given state and the economic

conditions that affect the work being done in a given country .

Incidentally, this does not mean that we should simply stop transporting gas through the existing system, including through Ukraine. On the contrary, I believe that we must learn all the possible lessons from what has happened and establish both bilateral and multilateral mechanisms, with the participation of all interested states, to prevent this kind of conflict.

Once again I would like to stress one simple idea: no matter how hard we can try to speculate that this is simply a bilateral misunderstanding, a bilateral dispute between Russia and Ukraine, in the

end these kinds of issues cause problems for many states and therefore require international mechanisms. Our world is a global one and energy supplies are also globalised. I think that perhaps the best result from the current gas crisis will be the creation of this kind of international system.

Thank you very much. I hope that the next occasion on which we meet will be more fun and that we can talk about other things.

Goodbye.

Joint press conference following Russian-Uzbekistani talks

*January 23, 2009
Tashkent, Uzbekistan*



*January 23, 2009. TASHKENT.
With President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov.*

PRESIDENT OF UZBEKISTAN ISLAM KARIMOV: Respected Dmitry Anatolyevich, respected media representatives!

It is my great pleasure to once again welcome our Russian friends and representatives of the media who are present here today.

This visit by Russian President Dmitry Anatolyevich Medvedev is his first state visit to Uzbekistan.

He has already had the opportunity to visit Uzbekistan, but in a different role. But today, as I said before, is his first visit to Uzbekistan in the role of President of Russia. It therefore gives me great pleasure to welcome him by saying [speaking in Uzbek], which means, "Welcome to Uzbekistan!"

In Uzbekistan, we view the current visit by the President of Russia as a logical expression and continuation of the relationship that has developed between our countries in terms of

strategic partnership and cooperation, and as a good opportunity in the rapidly changing circumstances of modern times to discuss and determine joint resolutions on current issues of a bilateral and international nature that are of interest to both our countries, at a time when life has put forward problems needing a new, more critical understanding of events occurring in the world and in various regions. To be sure, something new is added by problems that have occurred because of the growing scale of the financial and economic crisis, the issues of determining a joint course of action, the issues of increasing and deepening the ties of cooperation between our businesses in overcoming the negative effects of the crisis, and the issues of maintaining the levels we have reached in trade turnover between our countries.

In my opinion, all of these issues are extremely relevant at this time, and when we look for various ways to counteract symptoms of the crisis, the best, and I think, most rational option is to find new trade markets between our countries. Furthermore, today, Russia is a trade market for the entire world. And when we discuss unclaimed opportunities, we must look for such opportunities in trade relations between Uzbekistan and Russia.

Unfortunately, I must admit that there are enormous opportunities that remain practically unused. And even

today, while discussing our agenda and during presentations by individual representatives of Russia's business world, we saw that there are certain issues right at the surface that – if implemented simultaneously, if we align those ties of cooperation properly – will be long-term in nature. From this position – employment, orders, and everything that is tied to gross product – it all lies in this area. Therefore, from this point of view, ties of cooperation take on an importance such that we are simply obligated to deal with them.

The talks and exchanges of opinions, which were preceded by a series of bilateral events on an intergovernmental, interdepartmental level, once again confirmed the commonality of our positions on nearly all the issues discussed, a strong political will, an interest by both sides in expanding our collaboration, in greater orientation on practical results of agreements, and in developing strategic partnerships and cooperation.

It was our great pleasure to note the stable rates in the growth of trade and economic relations between our countries. Russia constantly holds the position of an important trade partner for Uzbekistan. Based on results for 2008, the turnover between our countries was about four billion dollars, thus remaining at the same level as in 2007, despite significant worldwide drops in prices.

Taking a critical look at the state of affairs in our economic collaboration, both sides highlighted several stereotypes that have come about, and we have come to the common conclusion about the necessity to diversify and strengthen our investment cooperation, as well as ties in industrial cooperation, in order to better use reserves and possibilities that have not yet been implemented, particularly in areas such as machinery manufacturing, instrument making, electrical goods, processing agricultural products, communications, and especially, transport.

Both sides also expressed serious concern regarding escalation in the conflict in Afghanistan, which is compounded by an increase in drug trafficking from that country.

We are very satisfied by the constructive nature of our bilateral interactions and close coordination of our efforts within the UN, SCO, and OSCE, where Uzbekistan and Russia's positions and approaches in regard to most issues are nearly identical or very similar.

Today, we also expressed genuine opinions regarding the course of integration processes in the former Soviet republics, including within the CIS and CSTO.

The result of our work together was, as you heard today, the signing of documents that should play a role in further strengthening cooperation between Uzbekistan and Russia in the sphere of politics and diplomacy, as well as the cultural-humanitarian sphere. In this regard, I would like to make a separate mention of the very important issues we plan to sign off on in the near future, and our plans to accept an intergovernmental program of cooperation in the area of culture and humanities during 2009–2011, which will reflect the positive experience we have acquired in recent times of reciprocal contact and will undoubtedly serve to bring our countries and our people closer in the future.

In conclusion, I would like to express my certainty that the state visit by Russian President Dmitry Anatolyevich Medvedev will become a landmark event in strengthening and developing relations between Uzbekistan and Russia. Its results will unambiguously serve our common interests.

Thank you for your attention. It is my pleasure to pass the microphone to Dmitry Anatolyevich.

PRESIDENT OF RUSSIA DMITRY MEDVEDEV: Islam Abduganievich, press representatives, colleagues.

The President of Uzbekistan and I have just concluded our talks, and in my view their results reflect the level of those relationships which have developed between our two countries. These relationships are characterised as those of a strategic partnership, and alliance, since in today's world it is vital that we are in synch, that we are in tune with one another, and that we constantly consider the most diverse issues.

Our discussions have touched on a wide range of questions. Most of these have already been mentioned by Islam Abduganievich. I would like to add, that, of course, our international cooperation on the situation in Central Asia, on matters relating to the situation in Afghanistan, and in countries that border Afghanistan, have an exceptional importance. We have talked about these issues on a wide variety of occasions. We have met in multilateral formats and held talks with Islam Abduganievich, and

we have then had discussions, as they say – behind the scenes – after various summits.

Both yesterday and today we have discussed the situation surrounding these very difficult problem areas, and have come to the conclusion that there is no unilateral solution, that nothing can be resolved without taking into account the collective opinion of states which have an interest in the resolution of the situation. Just as it is impossible to imagine the creation of some kind of ideal model which could be applied according to which a state could develop on the basis of foreign recommendations.

Any state must develop on the basis of its own laws, and taking into account its own diverse history and culture, which is particular to that state, while of course embracing international, universal values. Where to find this balance is indeed the fundamental problem which faces international organisations, and the whole world, in their discussions of conflicts, and in their discussions of the development of social forces.

We discussed not only international affairs but also of course we talked about our bilateral relationship, our cooperation in trade, the economy, and investment. I would like to lend my full support to what Islam Abduganievich said just now, we have a good relationship, which is productive, of significant scale, and has vast potential. The fact that today this can be rendered in figures at several billion dollars (3-4 billion), is of course good, but the sales volume and extent of trade deals could be significantly greater if, for example, we moved more actively on a series of questions relating to our investment cooperation, if we acted to diversify our investment cooperation, as we have just discussed during our talks in the expanded format.

