



Russian Centre for Science and Culture

INFORMATION BULLETIN

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Speech of the President of Russia Dmitry Medvedev at Ceremony Handing Back to Russia the Russian Orthodox Church Metochion in Bari

March 1, 2009, Bari, Italy

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: President Napolitano, Ministers, Mayor and Prefect of the city of Bari, Compatriots and Italian friends,

We are gathered here for an event of historic importance: the Orthodox metochion built here a little less than 100 years ago by our compatriots in Italy is returning to Russia. Everyone present here today understands the moral dimension of this act and is, I am sure, filled with the most joyous and sincere emotion.

First of all, I want to express my heartfelt thanks to everyone who has put in the effort and commitment to making this important event possible. I especially want to thank President of the Republic of Italy Giorgio Napolitano, and the Italian Government. I want to say a huge thanks to the Mayor of Bari and to everyone who looked after this metochion during the difficult years of the twentieth century. All of you cared for and preserved this unique monument of Russian culture and architecture, and in so doing showed an example of special feeling towards our people.

Today's event was also made possible by the efforts of two patriarchs: Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Alexy II, whose memory will remain forever in our hearts, and Patriarch Kirill, who only recently was enthroned as Patriarch.

The significance of this handover, this event, is equally great for Russians and Italians. It is an act that confirms the deep-reaching ties between our cultures and peoples.

In 2017, we will celebrate together the metochion's 100th anniversary. This event will require big preparations on both sides and will demonstrate the common spiritual and humanitarian



*March 1, 2009, CHURCH OF ST NICHOLAS, BARI.
With President of Italy Giorgio Napolitano.*

values that Russia and Italy share, values that are based on not years, but centuries of mutual interests and respect.

For more than 1,000 years now, Russians and Italians have venerated Saint Nicholas. Saint Nicholas is especially venerated in Russia, where ever-new churches and monasteries were and still are raised in his name, and he is considered a helper in daily life.

The construction of an Orthodox Church here in Bari, close to the burial place of this great Christian saint, was therefore highly welcomed by our Orthodox compatriots.

There is no doubt that the importance of this metochion as one of the most important spiritual centres of Russian Orthodoxy on Italian soil will grow with time. Thousands of our compatriots have come here for help in the past, and thousands will con-

tinue to do so. People from every corner of our country will come.

In 2011, we will hold the Year of Italian Culture and Italian Language in Russia, and the Year of Russian Culture and Russian Language in Italy. These initiatives are part of the multifaceted cooperation that binds Russia and Italy. This cooperation is built on traditions of diverse and trusting relations between our countries. During the talks I had just now with Mr Giorgio Napolitano, we agreed to continue making every effort to build on these traditions of humanitarian cooperation between our countries.

Dear friends, I wish everyone present success and good luck in carrying out your plans. Thank you for your attention, thank you for your participation in today's ceremony.

Press Conference Following the Russian-Spanish Talks

March 3, 2009, Madrid

PRESIDENT OF RUSSIA DMITRY MEDVEDEV: Ladies and gentlemen!

First of all, I would like to thank the King of Spain, Juan Carlos I, and the President of the Government of Spain, Jose Rodriguez Zapatero, for welcoming us so warmly to Madrid, and for the atmosphere that was created to promote the work of our delegation.

Mr Prime Minister, I fully agree with you, Russia would indeed like to have the most friendly, positive, strategic relations with Spain, and that is the very reason for this state visit.

The programme for our delegation's stay in Madrid was very eventful. We not only attended protocol events, but also achieved that which is most important: reaching a new level of cooperation and a new level of mutual understanding regarding the most important issues we face today.

We have had very nice conversations with King Juan Carlos; we spoke about traditions of productive cooperation, the dialogue that exists between our nations, and the new possibilities that open up as a result of such contacts. I was particularly happy to discuss humanitarian issues and several other issues that traditionally bind the Russian and Spanish communities.

We had a very informative and fruitful discussion with Mr Prime Minister, talks in which our delegation participated. We looked at a wide range of issues regarding our main positions in close detail, and I would like to note that in the 21st century, we truly can reach a fundamentally different level of cooperation between our countries. And I do not just mean cooperation in the business sphere, but also in the humanitarian sphere, on issues of cultural ties. We value this deeply, because the relations between our countries have been going on for many centuries; and the modern status of these relations is determined by our work today.

The new realities of our relations are reflected in the Declaration of Strategic Partnership. This is, in my view, an historic document, because on the one hand, it confirms our commitment to common, democratic values, and on the other hand, it lays the foundation for future work, and most importantly, provides coordination for our efforts toward a variety of challenges in economics, humanitarian relations, and foreign policy, which is of no small importance, given the roles that our

countries play on our continent and in the world.

Spain is a very important trade and economic partner for Russia. Recent turnover has grown by almost 25%, reaching over 9 billion dollars. Our goal is to maintain this positive growth, even with the understanding that there will be difficulties this year, and we may even have some breakdowns. Nevertheless, the key priority is to maintain the high quality of this turnover, meaning, its upward direction, directedness toward the future.

Great prospects are emerging in the domain of fuel and energy – Mr Prime Minister has spoken about this in great detail – and in sectors such as metalworking, chemical and petrochemical production and industry. In this regard, the work being done by intergovernmental commissions on economic and trade cooperation (I feel that it is good work) should be reinforced and we must continue to work actively in this direction, perhaps by setting some kind of interim goals, as we discussed today during our talks: to meet once every six months and discuss the current situation and state of affairs.

Naturally, today we discussed the state of the world and issues relating to the global economic crisis. Both governments feel that these kinds of problems can only be solved through joint efforts, as a result of coordinated efforts by all of the world's key players. Today, we cannot rely on solutions implemented by one state or even a group of states, because such solutions will not work, in the same way that the financial security system which was formed on our planet 60-70 years ago is not working now. This system is not functioning, which means that we must seek a solution, a way out of this situation.

Soon, there will be a meeting in London. We have submitted our suggestions to all of our colleagues, our friends in Spain. Today, we briefly exchanged ideas on what should be done; Mr Prime Minister has spoken about this already. Of course, we are also talking about reforming international financial institutions, including the International Monetary Fund, corporate transparency, standards of conduct, and the possibility of conducting consultations on macroeconomic indicators of large countries, because the well-being of economies in those countries influences the well-being of other states, which are bound to those

countries with the invisible threads of economic ties.

That is why the agenda is difficult, but I hope that we will nevertheless be able to reach some new agreements. In any case, Russia's position is this: during the consultations in London and the subsequent consultations (we understand that London is not the last stop), we must not only reach an agreement regarding the fundamentals, but also reach universal, international agreements that will have a binding effect.

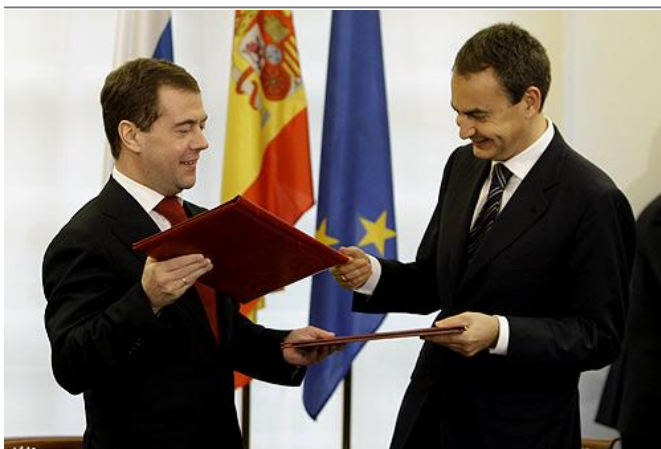
Russia and Spain are interested in strengthening stability and security in the world and in Europe. We also discussed this issue with the Spanish head of government. You know that for some time now – over a year – Russia has been suggesting new ideas, and last summer, I suggested the idea of a treaty on European security. We feel that that this could be a good foundation for moving forward, and we count on continuing dialogue regarding this issue on various platforms, including with our Spanish partners.

We are ready to jointly counteract the most serious threats existing in the world today. I am referring, of course, to terrorism and international crime. In this regard, I would like to particularly emphasize the treaty on military transit for Afghanistan, whose implementation will facilitate the security of the Spanish contingent currently located there.

We also have positive experience of cooperation between our law enforcement institutions. Today, a memorandum was signed on cooperation between the Prosecutor General's office [of Russia] and the State Prosecutor General's Office of Spain. I hope that we will have good results in this area of mutual cooperation as well.

A major issue that is important to our countries concerns our cultural ties. We are glad that Spain regularly hosts artists visiting from our country; this includes the leading performers from our artistic groups, as well as exhibitions and musical performances. Russian viewers, in turn, take great pleasure in going to concerts by Spanish artists. I feel that we must strengthen these kinds of contacts, especially since there is a constant growth in the number of our citizens visiting Spain, as well as Spanish citizens visiting the Russian Federation.

Mr Zapatero said that over 500 thousand Russians visit Spain every year, or at least, this was the figure for last



March 3, 2009, MADRID.

With Prime Minister of Spain Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero. Signing the Declaration on Strategic Partnership.

year. Nearly 150 thousand Spaniards visited the Russian Federation last year. I feel that this is very important, since nothing brings us closer than direct contacts between individuals, the possibility to come and see a

country, to socialize with regular people, to relax. This is very important, and it also increases our economic contacts.

We discussed a variety of very different issues; we talked about the situation in the world overall, and we talked about issues of international security.

If this interests you, you can ask questions about it. If not, then we will not talk about it.

I would like to once again thank Mr Prime Minister for this constructive dialogue. I am certain that with this

dialogue and with all the results that we reached – I would specifically like to emphasize that today we have entered a new level of cooperation, – we are demonstrating a mutual desire to develop our relations in the widest way possible, and in the friendliest way possible. We count on the resolutions that we made today to be brought to life.

Mr Prime Minister, I thank you.

QUESTION: I want to ask about the letter Barack Obama sent, in which he said that he wants to stop the construction and deployment of a missile defence shield if Russia cooperates on the Iranian issue.

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: Relations between Russia and America are indeed a very important element of international security. Russia wants to have normal and full-fledged relations with the United States. This was our position during the previous period too, when we worked with the Bush Administration, and it remains our posi-

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tion today. I hope that the positive signals we have received from Washington will become embodied in actual agreements. In any event, what we have received so far is evidence that our American colleagues and the new President, Barack Obama, want to intensify cooperation and arrive at a number of decisions of importance not just for Russia and the United States.