Today we have spoken about the prospects for the future. I hope that these will also be developed soon. Incidentally, in connection with this, I would like to acknowledge our colleagues and leaders of intergovernmental commissions, and all those who have taken part in the preparation for today's meeting, and in the preparation of those agreements which have just been signed. I think that this has all been excellent quality work, although the body of it is still to come.

I would also like to note that, in spite of the difficult position that the whole world finds itself in at the moment,

Russian companies have nonetheless proved ready to invest their money in the Uzbek economy, and are ready to develop investment cooperation in a wide variety of areas. These are well known: energy, tourism, industry, issues linked to the tourism industry, and on all matters where we can reach an agreement.

We also see a great future for the development of humanitarian contacts, the growth of cooperation in the areas of education, science, and culture. We are talking about signing a significant agreement, as Islam Abduganievich just mentioned, and about the implementation of various programmes which are already extant. There are a variety of them: some are sizeable, others are smaller. For example, literary classics of the CIS peoples are published under the framework of the Fund for humanitarian cooperation; this will include books by Uzbek authors. Last year, the Uzbek national epic was published in Russian and this will, I think, better acquaint us with the culture of friendly Uzbekistan, and will help us improve our orientation on the cultural landscape, which is very important.

Our colleagues have only just signed documents, which will aid the coordination of our cooperation in the international arena, and we think that this kind of cooperation is particularly important. I have already spoken about this.

Overall I would like to say that our meeting and negotiations were open, productive, intensive, and literally from the first minutes of my arrival in Uzbekistan, Islam Abduganievich and I started talking about a most diverse selection of matters, both internal and international. Of course it is exceptionally important considering the fact that time is always very pressing on these bilateral visits, in spite of its high status – that of a state visit. That is why, both what we discussed yesterday in Samarkand, and what we are talking about today in the capital, are very important topics for the development of both our states. I think that we succeeded making progress on these points, both in the mutual understanding of the subtleties of our positions, and in talking about those particular projects which really are vital for the development of our countries.

That is why I would like to thank Islam Abduganievich once more for his invitation, for what has turned out to be a most warm, cordial, reception, and I am certain that we will give new

impetus to the development of cooperation between our countries.

QUESTION: A question for the President of the Russian Federation, regarding safety and the economy. During your broadened meetings, it was noted that 95 percent of investment flow is directed toward the fuel and energy industry. In your opinion, what mechanisms can be used to ensure current agreements in this area, given today's complicated situation on the world financial market? It was also highlighted that it is necessary to diversify economic cooperation. What specific spheres and industries could become the basis for boosting this process?

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: This is a good question, one that we addressed today; we also talked about some issues with Islam Abduganievich yesterday. I will just specify that 95 percent is not the fuel and energy industry, but rather, the fuel and energy industry combined with telecommunications. That is to say, it is energy and high-tech, which, in reality, is not bad, but of course, the figure is still very high.

If that percentage were different – for example, 70 or 60 – I would think that would be the optimal proportion. But as it is, these two extremely important and very useful and mutually beneficial areas of cooperation account for a lot.

What is ahead? We have a range of projects ahead of us, which we have already begun to work on. I think that each of them can allow forward movement. Today, Islam Abduganievich and I, along with our Uzbek and Russian colleagues, have devoted a lot of time and attention to, for example, issues related to aircraft construction and subsequent sales. Clearly, now is not the easiest time for taking large orders, but if we do not work now to create a base for the future, then our aircraft construction plants may find themselves in a rather difficult situation.

That is why we must seek new markets and create joint projects. We discussed one such joint project today, in the field of creating new airplanes, the field of aircraft construction.

There are different possible approaches here. During our talks today, we were able to reach a certain compromise which, I believe, can move this project forward. But, of course, we need to seek out areas that will be in demand in the current

situation. That is why I see cooperation in production as an exceptionally important direction. I mean all different kinds of cooperation in the field of energy, and cooperation in the field of nuclear industry. I feel that we could also do well in working on issues of cooperation in transport. In this regard, we also have a range of suggestions that could be implemented. And any project in general that could be effective today should, in my opinion, be sought after.

Why is this particularly relevant? Precisely for the reason that today, the economy of the Russian Federation and the economy of Uzbekistan are suffering from a decrease in exports. Demand for our exports has fallen – this includes metallurgy, and certain other types of production. Naturally, we must somehow deal with these problems. So what must we do? We can create new production units, search for new projects, particularly in cases of consumption within the territories of our countries: where we do not need the markets of third countries, where we can credit each other, where we can find some kind of optimal procedure for financial and economic relations which will not require borrowing, for example, and receiving credit, costly credit, in other countries. This is what I perceive as being fairly interesting today.

ISLAM KARIMOV: Does anyone else have a question? Please.

QUESTION: I have a question to both presidents. What specific agreements did you reach on the basis of today's talks in the sphere of energy and developing a gas transmission system?

ISLAM KARIMOV: I think that we could spend a very long time listing all the projects that are being carried out today and whose scope we are looking to broaden.

Yesterday, I had a visit from Vagit Alekperov, who heads one of the leading Russian companies in the field of energy and energy resources. We spent several hours talking in detail about these issues, and had thorough discussions about the details of several projects. I am thankful to him for his understanding and the consideration for Uzbekistan's interests in constructing such projects as a gas refining plant at the Kandym deposits, and others, where we expect to refine over 15 billion cubic meters of gas in the upcoming years. There are also other projects, other gas deposits which contain up to 7 percent ethane, and you understand

that ethane can be used to get various refined products which are in great demand on the world market today.

These issues, which we have always discussed, are broad in nature. If we are to discuss sums or large investments that go hand in hand with this project, then we can talk for a very long time. But what is most important is that we have found mutual understanding and that these projects are very promising in nature. I could talk for a long while about how much time we spent in discussions with Gazprom, but in the end, we have a civilized system for determining prices which is accepted all throughout the world – not only for gas deliveries, but for other components as well.

I think that the issues on which we have reached agreement and which we are consolidating in our relations with Gazprom also have major importance, if we keep in mind that this year Uzbekistan had the opportunity to deliver greater quantities to Gazprom than it was able to accept. This is the result of certain particularities of 2008, but also, first and foremost, the world financial crisis, a decrease in demand for gas, and other factors. Nevertheless, we are very happy to have clearly defined prospects with Gazprom, and now, probably, there will no longer be any kind of subjective approaches.

Dmitry Anatolyevich and I did not only talk about these projects, but about long-range projects as well; first and foremost, issues related to communications projects. These projects have a lot of promise in Uzbekistan in regards to resolving high-tech issues, so that Uzbekistan receives the same technologies that Russia uses today: technologies that are not merely used, but that also receive a great deal of investments, which may result in some kind of explosive result in the near future. It is difficult for us to talk about this, but I believe that nanotechnologies, which Russia works on today, are something that could provide serious results, and Uzbekistan is interested in participating in these projects.