We are in constant contact and have spoken several times on the telephone. We do indeed correspond with each other, and it would make no sense to pretend otherwise, but as for this kind of exchange, this kind of deal you mentioned, I can tell you that the issues were not phrased in this way, for it would be counterproductive. We had and continue to have serious doubts about the missile defence project, at least in the form the previous administration's plans in this area took. Rather than strengthening security on the European continent, the missile defence initiative proposed a while ago only complicates matters further. In this respect Russia has taken a clear and straightforward position: let's work together on a missile defence system and build an effective and reliable shield against various threats, which are indeed many in number.

But what has been proposed was fragments of a system, and located close to the Russian Federation what's more, and this cannot but worry us because this will most likely be a defence not against global threats, but against something else again. This is why our reaction was so straightforward: we do not agree with what has been proposed, and if the new U.S. Administration shows common sense and proposes a new construction that would gain the approval of all Europeans, the approval of the United States itself, and our country's approval, we would be ready to discuss these proposals. But this would have to be a real full-fledged global system, not just fragments of a system deployed in close range to Russia's borders.

What we have received from our American partners shows at the very least that they are ready to discuss this issue, and this is already a good sign. Not so long ago, we were getting other signals, namely, that the issue had already been decided, there was nothing to discuss, and the Americans would go ahead with their plans. But the tone of the conversation always determines the tone of the response that follows.

Now the situation has changed, I hope. But no one is setting conditions of some kind of deal, some kind of swap, all the more so on the Iranian issue. As it is, we work in close contact

with our American colleagues on the issue of Iran's nuclear programme. These contacts were always just as close and just as regular even when we had a confrontation on a number of issues. We will therefore continue to discuss this matter on a regular basis, all the more so as we and the United States pursue the same objectives when it comes to this issue.

QUESTION: Did you discuss at today's talks the Russian President's initiative to conclude a new agreement on European security, and has there been any rapprochement in positions on this issue?

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: The issue of concluding a new treaty on European security is constantly being examined and discussed. We hold these discussions personally, and they also take place between our respective ministers and expert groups. I think there is no need now to set out the substance of what we are proposing, although I do hear from time to time calls for us to be more specific about what this whole thing is actually about. I think that it is very clear by now what this proposal is about. The situation is very simple: so long as there are various countries in Europe that are part of different groupings, different blocs, members of this or that organisation, only a treaty of the kind we propose can ensure security in Europe on a universal basis. But as for the choice of forum for holding discussions on this treaty and on the creation of a new organisation, this is a matter of taste. We are considering various options. It could be the European Union, the OSCE, or other forums. In any case, there are a great many different options for discussing this issue.

I talked about this already today during the meeting with the senior officials of the Spanish Cortes Generales. I want to say to you too that in my view, there is no alternative to this kind of treaty if we see security in Europe as something that goes beyond blocs, something that is an indivisible whole. I think that everyone understands this now. Every citizen, every person living in Europe realises that they depend on the level of security established, so let's work together on concluding an agreement of this kind.

QUESTION: Does the memorandum on cooperation in the energy sector mean that the door is once again open for talks between Lukoil and Repsol on Lukoil's acquisition of a stake in Repsol?

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: I will just say a couple of words about the cooperation between our companies. A memorandum has been signed. This memorandum does indeed bolster the possibili-

ties for developing contacts in various areas of the energy sector. This includes gas, oil, other fossil fuels, and also new energy sources, which is also very important. As for specific business projects, they should develop and unfold according to their own rules. In this sense, I want to say that no one ever closed the door on talks between Lukoil and Repsol. They have to decide for themselves when to meet, what to discuss, and negotiate the conditions of any potential deal. This is a normal business process in which companies engage in.

I just want to say that Russia has always been in favour of our big energy companies working together with their European partners. Exchange of assets is one of the best ways of reinforcing energy security in Europe. As for the concrete results this will produce, let's wait and see.

QUESTION: Continuing on from the last question, could you clarify the basis for developing energy cooperation? Will it be done through asset swaps, or through investment in new projects, or perhaps work together in other countries' markets?

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: I think you have just answered the question yourself, because normal energy cooperation should include all of these things.

Asset swaps are good because they create immediate reciprocal access to each other. This is a business procedure that makes it possible to start rapidly carrying out projects at a good level. But this does not mean that big projects, and even smaller-scale projects, could not also involve the creation of new enterprises. There could be investment in new facilities, and new companies could be created for this purpose.

I think we should therefore keep all avenues of cooperation open, all the more so as energy cooperation is perhaps one of the biggest priorities today for our countries.

But, looking at the future, I would not want the economic relations between Russia and Spain to be dominated only by energy sector issues. I want to see us develop economic ties that are as multifaceted as possible, have us work together in high technology sectors, work on new materials, work on creating the potential for the twenty-first century, while at the same time realising the importance and promise of cooperation on the big energy issues.

Interview of the President of Russia Dmitry Medvedev with BBC

March 29, 2009

ANDREW MARR: Mr. President, thank you very much for coming here to give an interview to the BBC. First, I would like you to reflect on the overall economic situation. We are meeting today at the time of the global crisis. How did it affect Russia? What do you think is the most probable course of events in your country?

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: Hello, Mr. Marr. I am pleased to give this interview to the BBC, even more so that I am doing this on the eve of my visit to London to attend the G20 Summit. Of course, the reason for our meeting in London will not please anybody. The financial crisis is indeed a global one affecting almost all economies in the world. Thus, the challenge all the leaders face is to find adequate ways of dealing with it. The question is what does adequacy mean and what can we possibly achieve today.

I have just discussed this matter with Prime Minister Brown, and we have agreed that the set of proposals to be considered at the Summit has been almost finalized. I will not cite them here, as they are rather big and bulky and perhaps will not attract the interest of the TV audience. What people really want is that we make at least a slight progress on our way forward.

Russia, too, was hit by the financial crisis. Some of its manifestations in Russia are exactly the same as in Britain. I am talking about a lack of financial liquidity and banking activities; however, there are also some problems specific to Russia. The Government has formulated a programme, which includes providing support to the so-called real sector that is our businesses, and creating new jobs, since the crisis has naturally affected our industries and led to increased unemployment. Over the

last five months alone, 200 thousand people lost their jobs; of course, we need to deal with this problem, just as other governments do.

We have taken certain measures to support our banks, and at some point we have managed to reverse the most alarming trends in our banking system. As a result, this system now operates normally.

ANDREW MARR: Your economy is heavily dependent on natural resources, on the energy sector. The crisis seems to require new reforms,

important future task is to continue following the path of economic diversification, to set up new industries, mainly high-tech ones. IT is the priority that we set for ourselves long ago. We should maintain the domestic demand; we should develop small and medium-size enterprises since they seem to be less dependent on the world economic situation.

ANDREW MARR: What will happen if, say, the G20 leaders do not reach an agreement, if they express different views on the world market?



DMITRY MEDVEDEV:

They have to reach an agreement, because it is the future of our countries and our peoples that depends on our accord, on our determination to introduce fundamental changes into the world financial architecture.

ANDREW MARR:

Would you like dollar to be replaced as the world's reserve currency,

which has been mentioned by you and many others? Would it be a practical solution from your point of view?

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: Of course, the crisis has exposed our problems. We realized it before that the Russian economy is not diversified enough and to a great extent based on the production of raw materials. Naturally, today we continue to believe that supplies of oil, gas and other energy supplies are an important part of our economy. But the point is that these are export commodities whereas the crisis makes the export shrink, thus reducing the revenues.

I can be frank here and say that it is the most heavily export-oriented countries that have mostly suffered from this crisis. In this regard, Russia is one of them. Therefore, our most

greater diversification. In Russia there are not so many small and medium-size enterprises.

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: You know, I have just discussed this issue with Gordon Brown and other partners. Of course, we are realistic, and I hope that my position is realistic, as well as that of our Chinese colleagues. But it is quite obvious that the existing currency system has not coped with the existing challenges. We were lucky to have a set of currencies: dollar, euro, and a pound. But in the future this system should be based upon a multi-currency basket, it should also include other regional reserve currencies. If we manage to agree on that, in the future we could talk about creating a kind of a supercurrency.

ANDREW MARR: You see this financial crisis as a moment when the balance of forces in the world shifts, to put it bluntly, from the West to the East.

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: I think that the question is not where this movement originates and where it goes. The question is that we should provide a right response. Of course, the existing architecture of the world economy is not perhaps quite in tune with the present situation. We see how fast the so-called dynamic economies grow, how fast the growth of the emerging markets is, like the BRIC markets (Brazil, Russia, India, China), how fast the Far East is developing. All that should be taken into consideration. But the crisis is not a reason to say "that's it, the new configuration and the new political landscape have been fixed, now we are living in a different world". The crisis should be used to find a solution.

ANDREW MARR: Russia has six million of the unemployed, the ruble lost one third of its value. Do you blame the greedy Western bankers for that? Should they be blamed for this crisis?

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: Of course, not. We do have all the problems that you mentioned, but it is essentially a response of any state. At the moment when the foreign currency inflow started to decrease gradually, we had to take this decision to devalue the ruble, which was the case in other countries as well, a considerable number of countries did the same with their own currencies. Indeed, many of our companies used to take loans from Western banks. Maybe, some of them have done it improperly, without taking into account possible consequences, but this is a responsibility of specific owners of those companies, and foreign banks have nothing to do with that. One should always think, when borrowing money, how you are going to repay it. This is the question for any money-lender.

ANDREW MARR: G20 will give you the first possibility to meet President Barack Obama personally. I believe you keep an eye on him. What do you think about the President today, what is your view of him?

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: I know him well, I have seen him many times on TV. (Laughing.)

But seriously speaking, we have had two telephone conversations. These were fruitful and constructive talks. We exchanged letters to present our

own vision of the evolution of the world situation. I would like to say that, in my view, the message by President Obama was very positive. And, frankly speaking, when I was reading it I was even surprised by the fact that many views outlined there coincided with my own ones. The question, certainly, is how we shall be able to present our views during our personal meeting. To what extent our teams are ready to move in a certain direction, to what extent we are ready to break stereotypes. To what extent we are ready to carry out the rebooting which is spoken about so much today.

ANDREW MARR: One thing proposed by President Obama is that he wants to reflect upon the issue of the antimissile system in Eastern Europe once again. But he would like you help him in other aspects— regarding Iran and its nuclear ballistic missile programme. If you wished to do this, would you be able to exert an efficient pressure upon Iran? What do you think, could they abandon this Programme or, to be more precise, ballistic missiles and not develop nuclear weapons?

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: You know, we have issues regarding which we maintain permanent contacts with the United States Administration irrespective of the level of our relations or whether our views on any specific issue of the current agenda coincide or differ. Both antimissile defense and a settlement of the situation around Iran are among such issues. We have maintained regular contacts on these issues with the previous Administration too.