Dmitry Anatolyevich talked about uranium. Uzbekistan is ready to supply it to Russia and resolve issues in satisfying Russia's demand for uranium concentrates. But today, these issues are under the shadow of the crisis, a drop in uranium prices, and other factors.

I could list all these questions at length, but I would like to say that

issues regarding the processing of agricultural products, in which Uzbekistan is rich and which Russia has a demand for, also have great meaning. In terms of monetary value, they do not provide that much, but they satisfy the demands of the Russian population, and importantly, they help to limit or prevent the growth in prices for food products. I think that Uzbekistan can be very useful to Russia in that respect.

I will not continue listing these issues, but I would nonetheless like to say what I said in the very beginning: as soon as we begin dealing with individual projects, it turns out that they provide an enormous sphere of activity as soon as we delve into them more deeply and begin to resolve them practically.

I talked about the significance of Dmitry Anatolyevich's state visit. First of all, I think that all the issues which we discussed will be continued. For this purpose, the delegations include very competent, very important individuals and business leaders. And I hope that today's visit will truly provide results, and that we can openly call it a successful visit.

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: I will just say a few words. I agree with what Islam Abduganievich has said. Without a doubt, all these trends are in the picture.

In talking about cooperation in energy, I will just note two factors. In order to have full-fledged cooperation, it is necessary for this cooperation to be relaxed, for it to create a sense of comfort, effectiveness, and mutual benefit. And it is already very good that, for example, in the gas sector, in our gas relations, we have truly reached new levels of cooperation and we are now within the bounds of modern, mutually beneficial agreements, which are based on market prices. This means that in other areas, we can move forward, knowing that we have already entered this phase. I spoke about this broadly during the opening of our talks.

Companies have been named which are interested in developing cooperation in energy. I don't really have anything to add to that. Clearly, this cooperation can progress both in the direction of acquiring various forms of energy sources and obtaining gas, and in the direction of constructing additional pipeline capacity and transport capacity. I feel that this is also very important if we count on these projects as being oriented to-

ward the future, if we count on binding ourselves to providing energy resources to our partners, other countries. That is why we must be watchful to ensure that the gas transport system is in proper form. And in this regard, I feel, we could also think about developing these kinds of projects.

Overall, I feel that we have a very good chance that our cooperation in energy will continue to be one of the key directions in economic cooperation between Russia and Uzbekistan.

QUESTION: I have a question that logically continues along this topic. At the extended session, you very clearly made mention of the fact that in politics, there are two deciding factors: trust and interests. I would like to ask about these interests: what are Russia's plans and position in regard to constructing hydroelectric facilities in several Central Asian countries, and how are the interests of other governments in the region taken into account?

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: What can I say? Different kinds of projects, especially ones as comprehensive as hydroelectric stations, must be made with consideration for the opinions of one's neighbours. You cannot proceed in isolation. It will not lead to any results, or it will cause tension which will later need to be resolved using political, rather than economic, methods; this is without even talking about more dangerous directions and approaches to resolving conflicts. Therefore, when we are talking about cooperation in hydroelectric projects, fulfilling any kind of orders, the Russian Federation presumes that each government that wants to build something must agree on it with its neighbours, provide suitable proof that the project will be ecologically consistent and take on the role of a normal, full-fledged customer of a given job. In that regard, I presume that all interested governments must discuss this issue on a collegial basis, in accordance with international agreements on this topic, as well as their bilateral agreements, in a friendly and neighbourly way. Only in this way can success be achieved. That's really about it. We presume that these kinds of projects must be implemented based on these principles

Speech of the President of Russia Dmitry Medvedev at the ceremony where foreign ambassadors presented their Credentials

January 16, 2009

Grand Kremlin Palace, Moscow



*January 16, 2009. THE KREMLIN, MOSCOW.
Presentation ceremony of foreign ambassadors' letters of credentials.
Ambassador of the Republic of Mali Brehima Coulibaly
presents his letter of credentials to the President of Russia.*

PRESIDENT OF RUSSIA DMITRY MEDVEDEV: Ladies and gentlemen!

The beginning of your official mission, working in Russia, has coincided with the beginning of a new year, 2009. And I would like to start by expressing my hopes that this year will be a successful one for your nations, and that your work in Russia will be interesting, effective, and fruitful.

It is true that this year, like last year, is not likely to be very easy for international relations or for our countries.

One of the most important outcomes is the fact that even local problems in our modern world can, at any moment, become global problems. And those local problems can affect many countries, sometimes even continents, and can go so far as to create problems of international law and order. That, unfortunately, is what happened as a result of Georgia's aggression against South Ossetia, which led to increased tensions far beyond the borders of that region, and even the Caucasus.

The same can be said of the financial crisis, whose negative aftermath affects nearly every country on our planet.

The first week of this year did not turn out to be simple, either – in Europe, in any case, it was overshadowed by the gloom of the gas crisis. And in this case, unfortunately, the situation is similar, because as a result of actions to block the transit of gas, which in our view were wrong and, in essence, were non-contractual and lawless, Russian gas stopped flowing to European consumers, without a doubt creating problems for many governments.

I will not deny our having assumed that the questions of energy security which were raised repeatedly at international meetings, and even during the G-8 summit in St. Petersburg, had once and for all resolved the issue of supply safety in the transit of Russian gas to Europe. But, unfortunately, life had something else in store, and Ukraine continues not to allow Russian gas to pass into European countries.

In order to unblock this problem and to resolve this situation of a "gas famine", I have suggested the idea of holding a summit on this topic in Moscow tomorrow [January 17] – the International Conference on Ensuring Russian Gas Supplies to European Consumers.

We are ready to look for long-term solutions; we counting on Ukraine to demonstrate a responsible approach, and on our European partners to contribute to the search for a urgent resolution, because unfortunately, this issue is no longer a question of bilateral relations and pure legal disagreements.

Another major world problem that occurred just at the beginning of the year is the conflict taking place in Gaza. Despite international efforts being made by the UN Security Council, taking place bilaterally, regrettably, the armed conflict continues.

What is most important today? Naturally, it is imperative to end the bloodshed – that is the most important task – and to end the armed hostilities from both sides. After that, with the help of negotiations, international mechanisms, and intermediary mechanisms, it is critical to reach a long-term ceasefire, a ceasefire which will be agreed upon by all sides and will be accepted by all participants in this conflict.

The events currently taking place in Gaza demonstrate yet again that these kinds of problems cannot be resolved through the use of military force, and should only be resolved through political means. Russia once again confirms its willingness to search for political resolutions. In this regard, we would like to emphasize that we are also ready for the meeting, which has already been announced, in Moscow on the Middle East.

One thing that will probably need to be done is to correct its agenda. In any case, this forum may become one of the steps on the way to re-establishing the peace process in the Middle East.

Ladies and gentlemen!

We are certain that it is impossible to achieve high-quality changes in international politics and the creation of a new and more just system of international relations without the united efforts of all governments. Only in that way can we count on our world being more stable, more successful, and more secure. And a particularly important role is played by bilateral relations and constructive bilateral cooperation.

Present here today are ambassadors from countries with which we are on friendly terms, and I would like to say a few words about our relations.