As regards the ABM, as regards the deployment of the notorious capabilities in Europe, our position has always been clear: we should not create ABM elements – a comprehensive antimissile system is required. And Russia is ready to become engaged in this system, because we are also interested in securing our country and our citizens from threats posed by certain problematic states. But the point is that this should be done through common efforts rather than by deploying any missiles or radars along our borders when a real doubt arises as to what lies behind all this? Is it done to make us nervous or in order to really prevent some threats?

As for Iran, we maintain full-fledged relations with this state, but our position is based on well-known UN resolutions and approaches set forth by the IAEA, namely that Iran's nuclear programme should be peaceful. This

is our public position, we have always informed Iranians about this. I don't think that any trade-offs are possible in this respect. Any information as to replace one issue with another one is not true, this is not a serious talk. But I have no doubt that we shall discuss both issues— that of ABM defense and of the situation around Iran's nuclear programme. I believe that President Obama thinks the same way.

ANDREW MARR: But, presumably, it may not be comfortable for the Russian people that the Iranian missiles so closely located to you finally would turn out to be nuclear missiles.

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: We wouldn't like to have any new nuclear missiles along our borders. The world has enough missiles without that and their multiplication does not assure the needed security. We are interested in the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons to be the main principle of human development for the years to come. We don't want any new members of the nuclear club; it's quite unnecessary.

ANDREW MARR: The modernization of the Russian Armed Forces is broadly noted and covered in the West and there have been your own statements on this subject. And what to say to people who consider it a kind of threat, a kind of "rocking of the boat"? Do you think that a serious modernization of the Russian Armed Forces is needed or something is done here additionally to counterbalance the West?

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: The modernization is a completely normal work. Russia as a big state, as a responsible participant in the International Club, as a permanent member of the Security Council has a number of serious obligations. Russia is a major nuclear power and we bear responsibility under the main conventions, including those in the field of strategic nuclear arms limitations. We should have an efficient defense system. But it cannot be on the level of the 1970s or the 1980s. We should have a defense system of the 21st century. And this is my main duty as the Commander-in-Chief. But certainly it shouldn't be regarded as a step against someone. This is our task— to maintain the needed level of defense capacities of our country. The fact that we didn't do that in the 1990s doesn't mean that we didn't want to modernize our defense system. As a matter of fact, we have had no possibilities to do that. Now the situation is different. Despite the crisis, Russia has sufficient means to carry out its

own defense strategy and to create modern armed forces. This is what we are doing. These actions are not directed against anyone, these are defense actions, and any state is doing that. You can say this to everybody interested in this matter.

ANDREW MARR: Can we ask a question on Afghanistan? At this moment, Americans are rethinking their policy on Afghanistan. But, besides that you could say: "We had been warning you", what would you recommend to Americans to do in the future as regards Afghanistan?

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: The Afghan issue is, of course, one of the most challenging, the most complex issues today. Initially, we have supported the efforts of Americans and the Allied States aimed at preventing the terrorist threat coming from that country, including in the course of negotiations with our close neighbours. Moreover, a few times we have simply rendered an open assistance when we were asked whether it was possible to deploy these or those forces or bases. Our response was simple: these are antiterrorist measures and we recommend to our friends, to our partners, including from the Central Asia, to help in this respect.

I believe that today a number of threats are still there. And in that sense we are ready to participate in the efforts directed at putting things in order, at preventing terrorist attacks, including within the obligations we had taken. Another matter is that sooner or later, as I see it, there should nevertheless appear a normal and developed political structure of Afghanistan. It is impossible to rule Afghanistan with the aid of the Alliance; it is impossible to rule Afghanistan from abroad. Afghanistan should find its own path to democracy.

ANDREW MARR: If Americans carry out a big campaign, as it was done in Iraq, what will be your reaction to it?

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: As for Iraq, the situation is a little bit different.

I have just explained our position on Afghanistan that is clear and open. But our approach to the situation in Iraq differs from that in Afghanistan. As for that country, we proceeded from the assumption that there was no reason to carry out such large-scale operations, all the more so when there were no proven threats. The developments that followed have shown that we were right. The threats that the previous American Administration was talking about appeared to be a phantom to a large extent.

Nevertheless, that state is in disorder, there is actually no state, and only military units and police forces maintain some order there. Was it really necessary to break up the Iraqi political system, if greatly imperfect, to be frank? Only to create a worse one? We therefore remain wary of the measures taken in that country. Certainly, we wish success to Iraq in searching for its own way, and we are willing to see it developing. And we also maintain contacts with the Iraqi Government.

ANDREW MARR: Can we turn to the relations between Britain and Russia? They were not good over the recent years, too. In this regard, there are certain problems to be highlighted: the case of Litvinenko, TNKBP and not least the British Council that is in the list of spy scare. Finally, how do you assess the climate of our relations? Of course, some warming can be seen. Can you describe the situation?

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: I think we have the above-zero temperature, like in the spring as you can see the weather outside. The changes take place.

ANDREW MARR: More specifically, is there any way to secure that Mr. Lugovoi would be subject to a lawsuit in a third country? It's a big issue in Britain. Is any compromise possible here?

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: You know, we may have problems that cannot be settled in a judicial manner, so it's not possible to seek a legal solution to them. With regard to the extradition of a Russian citizen, our Constitution and our legislation contain relevant provisions, which have been repeatedly brought to the attention of our British partners. Russia, like many other countries, has never used such a practice, irrespective of how sensitive the issue is.

ANDREW MARR: So, what can we tell Mrs. Litvinenko, a widow who cannot achieve a fair settlement concerning the death of her husband?

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: You know, I believe that any settlement, including such grievous and tragic instances like Litvinenko case, should be sought within the existing legal framework. This is what I have been taught as a lawyer. Some people, certainly, may—and do—appeal to political authorities. However, when it comes to legal dimension, there is a procedure established, there are investigating agencies and the judiciary. Whether people trust the investigation or not,

whether they believe the court or not—there are no other arrangements in place to settle this kind of problems. So I have one thing to recommend, which is to observe the legal framework and respect the laws of the Russian Federation.

ANDREW MARR: What is your forecast with respect to the problems involving British Ambassador in Moscow and the British Council? What is your vision of their future in the short term?

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: Frankly speaking, I don't see any particular problem here. It might have been a sequence of some regrettable incidents. Some of them were rooted in the Great Britain, while others might have their origins in Russia. It's not a systematic thing though. However, despite those difficulties that our relationships faced in the past, we were on excellent terms in other fields, such as trade, and this kind of situation is quite natural. The only thing that Russian senior authorities were talking about—and what I am now saying as one of them—is that the Russian laws should be respected.

We have come up with some proposals to the British Council. And even now the British Council keeps on its operation, despite some restrictions. If the issues concerning its legal status are settled, as proposed, the British Council will resume its activities in accordance with our law on foreign legal entities and public associations.

ANDREW MARR: As for British businessmen, a lot of concerns have been expressed regarding the BP company. And there is no doubt that even in these circumstances many British businessmen ask themselves a question: is it safe to invest money in Russian economy and do business in Russia? What would be your answer to them?

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: It will be simple, absolutely simple, clear and exact. British businesspeople are welcome in Russia. We believe that British businesspeople have the same rights on Russian investment market as all others. They can work on the territory of the Russian Federation and are actually doing so.

The only thing is that they should choose the right partners. I have mentioned it more than once during the talks with my counterparts, i.e. British Prime Minister and others. Yet these are the risks, which everyone has to take. When having found a partner one should certainly think of

the divorce procedure. I have been in juridical business for ten years and the first question which I asked right away before developing such joint projects was always the following – whether the 'divorce' procedure was documented and how it was defined, in which court the proceedings would take place and what would be the principles for the division of property. Yet, thank God, in case of the TNKBP it didn't go so far.

ANDREW MARR: A lot of people in Britain keep a close eye on Khodorkovsky case, who is now facing even a longer term in prison. Do you think it is possible to reconsider Khodorkovsky case and offer him some sort of parole, since it would be an indicator of business-friendly atmosphere in Russia?

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: I always try to think in a specific manner. This is perhaps both my merit and demerit. My cast of mind is one of a lawyer although I am a President. That is why I would like to comment simply on the Khodorkovsky case. It is true that he had been sentenced on certain charges under Russian criminal law. Currently new trial is being heard. We should wait for its results. If there is an acquitting judgment—that is one thing, if there is a judgment of conviction—that is another thing, but in any case, this will be decided by the court and in this context neither President nor anyone else has a right to interfere in this situation. A President has only one privilege, only one power—to grant pardon on behalf of State. When people make such appeals, it is my duty to consider them. That's it.

ANDREW MARR: The next question is about political reform in Russia. Is it true that you have told the Novaya Gazeta "It's great that you still keep working"?

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: Absolutely. Besides, I promised to give them an interview. I will have to do that.

ANDREW MARR: A number of journalists have been killed in Russia over the past few years. Do you think that some special reforms are needed in order to normalize the situation?

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: You know, unfortunately, we are facing major crime issues. This is the reason why I am addressing corruption. Recently I have held a special meeting on crimes against children. Unfortunately, journalists suffer too, together with other people who fall victims to crime. I do not think that all such cases have to do with politics. Yet, I

am sure, in some cases it is a matter of political revenge. Each of them should be examined in the most detailed manner, and the criminals should be found and prosecuted. This is the only way to change the situation.

ANDREW MARR: You are a ... person, you are a President. Does this open for you a new vision of what is going on in Russia, unlike people from different regions of this country?

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: I don't know about other people, but as for myself, I find my previous practice and my previous experience very helpful. I have dealt with legal matters, I have dealt with business, and I have my own views on many processes. I believe that the experience of working for the government which I have had by the time I was elected President—almost nine years' experience—has also been helpful. So I think that such a combination is really useful. Anyway, I will advise future Presidents to work in all these spheres.

ANDREW MARR: Who is now leading in Russia – do you lead Putin or does he lead you?

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: I am leading the country, I am the head of state, and the division of power is based on this. Mr. Putin is the prime minister of the Cabinet that implies very complicated and comprehensive work. But it is clear that the President is taking major decisions on behalf of the State.

ANDREW MARR: During President Sarkozy's visit to Russia Putin was quoted as saying then that he was a bad cop while the President was a good cop. How do you see the situation? Was he right?

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: I do not think so, I believe, we both are good cops. (L a u g h.)

ANDREW MARR: Are you going to run in next elections for the second term?

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: I would rather finish this term and realize what is going on. Such plans on the next term could be made only by a person who believes his rule to be a success.

ANDREW MARR: What changes and what kind of Russia would you like to get at the end of your Presidency? I mean, what changes does President Medvedev look for in Russia as he takes the lead?