Russia is interested in strengthening our time-tested partnership with Algeria. The successful development of dialogue between our countries is a good basis for advancing future cooperation, particularly in the trade and economic as well as the military and technical spheres.

We place a great deal of value on the development of relations between ourselves and Pakistan – a state that plays an important role in South Asia. Our agenda includes the diversification of processes of mutual trade and closer work in areas of extreme importance to us, such as the fight against international terrorism and drug trafficking.

We value the traditions of friendship that we have with the Republic of Mali, and we are ready to continue to develop our economic contacts and search for prospects in joint projects.

We also count on constructive dialogue with the Republic of Estonia. We would like to increase our level of business cooperation, including, perhaps, the near-border regions in particular. Naturally, we must evolve our traditions of good neighbourly relations, with the understanding that we are all part of the same pan-European family, where all European standards should be observed.

We value our traditionally friendly relations with Bangladesh. It is in our interests to enlarge our cooperation on both bilateral and international issues.

The time-tested friendship and trust have become a strong basis for the development of relations between Russia and Cuba; certain new projects are also being created. This is the intent of agreements that have

just recently been reached during my visit to Havana. I hope that the strong momentum to develop our bilateral relations will continue during the forthcoming visit to Russia by the President of the Cuban Council of State and the President of the Council of Ministers of Cuba, Ра́л Castro.

Our relations with Cameroon also have positive momentum. We count on our business contacts and other contacts to grow from year to year.

Traditions of friendship and cooperation tie Russia with the Republic of Cyprus. The outcomes of a recent visit to Moscow by Cyprus President Dimitris Christofias confirm our mutual aspiration to actively work together both on bilateral issues and on the world arena, including, of course, to fairly settle the Cyprus problem on the basis of decisions made by the UN Security Council and agreement of all sides.

We strive to strengthen the spirit of cooperation in our relations with our Baltic neighbour – Sweden. The development of pan-European cooperation and economic, cultural, and humanitarian ties are in the overall interests of our nations.

Great Britain has been and continues to be an important European partner for us. Constructive cooperation between our countries has a direct effect on the political climate in Europe and aids in the resolution of even the most difficult international issues. On our agenda is the promotion of ties in the trade and economic sphere, which in recent times have been developing nicely, and our ties in the areas of culture, education, and tourism. We are in constant contact. Immediately after this ceremony, I will be speaking with British Prime Minister Gordon Brown on the telephone.

We are determined to continue the development of good neighbourly relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran. We will create conditions to promote growth in trade, investment, and the expansion of humanitarian contacts. We also stand firmly behind the belief that the situation regarding Iran's nuclear programme should be resolved solely through political-diplomatic means.

We are interested in developing cooperation with Sudan, and in the future, we are willing to help in resolving the problems that exist in Sudan and around it on the basis of

regard for sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of the country.

Age-old bonds of friendship tie the Russian people to the people of the Republic of Abkhazia, whose independence Russia recognized in August of last year; we are intent on establishing all-round cooperation with Abkhazia as a sovereign, democratic government, and to help ensure its security and the building of a peaceful life.

The same can be said to the Republic of South Ossetia. Russia has, through its actions, confirmed its role as a protector of the South Ossetian people, having worked with them to fend off aggression coming from Georgian territory, and recognizing the independence of this republic. We will not leave our neighbour during times of trouble and in the difficult circumstances of a post-conflict period; we will jointly work to re-establish a socio-economic infrastructure in the republic and to strengthen its security.

I am sure that the international community's recognition of the new realities in the region will help to establish peace and stability in the Caucasus. For its part, of course, Russia is willing to make its contribution to this dialogue.

Ladies and gentlemen!

I count on your professional, personal diplomatic experience to help develop and achieve the potential for bilateral cooperation between your countries and the Russian Federation even more. I am certain that your Russian colleagues will offer you the greatest possible assistance in this task.

Good luck to you, and all the best! Thank you for your attention.

Transcript of Remarks and Response to Questions by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov at Press Conference on 2008 Foreign Policy Outcomes at MFA, January 16, 2009



Thank you for responding to our invitation to participate in the press conference which is traditionally dedicated to the outcomes of the past year.

The year past was very complicated, at times dramatic, packed with major contradictory events which most gravely impacted the situation. Those were the global financial crisis, which undermined trust in the international financial institutions formed after the Second World War, with efforts now being aimed at restoring this trust on a new basis reflecting the realities of a multipolar world; the unilateral – contrary to international law – recognition of Kosovo's independence; and, of course, Georgia's aggression against South Ossetia, which did not achieve its goals thanks only to the actions of Russia, which fully in line with our international obligations suppressed this illegal move. Regrettably, we entered the new year to the accompaniment of hostilities in Gaza and of the artificially created gas supply crisis in Europe. I think that at the end of the day all these events will turn participants of international relations face to reality; will make everybody realize that contemporary conflicts do not have force-based or other illegal solutions. In conditions of globalization there is no room left for national egoism, for attempts to solve one's own economic-and-financial or security problems at others' expense. I think that the accumulation of a critical mass of conflict potential in international relations should be-

come a catalyst for their swifter and deeper transformation; a catalyst for creating a polycentric system of global governance, including its material foundation, and for understanding that there is no alternative to collective approaches towards solving problems common to all on the basis of universal application of international law.

In the elapsed year Russia acted on the world stage fully aware of its responsibility and its capabilities. At the base of our foreign policy line lay a clear understanding of national interests, multiplied by common sense and readiness for equal cooperation with international partners. President Dmitry Medvedev approved the new Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, thus ensuring continuity of our foreign policy course. A concrete strategy to implement this Concept was articulated by the President in a number of his appearances and, especially, in his first Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation.

The main conclusion we draw for ourselves based on the 2008 outcomes is that Russia has basically completed a period of "inner concentration." And the conclusion which probably suggests itself for the entire world community is that we are now dealing with a qualitatively new geopolitical situation; perhaps, as they say, every cloud has a silver lining – the global financial and economic crisis has focused everyone on urgent issues rather than virtual projects. It is equally important that the crisis spurs all of us towards collective actions. In particular, the actual reconfiguration of the financial G7 into a financial G20, as occurred at the Washington summit in November 2008, indicates this. The forum is sufficiently representative, both geographically and civilizationally, let alone the fact that the twenty countries account for 80% of the world economy. Russia acted in close contact with our partners and associates in the CIS space, in Europe, in the BRIC format and took an active part in the G20 Washington summit. Further efforts have to be made in this direction, efforts for rebuilding the world financial system. I think that these efforts

must in principle help to accumulate a critical mass of trust, which will also allow for grappling with contradictions on certain political issues and must contribute to de-ideologizing international relations.