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: I would like Russia to be an efficient and powerful

country where people live well in accordance with appropriate and civilized standards with ensured adequate quality of life. I would also like to see Russia among democracies, within unified Europe, as a country that speaks to its partners on equal footing and with respect, and addresses the most challenging tasks. I would like Russia to be well-educated with preserved deeply rooted traditions of the Russian culture. Here are comprehensive, global goals, but I believe that they can be achieved.

ANDREW MARR: You are planning to come to London soon. And it seems to us that in the West we all know Mr. Putin, we even saw some of his topless photos where he is without a shirt. But we are not so well informed about you. What could you tell us about yourself?

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: First of all, I am ready to do a photo session if that may help. Though it is always a rather complicated matter to talk about myself as a politician currently in office. I think that some things that we had started together with Mr. Putin when he was President have succeeded after all. Yet let our citizens, not us, make the judgment.

As for myself, I do not even know what would be interesting for our TV audience. I realize that some specific facts, juicy details which people usually prefer to keep silent about, always arouse interest. As for my personal background, it is well known.

ANDREW MARR: Finally, let us sum up our conversation. For some time the relations between Russia, Great Britain and the West have been very difficult. Do you think that with Mr. Obama now in office, and after the outbreak of the crisis there could be a new beginning for these relations? Is it possible in the future?

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: New start is certainly possible, it is even necessary. I hope that my partner shares that point of view. Very soon we will meet and discuss everything. I am a moderate optimist. I believe that if the humanity exists and progresses that is because there is some reason behind it.

ANDREW MARR: Mr. President, thank you very much for taking part in our show on BBC news. I hope that your participation at the G20 Summit in London will be a new and interesting part of our history.

Press Conference following Russian-German Consultations

March 31, 2009, Berlin



With Federal Chancellor of Germany Angela Merkel at a joint press conference.

PRESIDENT OF RUSSIA DMITRY MEDVEDEV: Ms Federal Chancellor, Colleagues,

As we agreed earlier, we are meeting today to discuss preparations for the G20 summit in London and at the same time take a look at how our relations are developing.

It is symbolic that we began our discussions today by meeting with members of the German business community and examining the problems our economies and businesses currently face. What came through in this discussion, in my view, was that we did not get fixated with minor details, but spoke about future prospects, aware that the fate of big projects in Russia and Germany depends on the level of our relations and cooperation.

It is worth mentioning once more that our bilateral trade reached the unprecedented figure of \$67 billion last year. Of course we want to maintain this level in the future. There are a lot of people whose jobs and incomes depend on our trade, as does the prosperity of even entire regions.

This shows that our economic relations have become a real factor in cooperation. We are not talking about bits and pieces here and there, but about serious big programmes. During the discussions with our German colleagues, German businesspeople, I was very pleased to notice that they see real prospects for projects even at this difficult time. We talked about projects in machine-building, and of course about energy sector projects

too. Work is underway to implement practically all of our prior agreements, despite the difficulties our economies and the entire world are encountering today.

Our bilateral talks, during which we discussed preparations for the G20 summit, made a natural follow-up to the discussions with the business community. I agree 100 percent with what the Federal Chancellor said: we do indeed share very similar views on what needs to be done and what positions we should support at this summit.

We have all had a chance to look through the Declaration. It sets a certain direction for development, but in our opinion, most important of all is that the G20's work not end with simply adopting this or that declaration. The summit needs to be followed up with substantive further events in the form of conferences and other forums for discussing the shape of the future global financial system. Our objective today is not to inject money into economies in need, even large economies, and not to merely support our own manufacturers, although this is an important task for any government. Our objective is to prevent such crises or minimise their effects. This is the first time we have faced a crisis of this nature, and we do not yet fully understand its development and effects. But now that we have decided to meet and put precious time into discussions, we need to reflect on what we can do to best influence and manage these kinds of economic processes.

In this context, I fully agree that we should draw up full-fledged international agreements. One such agreement could be the Charter for Sustainable Development. I support this idea (and I voiced this support just now at our bilateral meeting) because this is not just a separate fragment of the work we need to do in the future, but an agreement of considerable substance and importance.

I also think that we should not try to avoid tackling the issue of the future of the international financial organizations. We cannot simply patch up holes in their mechanisms, but need to look at how to transform them into full-fledged modern institutions.

Their foundations were laid more than 60 years ago now, and they are in need of modernization. We need to be frank in recognizing that in many respects they have not been up to the task of managing this current crisis. This obliges us to meet and examine the question of setting up new funds and making new decisions on investment. This is a major task too.

We also need to look at establishing a modern currency system. This is something we discussed. The situation now is far from ideal, as the current crisis has exacerbated problems that already existed on the different currency markets, and has shown that these markets are not entirely stable. Even if the situation does stabilise somewhat there is no guarantee of real and calm development over the coming decades if we do not create a modern system of currency relations, including the question of setting up a larger number of reserve currencies. These are all issues forming the framework of important matters we will need to discuss at the London summit.

Finally, coming to the third set of subjects, we did indeed discuss relations between Russia and NATO, between Russia and the European Union, and the aspects of ensuring a modern security system in general.

The Russia-NATO Council is set to resume full-scale work soon. We welcome such development. We never sought to limit our relations with NATO. There was a suspension in our relations that was not of our choosing, but now that reason has prevailed and our dialogue is to resume, we are ready to work once more.

These relations are important, including with respect to a number of international issues such as Afghanistan

and cooperation on nuclear weapons non-proliferation, but this does not mean that we should concentrate all of our attention on relations between Russia and NATO alone. We also need to look at how to give our relations other forms.

I am referring for example to relations between the Russian Federation and the European Union, which can also contribute to Europe's security. This is a new item on the agenda, but relevant all the same. We therefore discussed these matters too, looking at the possibilities for working in this format on security issues.

This also correlates with the proposal for the treaty on European security that I put forward last year. We are grateful for the interest Germany has shown for this proposal, and we are ready to continue discussing this idea at the widest range of forums.

That accounts for what we discussed today. I think the Federal Chancellor and I will have the chance to continue discussing various matters at other venues today.

QUESTION: Germany and Russia each presented individual proposals in the run-up to the London summit. Some of these proposals have been mentioned here today. I would like to know, on what specific proposals do your positions coincide, and on which do you have differences. Could you please name the proposals on which you are not in agreement, and, following your talks, will there be any proposals to make adjustments, although there is not much time left now before the summit?

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: I can only say that I agree with what was just said [by the Federal Chancellor]. First, we have no major differences in our points of view. I will not say with whom we do have differences, so as not to ruin the intrigue. Let the sherpas continue their work and perhaps arrive at some compromise proposals.

What we all agree on for sure is that the aim of this G20 summit is not to make ultimate decisions, sum up the work and note our agreement, but to launch the major undertaking of building a new financial system. What we see as most important is that this future work should definitively transform the situation and bring about positive change in the way the international financial system functions, create a more stable balance of currencies in the world, a sounder system of international auditing and corporate reporting, improve the international ratings system, and achieve progress on all of the various issues that we will discuss.

The way we look at this problem is that we need to build the foundation for future work. We need to take the steps that will prevent a repeat of such crises. This is why, as I said, we welcome the important proposals our colleagues have put forward, including the idea of the Charter, which was discussed today. We must not replace real work with a set of separate decisions, add some money here or there, add in a function here or there, and hope that everything will turn out fine. I do not think this is the right approach. We need to build a new system. Overall, this work is underway today, and this is the goal we have in mind.

Regarding some of the fine points that have come out of today's discussions, we will of course send instructions to our sherpas. They will be able to make adjustments, and perhaps come to a consolidated position, which is always an added plus.

QUESTION: In Washington, the idea was discussed of not taking any protectionist measures for 12 months. Now, six months have gone by and we see that many countries have taken protectionist measures. How reasonable is it to make these kinds of promises only to see six months later that they have been broken?

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: Russia, like other responsible members of the international community, opposes primitive and unabashed protectionism. We are not a member of the World Trade Organisation, but we support concluding the Doha round of trade talks. These are self-evident things.

As I said at the meeting with the business community members today, on my way to Germany, I looked at what I think is the U.S. President's most recent interview, with the Financial Times. One of the questions stated that Washington has said much about anti-protectionist measures, but has taken more than 700 decisions that can be considered protectionist in nature. This demonstrates that our internal decisions do not always follow the dictates of pure logic.

We all face a situation where businesses are closing down, people are being laid off, and this is something we cannot ignore in our domestic policy. But at the same time, we must not allow, especially at this time, a policy of primitive and senseless protectionism that would lead to markets closing off, set of trade wars, and build high walls between countries.

There are special European Union decisions and other international agreements. Russia will follow these agreements, but at the same time, we also have to follow developments in

our own country and take some protection measures if need be. But these measures should be only local in nature, for a start, and I think they should also be only temporary. Otherwise, we risk creating a situation in which our economies function separately from each other, and this is something we cannot allow in the crisis situation, and ultimately it would be the wrong road to follow.

QUESTION: As you said, the energy sector is one of the most important fields of cooperation between Russia and Germany, and between Russia and Europe in general. An agreement on Ukraine's gas transport system was approved recently in Brussels. This document caused a stir in Russia above all because it excludes Russia, the main gas supplier, from the negotiating process. What is your view of the situation? How is it likely to develop?

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: I am grateful to the Federal Chancellor for this position. The conference itself and the decisions that came out of this conference under the European Commission's aegis are highly debatable in Russia's view. You cannot divide up a product that does not belong to you, and you cannot build a normal functioning system for transporting gas or any other commodity without involving the country that actually produces that commodity.

We were surprised and somewhat disappointed by this news. This does not mean that we now feel offended and will go off and sulk. We are ready to continue consultations.

At the same time, we want to make the point that any agreements in this area should be settled with all of the different parties. The crisis that occurred in January showed just how vulnerable we are if this or that transit country begins following its own policy without coordinating with the other parties.

There are several lessons to be learned from this situation. First is that we need to establish a full-fledged legal foundation so as not to have this kind of problem cause us difficulties in the future. This could take the form of a separate agreement, or we could make adjustments to the Energy Charter, something I spoke about a little while back. Russia's proposals are ready now and we will soon send them to our European partners and our Ukrainian partners too, of course, so that they can study them and we can then continue the discussions.

The second lesson is that all consultations of this kind should take place in friendly fashion. We hope that if discussion of these issues does continue, Russia will be given a suitable place in such consultations. If this does not

happen, this will affect our relations in the very sensitive area of energy security.

Finally, the third lesson to be learned from these events is that no one can guarantee against decisions, the consequences of which have not been fully thought through. Our Ukrainian partners decided they could go ahead with this dialogue without Russia's participation, and we, for our part, draw our conclusions from this situation, and you are aware we have already done so.

Our response, as you know, was to defer the intergovernmental consultations between Russia and Ukraine, as well as the approval of decisions our Ukrainian colleagues had requested of us. Our Ukrainian colleagues have a good many requests. They request money from us, for example. But how can we give money in a situation where we cannot agree on one of the most fundamental issues? We will take all of this into consideration.

QUESTION: There are many German companies that say the deals already concluded cannot actually go ahead. Is Russia ready to finance them?

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: I am not completely clear as to which deals the

Russian state should finance. Could you be more specific? Which deals are not going ahead, and which should be financed?

QUESTION: There are many companies whose Russian partners are having financing problems. The question is then, what help are they receiving from the state? In Germany, for example, there is a system of state guarantees.

DMITRY MEDVEDEV: To be honest, many companies in general are having problems – Russian companies, German companies, American companies and others. Government economic policy exists to help national business sector. Our country's economic policy includes various forms of support for businesses that are unable to meet all of their commitments in the current situation.

In specific terms, this includes measures such as providing preferential loans in sensitive and important cases, and a system of support for small and medium businesses. Our country is also putting in place these kinds of measures. The legislative work is underway on this, and our Government is taking the necessary steps and decisions.

As for the question of a system of state guarantees, following a period of reflection, the Government has approved procedures for state guarantees that obligations will be fulfilled. This system should begin work now. Making use of special bank guarantee methods, this will give companies currently having problems obtaining loans the possibility of using the services banks offer. This will make it possible for them to obtain loans under bank guarantees provided in accordance with the state procedures.

We can also look at other ways of helping them to fulfil their obligations, because the current problem with bank loans is that the value of the assets the companies previously used as collateral has decreased considerably. This is a problem in Russia and in other countries too, and governments have to look for new solutions and use less standard means, perhaps, to ensure that credit deals can go ahead. We are carrying out this work in Russia and we will continue it. This will also cover, of course, the companies working with German businesses.

Dmitry Medvedev sent a message of greetings to delegates at a conference of the League of Arab States.

"The League of Arab States has deserved authority and influence in the international community", Mr Medvedev said in his message. "Over many decades it has made an important contribution to regional peace, integration, humanitarian dialogue, and building up trust and mutual understanding in the Arab world.

I am pleased to see the steady development of Russia's relations with the Arab countries. Working in a spirit of mutually advantageous partnership, we are expanding our trade and economic relations, investment ties, and cooperation in the energy sector. We are intensifying our cooperation on a broad range of international and regional issues, and we are firmly committed to continuing this work together.

There are good conditions for this. We share close or common positions on most of the current international problems – nuclear non-proliferation, terrorism, extremism, and settlement of regional conflicts.

Russia will continue to assist collective efforts to settle disputes in the Middle East and North Africa. It is in our common interest to bring stability to this region.

It is especially important today to overcome the consequences of the recent crisis in the Gaza Strip. We note the positive results obtained at the international donors conference in Sharm El Sheikh on March 2. It is important for the international community to show its readiness to make considerable funds available for rebuilding Gaza. Russia, for its

part, will continue to assist the Palestinians in a wide range of different areas.

Restoring Palestinian unity around the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, under the auspices of the Palestinian National Authority, is a priority task today. We hope for positive developments in the dialogue between Palestinians.

This will serve the main objective – a return to the peace process. We need to end the occupation of Arab lands and establish a sovereign and viable Palestinian state that will coexist in peace and security with Israel.

I am sure that only a comprehensive and fair settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, based on universally recognised international law and the Arab peace initiative, will bring stability to the region. The Moscow conference on the Middle East aims to contribute towards this goal. We hope that all of the Arab countries will take an active part in the conference's work.

We place great importance on measures to stabilize the situation in Iraq. We think that guaranteeing national consensus built on dialogue involving all of Iraq's main political forces and ethnic and religious communities is absolutely vital for strengthening the country's sovereignty and preserving its territorial integrity and unity.

Russia also places great importance on maintaining stability in the strategically important Persian Gulf region. We have put forward a security concept for this region. We hope that our Arab partners will add to Russia's proposals."

Mr Medvedev's message was delivered at the conference by Alexander Saltanov, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister and special presidential envoy for the Middle East.

*Transcript of Remarks and Response to Media Questions
by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov at Press Conference Following Talks
with US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton, Geneva, March 6, 2009*



Esteemed colleagues,

First of all I would like to thank the United States Secretary of State, Hilary Clinton for this meeting. I will share practically everything that's just been said by the Secretary. In addition I can say that we have already managed to achieve one concrete practical result. We reached agreement about how "reset" ought to sound in both English and Russian. Now there are no different interpretations. And I am certain that this is a contribution to interaction between our people, a contribution to the advancement of English in Russia and Russian in the United States of America.

As Secretary Clinton said, we very thoroughly examined practically all of the issues on our agenda, starting with bilateral relations and, of course, including our cooperation in the international arena. And all this was done, first of all, in the context of the preparations for the first encounter between the Russian and US Presidents, which is planned to take place on the sidelines of the G20 summit in London at the very beginning of April. We exchanged views regarding our visions of the near-term priorities in our relations.

I am convinced that the Secretary of State will share my opinion that these priorities coincide for the most part. Of course, each side highlighted its emphases and nuances and it would be an exaggeration to say that we agreed on everything, but we agreed that on all questions, including those on which we have differences, we will work in the spirit of partnership, honestly and openly. What matters most is that we found just this readiness in work. We have a common understanding that today our bilateral relations are acquiring an additional chance which cannot be lost. Herein lie the interests of our peoples, the interests of the United States, the interests of the Russian Federation and we are fully

aware of the responsibility of our two countries for the state of affairs in the world.

As I've said, we devoted much attention to the preparation of the meeting between our presidents in London. We substantively discussed so called sore points in our relations and looked at how work could be organized to clear the logjams left over from previous years and how to make certain a constructive component, goal-oriented partner-like collaboration, dominates our relations.

We paid special attention to the problem of the nonproliferation of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction in general, of strategic offensive arms and strategic defensive arms. I am certain that it is within our power to reach a common denominator and maybe even come out with a plus for our strategic relationship on both START and missile defense. I note the readiness of our US partners for dialogue on the basis of mutual consideration of interests.

We looked at the situation with nuclear weapons nonproliferation, including as it applies to Iran and to the issue of the Korean peninsula. I am certain that in the near future we will try to come to some kind of agreement, some results that would enable us to bring a political-diplomatic resolution of these issues closer, within the framework of the existing negotiation formats.

We noted the special significance of the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and agreed to cooperate in the framework of the process of the preparations for the next review conference to be held in 2010. We also recalled that some time ago at the initiative of Russia and the United States the UN Security Council had adopted an important resolution aimed at preventing nuclear weapons or materials that can be used for their production from falling into non-state actor hands. And we agreed that our joint initiative would remain a subject of our special attention and that we might propose additional steps to reinforce the regime created by the Security Council in this area. We have many common initiatives which remain valid on the fight against the threat of nuclear terrorism. And here too there are concrete accords on how jointly to seek greater consolidation of the international community.

We told in detail about the initiative of President of the Russian Federation Dmitry Medvedev in the field of Euro-Atlantic security. The partners heard us and I look forward to concrete pragmatic expert consultations with the United States and, of course, with all other countries in the Euro-Atlantic area. We've got quite a few tasks concerning Middle East settlement where both our countries are members of the Quartet of international

mediators. We consider it our common goal to stabilize the situation in Afghanistan and we are interested in strengthening practical cooperation toward this end. I am certain that there will appear new spheres of cooperation for us. We agreed that we will promote the success of the upcoming Conference on Fighting the Terrorist and Narcotic Threats Emanating from Afghanistan to be held in Moscow on March 27 under the aegis of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and that we will cooperate in ensuring the success of another conference on this problem, which at the United States' initiative will take place in Europe at the end of March.

We have a common interest – to take our bilateral economic relations to a new level. They are already measured by impressive figures, but, of course, the results are still far from the potential our states possess. I think that in London our presidents will make a strategic choice in favor of fostering constructive relations between Russia and the United States. There was an exchange of messages last month toward this end. And we are convinced that this meets the basic interests of our countries, of our peoples and the interests of the world community. We agreed upon a schedule of upcoming work. It will be implemented and I look forward to further contacts with Hilary Clinton. I am very pleased with today's talks.

Question: Do you assess that conversation you had over dinner as the beginning of closer personal contacts?

Foreign Minister Lavrov: I make bold to assert that ours are excellent personal relations and I hope that Hilary will agree with me.

Question: Have you already pressed the "reset" button presented to you? If not, then when will you press it? And what will the Russian-US relations look like which you strive toward after pressing the button?

Foreign Minister Lavrov: I agree that the load that measures our agenda is enormous but I don't think Hilary or I wish to get rid of something from that load. In addition to the problems to be tackled, in addition to the joint initiatives to be put forward, we talked a lot today about strictly practical projects which are aimed at securing the interests of our citizens, at facilitating the conditions of contacts between them, at realizing different ideas in the cultural sphere, in environmental protection and many other things. I don't think we'll make our job easier by neglecting any of the issues discussed today. So that ours is a heavy agenda, but I assure you it doesn't need to be compared to the stone Sisyphus had to roll up a hill. At least we will cope with this stone for sure.

As to whether I pressed the button – yes, together with Hilary, we did manage to press that button. As you saw, it's a big, red button. And I hope that Russia and the United States and all other countries will never press the other button that was previously associated with the start of a destructive war. We will press the reset button for constructive cooperation.

Question: Could you comment on arms supplies to Iran?

Foreign Minister Lavrov: Regarding questions of military-technical cooperation with Iran, these questions, like questions of our analogous cooperation with any other country of the world, are tackled solely in the legal field in accordance with Russian export control legislation, and it is one of the strictest in the world; and, of course, in accordance with the existing international obligations. We supply our partners with non-destabilizing, defensive types of weapons. And, by the way, we want our partners to behave with equal restraint in their military supplies to the countries which have already, including not so long ago, used those weapons very close to our border. In our military-technical cooperation with Iran, I repeat, we do not violate anything. But at the same time we fully and seriously consider the concerns that both our US and Israeli partners voice to us. I am convinced that the way towards removing these concerns lies in the intensification of efforts to realize the proposals that were submitted by Group 5+1 to resolve the situation surrounding the Iranian nuclear program. Apart from major significant economic stimuli, these proposals also envisage starting an equal dialogue with the participation of Iran, with the participation of all countries of the region on the question of ensuring reliable and lasting security, when all the

countries here, including, of course, Israel, would live side by side in peace and security. This is a very complicated theme, it has a lot of nuances, but we have a clear understanding that these questions have to be tackled and we will engage.