A good example of a constructive, pragmatic approach is Russian cooperation with the European Union, both during the crisis in the Caucasus and in overcoming the artificially created obstacles in the path of gas supplies to Europe. I think that we have never before cooperated so closely with the EU on truly significant issues for both sides. I shall note the active role of President Sarkozy as EU President in the past half-year. Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek of the Czech Republic is now very actively, responsibly and with proper initiative engaged in resolving the issues of gas supply to our partners in Europe. The past year has also shown the Euro-Atlantic security architecture to be patchy and inadequate to today's requirements. I think that the relevance of President Medvedev's initiative for crafting a European Security Treaty has become more understandable to many. We cannot fail to welcome in this connection the recent open approach of FRG Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier to the US President-elect with the proposal to return to the idea of creating a Euro-Atlantic security space from Vancouver to Vladivostok. It's an old idea, but for a variety of reasons it was not realized immediately after the end of the Cold War.

Of course, we are ready for any development of events, but like many other countries we pin serious hopes on a change for the better in US policy and, among other things, a change in Washington's policy on the international stage. We are ready for such changes and hope for close cooperation.

Our major priority in foreign policy remains the Commonwealth of Independent States area. In the elapsed year the CIS Economic Development Strategy to 2020 was adopted along with strengthening the nucleus of the CIS, as represented by EurAsEC and CSTO. The Federal Agency for CIS, Overseas Compatriots and International Humanitarian Cooperation set up at

the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is designed to become a tool for raising the effectiveness of our policy in the post-Soviet space.

Other thrust areas of Russia's multivector foreign policy were also boosted. I shall note interaction within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and the development of relations with the partners in the Middle East, Asia, Latin America and

Africa. Multilateral diplomacy under G8 auspices and in the framework of BRIC, APEC and other forums also contributed to securing national interests.

So we have very extensive foreign policy tasks before us in the year that has begun.

The events which have marred the year's start are further evidence of the necessity to combine efforts for

systemic collective work. The prosperity and well-being of the entire world will depend on the success of this work. Russia is ready for this work and hopes for a similar approach of all our international partners. Thank you for your attention, and I am ready to answer your questions.

RUSSIAN RELATIONS WITH THE SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN COUNTRIES IN 2008

The outgoing year, as is known, has brought difficult ordeals for all countries of the world. The incipient global financial crisis has affected all states without exception, dealt a tangible blow to the stability of the world economic system and had serious adverse effects on the situation of developing, including sub-Saharan African countries.

Despite these negative trends, work on strengthening the traditionally friendly relations with the states of the African continent has remained one of the important components of Russian foreign policy. Moreover, the need for continued diversification of foreign ties in contemporary conditions increases. Russia is interested in developing many-sided cooperation with the countries of Africa, which we regard as not only good, time-tested, but also as very promising partners.

Priority attention has been paid to intensifying the Russian-African dialogue and agreeing our positions on the key aspects of the international agenda, including the issues of promoting strategic stability, constructing a multipolar world, strengthening the central UN role, and countering the new challenges and threats, primarily terrorism and extremism.

An important role has been allotted to regular contacts with top leaders of African states. The objective of advancing our dialogue with the continent's community is confirmed in the renovated version of the Russian Federation Foreign Policy Concept, approved by the President of Russia on July 12, 2008; it is also reflected in Dmitry Medvedev's address to the Federal Assembly and became the subject of discussion in the ambassadors' meeting at the Russian MFA this past July.

A number of principled accords on promoting our many-sided cooperation with Africa were reached as Russian First Deputy Prime Minister Sergey

Ivanov made a trip to South Africa and Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov visited Senegal for the OIC summit and had contacts with heads of foreign affairs agencies of African countries in Moscow and New York. There were useful practical benefits in the Moscow visits of ministers of foreign affairs from South Africa and Kenya, leaders of the foreign affairs agencies of Cameroon, Gabon, Madagascar and other officials from a number of African states.

Steps to strengthen links with the African Union (AU) and sub-regional integrative associations were taken. Useful was the participation of Russian delegations led by Alexei Vasiliev, Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation for Relations with African Leaders, in the work of AU summits. The scheduled 2009 Moscow visit by AU Commission Chairman Jean Ping will undoubtedly contribute to the further advancement of dialogue with the African Union and reinvigoration of our cooperation on the broadest spectrum of issues.

Inter-parliamentary links made an important contribution to the further development of Russian-African relations. The visits to our country by parliamentarians from Gabon, DR Congo, Zambia, Madagascar, and South Africa constituted a noticeable event.

Religious organizations' ties received a new impetus. The visit to Angola, Namibia and South Africa by Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad served to strengthen the positions of the Russian Orthodox Church in African countries and to develop interfaith links.

The contacts held facilitated expanding the "geography" of our interaction with Africa, and solving a number of specific issues in bilateral cooperation, both with large and with small states of the continent. Among our principal partners are Angola, Guinea, Namibia, Nigeria, Ethiopia and South Africa. There are quite good prospects for the

advancement of cooperation with DR Congo, Gabon, Zimbabwe, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Kenya, Madagascar, Mali and other countries.

Despite the unfavorable tendencies linked to the global economic and financial crisis, purposeful work was conducted to reinvigorate economic and trade cooperation with the countries of Africa, whose current level we think does not yet match the available considerable potential. Great significance was attached to raising the effectiveness of the activities of bilateral intergovernmental commissions (IGCs) in this context.

Considerable reserves lie in the promotion of direct economic ties between representatives of small and medium-sized business, including under the auspices of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation. Fresh examples are the understanding reached during the visit of a delegation of entrepreneurs from St. Petersburg to major South African cities on the conclusion of a cooperation agreement between St. Petersburg and Johannesburg, and the study of the possibility of establishing twin-city relations between Krasnodar Territory and the South African province of Kwazulu Natal.

Assistance to the expansion of activities of Russian business circles is one of the major components of our foreign policy, including on the African continent. The Russian Foreign Ministry continued providing necessary politico-diplomatic follow-up for the activities in Africa of such leading Russian companies as Alrosa, Gazprom, Lukoil, Rusal, Renova, Gammakhim, Technopromexport, and VEB and VTB banks, which are engaged in large-scale investment projects on the continent. Positive dynamics are evident in the development of Russian-African cooperation in the minerals & raw materials, infrastructure, energy and other spheres, which has helped create conditions in the region for the successful tackling of the socioeconomic prob-

lems facing it.

The first, but important steps are being taken to develop cooperation with African countries in the realm of high technologies (nuclear energy, astrophysics, exploration and development of outer space for peaceful purposes). They appear to have a great future.

We note with satisfaction the obvious trend for trade to grow between Russia and the sub-Saharan African countries, which in the first ten months of 2008 surpassed the relevant period of last year by 30%, amounting to 1.9 billion dollars. At the same time it has to be stated that economic cooperation with African countries still encountered a number of difficulties due to, inter alia, from insufficient information available to Russian and African partners about mutual possibilities and requirements. Yet it is undoubted that these are "growing pains," the complexities of a practical nature which can be overcome by joint efforts. Much has to be done to ensure that Russian cooperation with African states continues to develop along an ascending line. All the necessary conditions exist for that.

Mention should also be made of such an important area of diplomatic work as the protection of the lawful rights and interests of compatriots who are resident or on a temporary stay in the region's countries and the provision of necessary assistance to them. Of special concern in this context is the growing number of acts of piracy and armed robbery at sea off the coast of Somalia, whose victims Russian citizens also become.