Question: Do you think it's possible to reach new SOA accords before December 5, 2009?

Foreign Minister Lavrov: I fully subscribe to this statement. We will do everything to ensure that the accord is reached. The present Treaty is outdated; at least, the limits there have long since been fulfilled, and to stay within this Treaty would mean that both Russia and the United States can, essentially, increase, not reduce their strategic offensive arms. This will be a very bad signal to all others, especially ahead of the next Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Question: Will Russia recognize the declared independence of Kosovo?

Foreign Minister Lavrov: Kosovo is certainly one of the problems on which we have differences with the United States, and fairly serious differences, although Russia has never tried to draw any conclusions from these differences that would have an adverse impact upon our relationships in other areas. We consider the unilateral proclamation of Kosovo's independence illegal. On this theme there are Serbia's requests to the International Court of Justice. Russia will present its opinion for consideration in the legal procedure. It seems to me that all those who do not recognize Kosovo understand the dangers inherent in such processes, processes which involve no logic from the viewpoint of the security of

the Albanian population of Kosovo. This population, after the Security Council resolution was adopted in 1999, was not subjected to any dangers. On the contrary, minorities suffered in Kosovo. There were no threats for the Kosovo Albanians in the last eight to nine years. Against this background to declare recognition of Kosovo's independence was wrong, we believe. I very much hope that this situation will not entail a new outbreak of violence in the Balkans, will not entail attempts at a further fragmentation of this space. We are not interested in this. We want to strengthen security in the Balkans with due regard for the interests of all the peoples living there and, of course, on the basis of international law. By the way, President Medvedev's initiative to consider a new Treaty on Euro-Atlantic Security envisages that considering the criteria for conflict settlement in the region must be a part of these discussions. It seems to me that uniform standards would be fully appropriate here.

Question: When is it possible to expect a resumption of direct talks between the US and Iran? How can the United States' statement about starting direct talks be associated with the toughening of the US sanctions against Iran?

Foreign Minister Lavrov: Just a couple of words. We very much appreciate that the Administration of President Barack Obama, in carrying out a comprehensive review of its Iranian policy, is prepared to listen to other countries, including Russia, and to our opinion on how we consider it necessary to act in this direction. We have expressed our view and I am certain that this conversation will continue.

*Transcript of Remarks and Response to Media Questions by Russian Foreign Minister
Sergey Lavrov at Press Conference After Address to Conference on Disarmament,
Geneva, March 7, 2009*

I just read out at the Conference on Disarmament meeting the statement of President of the Russian Federation Dmitry Medvedev, "On Conclusion of an Agreement with the USA to Replace the START Treaty." The document reflects Russia's principled approaches to elaboration of a new full-format agreement with the United States on the further mutually verifiable reduction and limitation of strategic offensive arms.

We welcome the positive signals from the new US administration. We are convinced that, after a long hiatus, Washington's renewed interest in the disarmament process can become a key aspect of a new, positive agenda for both Russian-American relations and multilateral disarmament talks.

We want a future Russian-American agreement on strategic offensive arms to be legally binding in nature, and to limit not only warheads but also their delivery vehicles – intercontinental ballistic missiles, submarine launched ballistic missiles and heavy bombers. We also consider it necessary to exclude possible deployment of strategic offensive arms outside national territory, and to prevent "upload" and "compensatory" potentials alike.

President Medvedev stressed Russia's commitment to the goal of achieving a world free of nuclear weapons, in full accordance with NPT obligations, and our preparedness for talks

with the new American administration.

Besides, we shared the Russian assessments of key nonproliferation, disarmament and arms control issues in the address and affirmed Russia's intention to continue countering any extension of arms race, primarily to outer space. There is a joint Russian-Chinese initiative on this score that is being examined by the participants of the Conference on Disarmament. We declared the readiness to develop the Russian-Chinese initiatives to prevent the placement of weapons of any type in outer space. I am certain that such work will help ensure the predictability of the strategic situation, which I do not doubt all states enjoying the benefits of peaceful space are interested in.

We highly appreciate the weighty contribution of the Conference to the strengthening of international security, we stand for making full use of the potential of this forum and we are interested in the early start of the negotiation process based on a coordinated work program meeting the interests of all member states.

I am convinced that multilateral diplomacy and the readiness for compromises and to overcome the crisis phenomena jointly is the only way to solve the tasks facing the international community, a solid methodological base for achieving real pro-

gress in the disarmament sphere. Much time has been lost. That is why we are disposed to work intensively with the American partners and with all states involved in the activities of the Conference on Disarmament.

Question: What conclusion can be drawn from your talks yesterday with US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton on Middle East settlement? What are Russia's proposals on this issue?

Foreign Minister Lavrov: The conclusion we draw after yesterday's talks with the United States Secretary of State is that solving Middle East problems on the basis of creating a Palestinian state and ensuring the peaceful coexistence of this and all other states of the region with Israel is a realistic proposition. We felt a continuing adherence of the new American administration to just this kind of approach. In the new conditions the situation needs to be reassessed along with deciding on immediate steps. But I am convinced that the strategic goals of creating a Palestinian state and realizing the concept of "two states" – Palestine and Israel – living in peace and security with each other and with all other states remain unchanged. I hope that in the near future, as soon as the formation of a government is completed in Israel, we will fix the date for the Moscow Conference, designed to "re-launch" the peace process, not from zero but based on what has already been achieved by the parties.

Achieving Palestinian unity is a major condition for the effectiveness of work in this direction. We welcome Egypt's efforts to determine conditions for that unity, particularly to forge a government and prepare presidential and parliamentary elections in Palestine. We believe it is a hugely important initiative, and that any other ideas that would run counter to the efforts of Egypt will be counterproductive. That's why our activity is now concentrated on support for Cairo's efforts.

Question: Did the concerns of Russia over the US intention to deploy striking forces in space diminish after yesterday's meeting? At what stage of development is the Draft Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space at this moment?

Foreign Minister Lavrov: I have already answered this question in my opening remarks. As to the position of the United States on non-placement of weapons in outer space, a review of the approaches of the new administration toward all aspects of the disarmament problem is not over, it is continuing. We hope this review results in a position enabling negotiation based on the Russian-Chinese initiative and other initiatives being put forward by states interested in outer space remaining peaceful.

Question: In your statement you supported the initiative to create an international nuclear fuel cycle organization and spoke of forming stocks of low-enriched uranium. Missiles fired on

Lebanon (2006) and Syria (2007) contained warheads with low-enriched uranium. One has the impression that by your statement you close the regime of nuclear weapons which have gone obsolete and open a new era of weapons which leave radioactive contamination after themselves. The United States has repeatedly tested such weapons in Afghanistan, Iraq and other countries. Could you comment upon this?

Foreign Minister Lavrov: I find it very difficult to comment on this, because the statement is very strange. The multilateral centers providing nuclear fuel cycle services will be working under full IAEA control; will be producing not stuff for weapons but fuel for atomic power stations. Hence I discern no link between this highly important initiative, approved by all states, and events in the Middle East, including the use of weapons against civilians.

Question: In your address you spoke of converting the Middle East into a nuclear free zone. How can Israel be drawn into this process?

Foreign Minister Lavrov: As I have said, states parties to the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons spoke in favor of creating a nuclear-weapons-free zone in the Middle East. There are the Security Council decisions backing efforts aimed at creating that zone. I won't speak long about what's obvious. This is a very complicated question linked to many aspects of the evolution of the situation in the Middle East and depending substantially on how the comprehensive Middle Eastern settlement process advances. That's why I can recommend nothing but a continued persistent and patient search for compromise solutions and I am certain that the urgency of this theme not only persists but will also grow as we all advance towards a peaceful arrangement for the Middle East.

Question: Is the feeling of a friendly atmosphere in the course of your meeting yesterday with US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton evidence of something concrete? Will pressing the "reset" button signify a similar "resetting" in the field of strategic arms talks?

Foreign Minister Lavrov: As you understand, the first meeting is always dedicated to getting acquainted with each other. That's the kind of meeting that took place yesterday. The agenda of bilateral relations was discussed in the course of the talks – including regional and international issues. We agreed that not one of the existing questions would be removed from the agenda. I mean both the questions on which our positions are similar and contentious issues which should also not be left without attention. We developed something like a "schedule" envisaging not only meetings between representatives of the Russian and US governments, but also a list of questions which need to be discussed. We agreed to bring considerations to the attention of our presidents regarding what directives

they could give to the relevant departments in Moscow and Washington in order to carry out joint efforts aimed at achieving progress on a whole array of issues. The main priority, chronologically and essentially, is the Strategic Arms Treaty which is set to expire in December this year. We hold that a new such treaty is needed.

Indeed, the meeting passed in a friendly atmosphere. We did not begin talks on the substance of issues. The talks will be harder to conduct, as is the case with any talks in general. But we concurred on the need to focus on key issues of our agenda. As soon as a team of American disarmament negotiators is formed, we will hold a meeting with our partners at the level of expert groups and will endeavor to get a new treaty ready by the end of the year.

Question: Do you consider it necessary to limit the warheads in warehouses? Deploying which types of strategic offensive arms do you think is impermissible outside national territory?

Foreign Minister Lavrov: Regarding the first part of the question, I talked at length about this in my address to the Conference on Disarmament, and also mentioned it here. We hold that all warheads should be limited – not only so called operationally deployable, but also the warheads in warehouses – in order to prevent an upload potential. We think it necessary to limit all strategic offensive arms carriers.

As to nuclear weapons deployment outside national territory, at issue are ground-based nuclear weapons in the first place. The world ocean, in our conviction, will not be an object of any new international legal regulations. The rules that exist in line with present-day international law should fully remain in force.

Question: Was the antimissile shield issue discussed at the meeting with Clinton? Her remarks seem to suggest that the US is prepared to give up deploying a MD system in Europe. Will Russia cooperate with the United States on this issue? Does the Russian Federation intend to toughen its position on Iran's nuclear program?

Foreign Minister Lavrov: We discussed the missile defense issue, and presented our position underlain by a very serious competent analysis of military specialists. If a third positioning area in Eastern Europe is actually created this would involve risks for the strategic interests of the Russian Federation. We would have to take account of measures to alleviate this risk. At the same time, we would prefer not to move in this direction. If, as our American colleagues say, the idea is to counter a threat from the "south," then the offer made by Russia two years ago regarding joint monitoring of these questions with the use of the facilities Russia has (both on its own territory and on the territory of neighboring countries) precisely implies an appropriate action in relation to threats from the "south." We think it advisable in cooperation with

the US and European countries to look at how it is possible to jointly use our intellectual potential instead of relying on this or that decision made in one capital. We are waiting with interest for the results of a study of this matter by the new US administration. It is about the expedience of deploying MD in a specific country and about possible additional schemes to counter threats in relation to the spread of missile technologies and to provide protection from such threats. The very fact of this examination means that the third positioning area in the Czech Republic and Poland does not appear to be the sole option from even the viewpoint of American experts. As I have said, the Obama administration is now studying this matter. Yesterday we asked our US partners to also consider during this review the assessments which Russia has presented. We are prepared to set out our considerations in greater detail in the course of a further discussion of this theme with the American side. Of course, Iran is a separate question. On Iran Russia and the US work jointly in the Group 5+1 format. The group

developed its proposals and presented them to Iran. We hope that the Obama administration's scrutiny of possible approaches to Iran will consider not only US interests, but the point of view of other countries as well and we expect that this will lead to a reinvigoration of the US efforts in search of a political and diplomatic solution.

Question: Is Russian-American military cooperation possible with respect to Iran? In your address you mentioned the incipient progress in the disarmament process. Why did you feel that precisely now?

Foreign Minister Lavrov: Regional conflict situations, including the situation surrounding Iran's nuclear program, have no military solution. That's why we are ready for contacts between the Russian and US military, but it is not about any joint military action to solve such problems. We're also interested in developing military contacts on a bilateral basis in context of the resumption of the work of the Russia-NATO Council on the principles of equal security. First and foremost, we want to develop compatibility of our peacemaking capabilities.

This is a very important area of activity. I think that our military will be in a position to look for possible ways of cooperation here.

As to appraisal of the present moment in international relations, the advent of the Obama administration has, of course, changed the situation because the question of multilateral disarmament is given heightened attention, something we did not observe in the previous administration. Everyone in the world has seen for themselves that the development of events has been acquiring too alarming a character in recent years. An understanding grows of the need for real collective effective steps to reduce tension and to build new limits into the regimes which ensure the nonproliferation of nuclear weapons of mass destruction and prevent their falling into non-state actor hands. The accumulation of all these factors creates the positive critical mass that can – given the general political will – evolve into concrete decisions to ensure progress in the cause of disarmament.

Transcript of Remarks and Response to Media Questions by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov at Joint Press Conference Following Talks with Afghanistan Minister of Foreign Affairs Rangin Dadfar Spanta, Kabul, March 16, 2009

Foreign Minister Lavrov: Esteemed colleagues,

Our present talks are taking place at a very significant moment for Russian-Afghan relations. This month marks 90 years since Russia recognized Afghanistan's independence, and two months from now the 90th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between our countries will be observed. Our relations went through different periods, but the desire for greater friendship and cooperation, as well as mutual respect and support prevail in them.

We advocate intensifying the international economic and social rehabilitation efforts in Afghanistan. Russia contributes concretely to these efforts. Over 140 industry, energy, infrastructure, transport and communications plants are built in Afghanistan with the aid of our country. Russia made a major contribution to forming the defense potential of Afghanistan. Today our experts and companies are working in projects to modernize Naglu HPP and to build several mini-hydros here.

We are working on education assistance to Afghanistan. We will be restoring Kabul Polytechnic University. We are increasing the number of scholarships that are allocated to Afghanistan to train its citizens in Russia's universities and colleges, including in fields related to the struggle against drug trafficking and to the training of law enforcement specialists.

We are providing humanitarian aid to the friendly Afghan people. Eighteen thousand tons of flour has already been delivered this year. Only the day before yesterday one more plane arrived bringing 40 tons of humanitarian cargo.

We are unanimous with our Afghan friends and with the entire world community that terrorism, drug trafficking and the related organized crime are the chief obstacle to Afghanistan's peaceful, constructive development. These threats create problems for this and other regions of the world.

Today we took an important step towards further increasing the effectiveness of the fight against these threats by signing an agreement between the Russian Federation and Afghani-

stan to combat illicit trade of narcotic drugs.

We attach great significance to the upcoming conference on March 27 in Moscow under the aegis of the SCO on countering the terrorist and narco-threat in this region. I am grateful to Mr. Minister, my colleague and friend Spanta for the consent to participate in this event together with foreign ministers from other states.

The chief conclusion from the present talks is that Russia and Afghanistan are disposed to further strengthen friendship and develop our cooperation in all fields.

I thank Mr. Spanta for the hospitality and invite him to make a reciprocal visit to the Russian Federation.

Question: How do you see the participation of Russia in resolving the situation in the region today, considering that the Afghan problem can no longer be tackled without taking account of the situation in Pakistan?

Foreign Minister Lavrov (replies after Spanta): Russia is interested in raising the effectiveness of international efforts to resolve the situation in and around Afghanistan. Our initiative to hold the SCO-sponsored Moscow Conference and the readiness to help raise the effectiveness of the activities of the International Security Assistance Force are proof of this. The decisions are already taken. We are also ready to discuss extra measures. We actively support involving in these efforts all of Afghanistan's neighbors without exception. In particular, all countries adjoining Afghanistan, including the Central Asian states, Iran and Pakistan are invited to the Moscow Conference. We consider this to be very important and want all these countries to be further involved in the world community efforts of support for Afghanistan in solving its problems. We also welcome the dialogue that is evolving between Afghanistan and Iran and between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Question: What will the reaction of Russia be if the international community requests it to send troops to Afghanistan? How do you assess the situation in Afghanistan today, eight

years after the overthrow of Taliban rule?

Foreign Minister Lavrov: I can at once say that the international community isn't asking the Russian Federation to send troops to Afghanistan. Such actions are not being planned. We want the international contingents already here to act in full agreement with the leadership of Afghanistan, their legal status within the territory of this country to be properly formalized and all of their activities to be directed at the soonest eradication of the terrorist and narcotic threats in and around Afghanistan. The success of their mission in Afghanistan will help reduce the acuteness of these threats outside it. Apart from sending troops to Afghanistan, there are many other concrete practical measures aimed at solving the problems of this country. Russia will actively participate in carrying them out. In so doing we will take into account the position of the Government of Afghanistan urging the international community to pay more attention to the socioeconomic reconstruction of the country, the training of national personnel and the strengthening of government structures.

As to the situation inside Afghanistan, this is primarily an internal matter of the Afghans themselves. For our part we

want this situation to evolve constructively and give no occasion for extremists to try and undermine the positive tendencies and especially the election process now unfolding in Afghanistan. We expect the executive and legislative branches of Afghanistan to do everything to prevent such destabilization.

Question: As is known, Russia gave NATO countries the possibility to ship nonmilitary cargo via its territory. Is Russia prepared to consider the possibility of transit of military cargo, in particular, military equipment?

Foreign Minister Lavrov: Regarding the extra measures that may be taken by Russia to render support to Afghanistan, I have already said in my opening remarks and in response to the previous question.

Question: What can you say about the upcoming elections in Afghanistan and with regard to Afghanistan's request that Russia as successor to the Soviet Union offer compensation for destruction inflicted?

Foreign Minister Lavrov: Regarding the latter part of the question – I have not heard that this question was officially raised somewhere. As I have said, we want to render comprehensive assistance to Afghanistan at this complicated

stage of its development. Economically and financially we have done quite a lot. Where finances and the alleviation of the debt burden of Afghanistan are concerned, Russia has done more than any other country.

As to preparations for this year's presidential and provincial elections, this question is, of course, one of the key issues for the domestic political agenda of Afghanistan. It has also received wide international coverage. This is understandable, given the sincere interest of the world community in seeing Afghanistan develop in an ongoing, stable manner without any destabilizing moments. We hope that it is from this vantage point that the Afghans themselves will do preparatory work for the elections, and that no outside interference in this process occurs. We support the Afghan leaders' position. I also felt it in today's conversations with the speakers of both houses of the Afghan parliament. This position aims to prevent extremists from rocking the boat at this complicated stage in the country.

Transcript of Remarks and Response to Media Questions by Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Sergey Lavrov at Joint Press Conference Following Talks with Ojo Maduekwe, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Nigeria, Moscow, March 17, 2009

Foreign Minister Lavrov: Esteemed colleagues, I am glad to welcome my Nigerian counterpart Ojo Maduekwe to Moscow. We have held substantive and productive talks. The approaches of our countries to pressing international and regional problems are close, and in most cases coincide. Both Russia and Nigeria advocate strict and universal observance of the norms and principles of international law, and a stronger central role for the United Nations, particularly the effective UN reformation with regard for the interests of developing, including African countries. We are also united by a striving to help create a new secure, democratic and fair world order in both the political and economic sphere. Of course, we also discussed the situation in Africa. In tackling its problems along with efforts by African countries themselves which we actively support, the continent still requires assistance from the world community, particularly with regard to the commitments to aid Africa that were elaborated in the framework of the UN Millennium Development Goals. We are sincerely interested in supporting the efforts of African countries to settle the various conflicts on the continent. We appreciate and support the active leading role of Nigeria on a number of conflict situations. We are going to make extra efforts to render assistance to the work of our Nigerian friends. We thoroughly reviewed the state of and prospects for our bilateral relations. Nigeria today holds second place in trade among Russia's sub-Saharan partners. We hope that the Intergovernmental Commission on Economic and Scientific-Technical Cooperation, which is resuming its work tomorrow, will arrive at agreements that will enable more active use of the very rich potential that both Russia and Nigeria possess in the trade and economic field, in the sphere of implementing large investment projects, including projects related to the

development of the infrastructure of Nigeria, the ferrous and nonferrous metals industry, electric power, including perhaps nuclear energy, and the extraction of hydrocarbon and other mineral raw materials. We agreed to speed up work on modernizing the juridical base of our relations. A whole array of important draft documents are in the stage of elaboration, including an agreement on the encouragement and protection of investment.

By and large, we are convinced that Russian-Nigerian relations have very good prospects. I am certain that the visit of Ojo Maduekwe will contribute to the maximally effective realization of these possibilities.

Question: Will you please comment on the situation in Madagascar? How may the world community react to it, in your opinion?

Foreign Minister Lavrov: We are, of course, concerned by the increased frequency of attempts on the African continent to resort to non-constitutional methods of solving internal political problems. Attempts to resort to methods of force for these purposes are all the more a cause for profound concern. Such actions not only lead to an exacerbation of economic and social problems, the aggravation of the social and economic position of the population of the relevant African countries that already experiences serious difficulties, but also run counter to the principles of democracy, which were endorsed within the framework of the African Union by all countries of the continent.

We hope that such attempts will be brought to an end and that every effort will be made to bring the situation back into the constitutional channel. We support the principled position of the African Union on this issue.