The Russian Foreign Ministry actively joined international efforts to combat piracy in this region. At present the Russian destroyer *Neustrashimy* is on operational duty off the shores of Somalia. On the basis of UNSC resolution 1846, which has created a more clearly defined international legal base for combating this evil, the possibility is being studied of sending additional Russian Navy forces to that region.

One of the main components of the African vector of Russian foreign policy is active participation in the coordinated steps of the international community to provide comprehensive assistance to the continent. For the purpose of the intensification of the war on poverty and the achievement by African countries of the UN Millennium Development Goals, at the International Conference on Financing for Development held in Doha in December 2008, we proposed a number of measures to stabilize the situation in African countries and minimize the adverse consequences of the present financial crisis.

It is, first of all, about the fulfillment of

the pledges already made by the donor community to provide aid and additional financial resources to the countries worst hit by the crisis; about assistance in the elaboration and realization of a macroeconomic and fiscal policy with a view to making more effective use of both internal and attracted resources; about the removal of barriers in the path of movement of goods and services from African countries; and about consideration of the interests of African countries in the process of the elaboration of decisions to reform the international financial system by increasing their representation and stepping up their participation in activities of international institutions.

In accordance with the presidentially approved Concept of participation by our country in international development assistance (IDA), measures are currently being taken to create a national IDA system. It can be noted with confidence that we have achieved significant progress in this endeavor. The level of provided aid was raised from 50 million dollars in 2003 to 210 million dollars in 2007 – not counting written-off debts, in the amount of which Russia holds one of the leading places among the G8 countries. Russia has by now canceled debts of African countries amounting to 20 billion dollars. Negotiations are being conducted with Benin, Guinea, Zambia, Madagascar, Mozambique, Tanzania, and Ethiopia to write-off their debts in the amount of more than half a billion dollars.

Russia has stepped up its participation in realizing international initiatives and crafting new approaches and mechanisms for development assistance. We have committed ourselves to provide more than 1 billion dollars in aid to the poorest, including African, countries, during the period to 2010-2011 to fight infectious diseases, "energy poverty" and to bolster education, of which amount more than half has already been allocated. We are actively involved in international efforts to provide humanitarian aid to African states, particularly under the auspices of the United Nations World Food Program, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other entities. Our donor contributions are being used to provide food and humanitarian aid to Guinea, DR Congo, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia. Despite the world economic and financial crisis, which has also affected Russia, we are not renegeing on our obligations to render support to developing, including African, countries and are planning to bring up the volume of our aid to 400-500 million dollars a year in the near future.

One more important thrust of the "African vector" is political work in the

UN on assistance to Africa's development and on strengthening peace and security in Africa. A landmark stage in collective efforts in this field was the high-level meeting of the UN General Assembly on Africa's development needs held this past September.

Russia continues to participate actively not only in developing a strategy to resolve particular armed conflicts and in determining the mandates for the appropriate peacekeeping operations in the region, but also in "practical peacekeeping" on the continent. Russian troops and policemen (about 230) are involved in all UN peacekeeping operations in Africa, including in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Western Sahara, Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sudan. In 2008 Russia joined the European Union's peacekeeping operation in Chad and CAR. The transfer of a Russian military contingent (120 troops with 4 military transport helicopters) to Ndjamena has been practically completed.

Our assistance in the training of African peacekeepers has been built up. Hundreds of Russian-trained civilian policemen and law enforcement officers from African countries are already serving in hot spots, making their important contribution to the maintenance of peace and security on the continent.

One cannot fail to note the significant contribution of Russia to the collective efforts of the Group of Eight in providing assistance to Africa. The Russian side has been consistently implementing all the G8 accords on African problems, including those reached at the last summit in Hokkaido. Russian entrepreneurs actively participated in the discussion of the continent's problems during the meetings of the Group of the G8 Leaders' Personal Representatives on Africa and in the format of the "enlarged dialogue" – the Africa Partnership Forum.

The principled line in support of Africa, which is going to be continued, has helped to tackle tasks in ensuring global stability and in creating more favorable conditions for developing fruitful interaction with African countries. The first consideration now is by relying upon the amassed experience and acting hand-in-hand to work towards a fuller unfolding of the cooperation potential in the interests of our states and peoples.

Alexander Saltanov

Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation

Article of Alexander Yakovenko in *Diplomatic Vestnik*-2008 RUSSIA-UNITED NATIONS

The general debate at the 63rd UN General Assembly session has confirmed that most states favor replacing the artificial unipolarity with a more natural polycentric international system with reliance upon the United Nations. In conditions of globalization the relevance of the Organization as the central multilateral mechanism for realizing a comprehensive strategy to tackle the issues of security, development and human rights in their inseparability objectively increases. Russia has been consistently supportive of bolstering the UN and considers its role as a unique forum for constructive and equal dialogue among states to be unalternative. We intend to continue pursuing an independent, pragmatic, open, and predictable foreign policy, participating in international cooperation without hidden agendas and relying on the solid basis of the UN Charter and other norms of international law.

The UN has historically proven its effectiveness in developing and using politico-diplomatic tools for conflict resolution in the world. This major sector of work is becoming ever more relevant owing to an expanding geography of crisis and conflict. The significance of coordination of peacekeeping efforts between the UN and regional and subregional organizations while observing the Charter prerogatives of the UN Security Council has grown.

Russia has consistently advocated preserving the central role of the UN in collective efforts to maintain international peace and security, to counter the new challenges and threats and to prevent the coalescence of terrorism with WMD. To achieve this aim it is important to concentrate efforts on strengthening the multilateral elements in arms control, disarmament and WMD non-proliferation, seeking to ensure strict fulfillment of existing, and the elaboration of new international legal agreements. We believe that the search for adequate answers to the new international security challenges and threats in no way detracts from the significance of the observance of previous obligations in this sphere.

Our country places high importance on UN activities aimed at establishing a world order predicated on the rule of law. In the spirit of this attitude we shall continue to advocate strengthening the rule of law in international relations, based on strict observance of the international legal principles and norms set forth, in particular, in the Charter of the United Nations.

We are convinced that UN reform is indispensable. At the same time we hold that reforms are not an aim in itself. Their task is to ensure raising the Organization's effectiveness. Transfor-

mation decisions must be taken solely on a platform of the broadest consensus among member states.

We regard the setting up of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), which is carrying out substantive work on country dossiers (Burundi, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau, CAR), as an important achievement in the sphere of the reformation of the United Nations. The activities of the Commission bear out the fact that this body has considerable practical potential and is capable of becoming an effective international mechanism in this sphere. At the same time the PBC should regularize its procedure for the inclusion, approval and exclusion of agenda items.

It is our belief that the reform of the UN Security Council, aimed at raising the effectiveness of this body through its limited enlargement, meets the world's interests. But we have to state that there is still a wide divergence of opinion on Security Council enlargement among the UN member states. For us the key guideline remains the task of imparting to the Council a more representative character, but not to the detriment of this body's capacity for work. Overall, we believe that as there is no agreement between supporters of different schemes for the Council's enlargement, the "interim model" (calling for an enlargement only in the category of nonpermanent membership that has a longer term and which allows members to run for reelection) or its possible variations can move the debate on Council reform off dead center.

The growing need for UN peacekeeping and the steadily widening range of tasks in PK operations make this a principal work area of the Organization. Today, PK operations involve a record number of personnel (110,000) and the peacekeeping budget amounts to about seven billion dollars. Yet we are concerned that the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations' last session was regrettably marked by an unprecedented level of confrontation between major groups of states (EU and NAM), on minor issues at that, which prevented agreement on a report to the General Assembly for a long time.

The new quality of UN peacekeeping requires greater military expertise when adopting appropriate Security Council decisions. In this connection we advocate for the reinvigoration of an auxiliary body of the Council envisaged by the UN Charter – the Military Staff Committee (MSC). Our proposal consists in that a renewed MSC should be working in a format envisaging participation of all Security Council members.

We are opposed to politicizing the "frozen conflicts" issue and involving the

UN General Assembly for this purpose. In this context we hold that the promotion by GUAM member states during the 62nd UNGA session of the relevant draft resolution only whipped up emotions, antagonized the positions of the sides and made prospects of a comprehensive settlement of the conflicts more remote. The search for mutually acceptable solutions must continue to be conducted with the use of the negotiation and peacekeeping mechanisms that have proven their effectiveness.

In view of the new political realities in the South Caucasus region resulting from Georgia's aggression against South Ossetia, Russia advocates seriously adjusting the mandate of a UN Mission that is due to replace the UN Observer Mission in Georgia. Without everybody's scrupulous fulfillment of the agreements reached by the presidents of Russia and France, to create a climate of security and trust in relations between the concerned parties will be obviously impossible.

Despite the security and stability successes in Iraq, as well as the strengthened position of the country's security forces and their greater efficiency, Russia continues to be concerned about the lingering elements of tension that manifest themselves in periodic fresh outbreaks of violence.

In this connection the international community should render all assistance to the people of Iraq in rebuilding a peaceful life, in ensuring an ethnic and faith balance and in rehabilitating the economy and infrastructure of the country.

A leading role in these processes should be played by the United Nations and the Security Council as one of its key bodies for the maintenance of international peace and security. In 2009 the Council will begin a review of the resolutions adopted by it over the last 18 years in relation to the Iraq-Kuwait crisis, to consider steps to be taken, including by Iraq, to return the country to the international status that existed before August 1990. Russia intends to take an active part in this process.

The unilateral declaration of independence has not helped to solve the key problems of Kosovo. Tension lingers on in the province.

Russia advocates for stepping up efforts by the international community, aimed at continuing the search for a compromise Kosovo solution that will provide, *inter alia*, rights-and-security guarantees for national minorities pursuant to Security Council resolution 1244, with the UN playing a leading role.

In this connection, in June 2008, we perceived as going beyond the UN Secretary General's prerogatives his decision to reconfigure the UN Mission

in Kosovo and transfer major competences regarding external assistance to the settlement process there to the European Union Rule of Law Mission (EULEX), and called for continued consultation with all the concerned parties, primarily Belgrade, on the parameters for the UN presence in Kosovo.

In November 2008 the Secretary General informed the Security Council of the agreement that he had reached with Serbia on the practical activities of UNMIK and on the parameters for its cooperation with EULEX. The Serbian authorities, for their part, asked Council members to support the Secretary General's report, which fixed that agreement.

Proceeding from this, Russia, following its principled line, aligned itself with the Presidential statement, adopted at the end of the Council meeting, which, in particular, welcomed the Secretary General's report on cooperation between the UN and regional organizations in the framework of UNSCR 1244. This Council decision in no way dealt with the province's status. In turn, the UN General Assembly in October at Serbia's initiative adopted a special resolution requesting for an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on whether the unilateral declaration of Kosovo's independence conforms to the norms of international law. Russia supported this document.

Russia is seriously concerned by the worsening security situation in Afghanistan and by the growing number of civilian casualties as a consequence of mistaken actions by foreign military presences. National reconciliation in Afghanistan must be promoted with the strict observance of the country's Constitution and the anti-Taliban sanctions regime imposed by UNSCR 1267. Only persons who have not sullied themselves with war crimes may return to participation in peaceful life. Any attempts at flirting with extremists and their gradual empowering are merely fraught with further destabilization.

Russia welcomes progress during the latest rounds of intercommunal talks, and advocates achieving a just, comprehensive and viable solution to the Cyprus problem that envisages the creation of a bi-communal, bi-zonal federation with the political equality of the Greek and Turkish communities and on the basis of relevant UN Security Council resolutions. It is important that new UN efforts in Cyprus affairs should help the Cypriot communities with the settlement process, be impartial and objective and conform to the mandate of the UN Secretary General's Good Offices Mission with no arbitration, ready-made recipes or artificial timetables.

We advocate for shaping a comprehensive approach to conflict settlement and prevention, strengthening democracy and ensuring sustainable economic and social development in Africa.

We welcome the striving of African countries to raise the effectiveness of their peacekeeping potential, including work on the establishment of the African Standby Force.

We champion close cooperation by the UN with the African Union in elaborating concerted approaches to resolving conflict situations in the region and we welcome both the constructive dialogue and broader partner relations between the UN, and the AU and leading African subregional organizations.

Russia actively participates in the elaboration and implementation of measures for the settlement of crises in Africa and takes part in most UN peacekeeping operations on the contingent.

Piracy and armed robbery at sea off the coast of Somalia pose a serious threat to the lives of seamen and ship passengers and to the safety of navigation. The Russian Federation took the most active part in the elaboration of the "anti-piracy" resolutions of the UN Security Council to reinforce the international legal basis of combating piracy and to authorize countries to conduct operations against armed robbery in the territorial sea of Somalia and on land. The Russian Navy has actively joined international counter-piracy efforts. We plan to maintain our naval presence in the region, acting in strict conformity with international law and the decisions of the UN Security Council.

We regard sanctions as one of the important tools in achieving a politico-diplomatic resolution of conflict situations. At the same time this tool should be used with extreme caution. Sanction measures should not go beyond the scope of the relevant Security Council resolutions and allow a broad and arbitrary juridical interpretation. UN Security Council decisions imposing sanctions must provide for humanitarian exemptions to the sanctions regime, time limitations on the measures proposed and the criteria for their lifting. Already in the stage of elaboration of an embargo mechanism consideration should be given to the humanitarian consequences of the sanctions both for the population of the state against which they are being imposed and for the countries adjacent to it.

In the current year UN activities in the socioeconomic sphere took place against the background of a deepening global economic and financial crisis. In this connection as never before a sharp debate raged at the sessions of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and during the 63rd UN General Assembly session around the issues of eliminating the consequences of the financial crisis, ensuring food and energy security and, of course, achieving the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – primarily through the prism of mobilization of necessary financing in the conditions of an increasing recession of the world economy.

The chief event of the year in the UN on

the economic front was undoubtedly the International Conference on Financing for Development (Doha, Qatar, November 29 – December 2, 2008). During its course Russia along with other developed countries reaffirmed the pledges to provide aid to developing countries, which is regarded as an important factor of countering the spread of the global financial crisis to the sphere of development financing. Actions were agreed to mobilize internal and external resources of both countries and international organizations for ongoing progress towards attaining the MDGs. We shall note that Russia's aid to poorest countries in 2007 amounted to more than 210 million dollars, and the volume of that aid will increase to 400-500 million dollars in the coming years. This enhances the prestige of our state in the world and allows it to fill necessary niches in markets of developing countries.

This year the UN adopted principled decisions to holding major global forums on the most pressing issues of development, including the UN Conference at the highest level to examine the impact of the world financial and economic crisis on development, UN High-Level Conference on South-South Cooperation, the Fourth UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries, the UN General Assembly High-Level Dialogue on International Migration, and others.

In terms of bolstering regional economic interaction with European and Asian countries Russia continued to actively participate in the activities of the UN Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). In order to increase the practical results of ECE activities Russia's first earmarked voluntary contribution of 1.2 million dollars was made to this Commission in 2008; an analogous contribution to ESCAP in 2009-2010 is being considered. All this money will go to projects which will help bolster international cooperation in these regions that meets the interests of the Russian state and business community, especially in the fields of energy, transport, ecology, trade boost and investment.

An important event in terms of bolstering our interaction with the Central Asian countries with the use of UN formats was the session held in Moscow on October 20, 2008, of the Governing Council and the Economic Forum of the UN Special Program for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) incorporating under its aegis all states of this region, as also Azerbaijan and Afghanistan. UN regional platforms also were used by us for the active promotion of cooperation by the constituent entities of the Federation on the pressing issues of development, environmental activities, and the enhancement of trade and investment attractiveness.

Active work was conducted to rebuild

relations with UN operational programs, funds and specialized agencies in connection with the Russian donor potential buildup in the context of realizing the Concept of Russia's Participation in International Development Assistance. In particular, work began on the preparations for the creation of a Russian National Committee for UNICEF, which will solicit private sector resources and individual donations to finance the Fund's programs in our country and abroad, primarily in the CIS.

Projects were developed and cleared with Russian specialized agencies and foreign partners that are meant to be carried out within the framework of Russia's voluntary contribution to UNIDO's Industrial Development Fund.

The problems of sustainable development and environmental protection, including countering global climate change figure prominently among the international community's global priorities at this stage. Accordingly, the significance of this area of activity is also steadily increasing in the Russian diplomats' work. In this case our foreign policy efforts aim primarily to help solve the tasks facing the Russian Federation in providing a healthy environment, in enhancing people's quality of life and in bolstering national ecological security without prejudice to socioeconomic interests.

In 2008 Russia ongoingly built its cooperation with the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), UN Forum on Forests (UNFF), the UN Environment Program (UNEP), the UN Human Settlements Program (UN-HABITAT), and global and major regional environmental conventions and agreements – climate, the ozone layer, desertification, biodiversity, transfrontier air pollution, and the protection of the marine environment of the Arctic, the Caspian Sea, the Black Sea, and the Pacific Northwest.

Russia plays a leading role in advancing the climate process with an eye to devising an international framework for cooperation in combating climate change for the post-Kyoto period (after 2012). Russia has stood consistently for strengthening the constructive foundations of, and imparting to the international climate regime a truly universal and equitable character. That's where the efforts of Russia's delegation were concentrated during the work of the 14th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the 4th Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol in Poznan in December 2008. Significant is the contribution of the Russian Foreign Ministry to shaping and implementing the environmental agenda of the Group of Eight.

Work is continuing aimed at Russia's accession to such important multilateral environmental agreements as the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, Rotterdam Conven-

tion on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade, the Bonn Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and so on.

The role of Russia is also increasing in international health cooperation. Among the latest steps realized with the participation of the Russian MFA are our country's accession to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control and the decision to hold a European Congress of Pediatricians in Moscow in July 2009. Our donor participation is being built up in dealing with the most acute health problems on a global level – fighting the spread of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria, as well as an avian flu pandemic.

In 2008 Russia consistently advocated stepping up international efforts to battle the global food crisis (GFC), which has moved into the category of most acute problems. The rapid growth of food prices in the last three years has adversely affected the living standards of the population, especially in developing countries, and really jeopardized the achievement of the key MDG 2015 target of halving the number of starving people in the world.

Pursuant to our principled tenet of strengthening the role of the UN and its specialized agencies in dealing with global problems, we actively supported the establishment in April of the UN Secretary General's High Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis to develop a Comprehensive Action Program. In the course of the participation in the work of the High-Level Conference on World Food Security: The Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy (Rome, June 3-5, 2008) and of the Substantive Session of ECOSOC (New York, July 2008) we pursued a line on strengthening the role of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in questions of developing the agro sector and ensuring food security.

Taking into account the significance of the United Nations World Food Program (WFP) as the main channel for providing food aid, Russia continued to build up its donor contribution to WFP activities. In 2008 we financed food aid for the population of Armenia (\$2m), Kenya (\$2m), Cuba (\$1m), Tajikistan (\$2m), Ethiopia (\$4m) along with providing one-time aid to Bangladesh (\$1.5m), Guinea (\$1m) and Zimbabwe (\$1m).

We also actively backed the consideration of the GFC issue this year by the G8 Summit in Toyako. In particular, its statement on global food security, adopted following the debate, endorsed the Russian initiative for holding regular meetings of G8 agriculture ministers. Also received with interest was our proposal that a World Grain Summit be held in Russia in the summer of 2009.

The G8 leaders supported the steps to form a Global Partnership on Agriculture and Food, strengthening and building on existing UN and other international institutions.

An important UN-related task of Russian diplomacy is work on upholding Russian interests in the intergovernmental and expert bodies of the UN and other international organizations defining their policy in questions of management, personnel, budget and program planning and procurement.

In considering management and budget matters related to the functioning of international organizations, Russia has consistently sought to enhance the effectiveness of the work of the UN Secretariat (and the secretariats of other international organizations) on implementing decisions of member states, to bolster accountability and transparency in its activities, to increase the responsibility of the Secretariat officials for decisions and performance and to ensure procurement effectiveness and transparency, and fair international competition in the UN market.

Bolstering harmony among civilizations and, inter alia, fostering constructive interaction between members of all religious confessions is among the foreign policy priorities of Russia.

We hold that the UN platform offers all possibilities for developing a broad dialogue in this field involving the representatives of states and civil society. We stand ready to take the most active part in it.

Russia is a member of the Group of Friends of the Alliance of Civilizations (AC), and supports the work of Jorge Sampaio, the UN Secretary-General's High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations. We are certain that the AC can become a real framework for bolstering cooperation in this area of contemporary international relations. In particular, the First Alliance of Civilizations Forum held in Madrid in January 2008, in which delegations from more than 80 states, including Russia, and over 300 representatives of NGOs, religious entities, business circles and media took part, is testimony to this.

Generally speaking, we understand the urgent need for the adaptation of the United Nations and all its bodies to the changing conditions in the world, and staunchly champion international institutions reform while strengthening the central role of the world Organization. This position remains invariable for us. We have always proceeded on the assumption that mankind has thought up nothing more effective than the UN to maintain global security over the last century.