*Transcript of Remarks and Response to Questions by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs
Sergey Lavrov at Brussels Forum 2009, Brussels, March 21, 2009*

Philip Stephens (moderator): I'm going to start with a question to Mr. Lavrov and it's this. We've heard recently from the Russian President that Russia wants a new set of security arrangements for Europe. A lot of the reaction in Europe to that has been one, what does it mean. There hasn't been enough detail. And two, is this another Russian way of trying to detach us from NATO?

I wonder Mr. Lavrov, whether you'd explain to us what the plan is and how it fits with the security architecture we already have.

Foreign Minister Lavrov: Thank you very much and this is certainly a new question.

Well, do we feel secure in the Euro-Atlantic area? Yes, we have organizations, several of them. We have assumed political commitments. We have the principles enshrined in OSCE documents and in Russia-NATO Council documents. They are related to the indivisibility of security as one of the most important principles (and of course not to mention territorial integrity and sovereignty).

No one challenges these principles. But some of them, especially those related to hard security exist in the form of political commitments, and they don't seem to be working. They haven't been working for quite a long time – ever since the demise of the Soviet Union, when the arrangements and political commitments were first and foremost not to expand NATO.

Then, when the first wave of NATO expansion did take place, an agreement was reached, stipulating that the alliance would not put any substantial combat forces in the new member countries. This wasn't delivered either.

They next assured us that the NATO expansion aimed to encompass Eastern Europe and the Baltic States only. So don't you worry, they said, because this move will solidify security and these countries, with their understandable fears and historical memory, will feel safe in the NATO fold and "won't be nervous any more." None of this happened.

The principle of the indivisibility of security says that no country should secure itself at the expense of another. It has been adopted at the top level in the OSCE and the Russia-NATO Council, but we just don't see it being used in practice. And I won't mention the military bases now deployed very close to Russian territory; I won't mention the certain moves related to missile defense. You know all this.

So if we still abide by these principles, our suggestion is let's get together and make them legally binding. About a year ago, at the Russia-NATO summit in Bucharest, we sought to have a joint

declaration adopted, but it did not meet with approval, because of a disagreement over restating, as in the Russia-NATO Council basic documents, that no one should secure himself at the expense of another.

We do of course have questions. Why is that so? We just want to check whether the endorsed principles concerning military-political security are still valid for all members of the Euro-Atlantic area. And if they are, why shouldn't they be made legally binding?

Plus we want in this new exercise and in a new Treaty, to agree on criteria for conflict settlement, so that we don't have one standard for Kosovo and another for everything else.

It has to be noted that the arms control process is also in a state of crisis. Our NATO colleagues failed to ratify the Adapted CFE Treaty under farfetched pretexts, trying again and again to mix the legally binding CFE Treaty and political commitments together into one pile. Later, when Russia also fulfilled these political commitments, known as the Istanbul Commitments, new interpretations of what should be done for NATO to ratify the Adapted CFE Treaty emerged.

So we also want in this exercise to agree on the principles for arms control and to make them legally binding. This is not to substitute for efforts to revive the CFE regime. But we do want this CFE effort to continue and not be limited to the Russian-US dialogue. Europeans should participate in this work, because it is about conventional forces in Europe after all, and we count on their active involvement in this endeavor. In this context we welcome the initiative by Frank-Walter Steinmeier, to convene a high-level meeting of experts in Germany in June this year to consider the situation surrounding the CFE Treaty.

At issue is reaffirmation of the principle of indivisibility of security; the creation of mechanisms to be activated when any participant of this arrangement feels insecure; the criteria for conflict settlement, and principles for arms control. And of course in the new treaty proposed by us, a new quality of cooperation could find reflection, cooperation in countering terrorism, ensuring the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and addressing the other threats and challenges which we all face today.

Why not do it within the existing structures? The answer is simple: NATO cares solely for the security of its own members, as does the Collective Security Treaty Organization. The CIS and the European Union, with its European Security and Defense Policy – all these structures represent clubs or organizations created for their own security.

The OSCE is a universal organization, and no one questions its principles – including Russia. But the OSCE has been neglectful of hard security issues for a long time now. Although the OSCE has the Forum for Security Cooperation and the Annual Security Review Conference purportedly to discuss these issues, there is no movement here. We want to change this situation. We are striving to reactivate the OSCE, which has been really neglectful of these issues hitherto. At the end of June I am planning to visit Vienna to attend the Security Review Conference.

There is a second problem with the OSCE: it embraces countries, but no organizations. We believe that a new treaty must be negotiated by all member states, plus all the organizations active in the realm of security within our common space.

Lastly, speaking of commitments and legal obligations, the OSCE is not a legally binding organization. Like the Russia-NATO Council, it only has political commitments, not legally binding obligations. Contrastingly, the obligations in NATO are legally binding. This gives rise to different security levels.

So basically this is the thinking behind our idea.

Q&A Session:

Foreign Minister Lavrov (speaks after the opening comments of Javier Solana): We want not only the OSCE, but also all security organizations in this space to be involved in these efforts.

Secondly, regarding the three security dimensions and that you can only move on with all three dimensions being considered in a package, no one questions the humanitarian or economic basket of the OSCE. The humanitarian part of the OSCE has its own mechanisms which work and which produce results – with difficulty at times, but they do work. In the hard security area, it is a total zero.

And by the way if we are to speak about the linkages between hard security and soft security – when the negotiations on the missile defense facilities in Europe were under way, did anyone link that with human rights or democracy? What was the linkage with the third basket, when the military bases were being created in Romania and Bulgaria?

So let's just try to grasp that there is a real failure in the hard security area. We want to fix things in this domain without challenging the comprehensive approach towards security. Let's just remove this disbalance.

Question: Mr. Lavrov, you said in your introduction that there had been some agreements in 1989 or in 1991 at the time of the breakup of the Soviet Union. And one of them was not to expand NATO and the other one was not to have

any US or Western military forces in any ex-Warsaw Pact countries. First of all I'm not aware that there were any such agreements made. Perhaps they were oral. My question for you is this. In what way does NATO now threaten Russia?

Foreign Minister Lavrov: The question was asked and I will say yes. Yes, unfortunately those were oral promises and commitments. But very firm oral promises.

And basically I think we were naive. Those who were taking those promises were naive. I've read transcripts of the top-level negotiations. I know what I am talking about. And the naivety stemmed from the conviction that after the Soviet Union the world was set for a new era and everyone was going to be brothers and sisters. It didn't happen. But yes, those were oral commitments.

As to the presence of the US forces in Eastern Europe, two military bases are under construction – in Romania and Bulgaria. And this is a fact; it's not an oral form, but quite material.

As to whether NATO now threatens Russia, the arrangements reached in the 1990s between Russia and NATO were that the Russia-NATO Council is not "26 plus one," but "27 members" and that each country should participate in its national capacity. Of course that never worked in practice, which is another problem that we have.

We regard NATO as a reality. We want to cooperate with it and see the potential for this cooperation: Afghanistan, joint airspace control, a whole array of other fields – compatibility of peacekeeping forces, etc. But we also don't like that NATO takes it upon itself to judge everyone and everything. And that NATO bombed Yugoslavia without any legal justification, without okay from the Security Council and in violation of the United Nations Charter. The new NATO strategy or doctrine – in principle, it's an open material – includes more and more scenarios where force could be used, not necessarily with Security Council authorization. This bothers us because we do believe that international law ought to be universally applied and that there should be no privileged security areas.

We just don't understand why NATO is expanding. We don't understand why this military infrastructure is being moved to our borders. Missile defense is a separate issue. During the course of the last few years, we have been quietly reducing our military presence in the Kaliningrad area. And yet we are going to have a third positioning area of the US global missile defense system?

And of course we don't understand why NATO or some NATO members are in effect pushing Ukraine into the alliance when only 18 percent of the Ukrainian people support the entry. And why NATO is still saying that Georgia should become a NATO member, even though the current Georgian regime used brutal force in violation of all its international obligations.

And my very last point, I think that, frankly, I don't want to make it a secret – before Mr. Saakashvili gave orders to attack South Ossetia, we had been talking very intensively with Condoleezza Rice. And I had kept asking repeatedly: Why don't you persuade them to sign a nonuse of force agreement? Why don't you stop providing them with offensive arms? And she told me, don't you worry. And I also said, with all this, why are you pulling them into NATO? And she said, don't you worry, if he uses force, he could forget about NATO. Okay, he did use force.

I agree that any country has the sovereign right to choose its partners and to choose those with whom to enter into alliance. Take Ukraine. I said that public opinion polls indicated less than 20 percent of Ukrainians want NATO membership. In the case of Georgia NATO was recently called a "school for democracy." But what sort of democracy is it that starts an aggression and deprives hundreds upon hundreds of civilians of their lives? I leave this to NATO members to clarify.

But I certainly want to pick on OSCE problems. Yes, consensus means that everyone has a veto. That's the case, except the "consensus minus one" arrangement which is applied to human rights violations. As far as I remember, this "consensus minus one" mechanism was agreed in Moscow in 1991 just after the putsch and just before the disintegration of the Soviet Union, and it continues to operate.

Yes, the OSCE needs some revamping. And for three or four, maybe five years Russia together with several other nations has been promoting the idea of negotiations to adopt an OSCE charter. It is called an organization, but it is not an organization. It does not have legal capacity. We have submitted a number of documents which, if agreed, would bring more transparency in OSCE actions, including election monitoring, cooperation with nongovernmental organizations, appointment of field missions and their mandates. We want these field missions to be in line with the existing documents.

We also want to do something about the unacceptable situation with the OSCE budget, where any country can just say it wants to make an extra-budgetary contribution for a specific project in country X. And this offer, without going to the Permanent Council or any intergovernmental body, immediately gets OSCE project status. So anyone can do anything in any country and receive an OSCE umbrella. This is wrong. It gives rise to unnecessary suspicions. And when people don't want to consider those modalities for the OSCE to become transparent and clear to everybody, we tend to think that these people just want to use the OSCE, with its very vague rules and practices, for the purposes which are not OSCE-endorsed purposes.

Foreign Minister Lavrov: Yes, I agree

making something a law does not mean that security would be ensured. International law, including the UN Charter, has been repeatedly violated. But I do believe that at least we should try to be honest to each other. And if we assume some political commitments, which remain in force, then we may try to do it. And if we are, all of us, still committed to those political arrangements, then why not make them legally binding and why not, together with NATO, with the OSCE, with the Collective Security Treaty Organization, with the Russia-NATO Council after all, and with the European Union of course, have a look at whether we can develop mechanisms which will not affect all these organizations with their own rules, but will be acceptable to all and applicable by all. We don't have an answer how this might work and whether it would work at all. But we believe it is worth a try.

I agree that to speak of the Treaty today is premature. What we want is to discuss the substance of these problems and try to see whether people would be really interested in making sure that everyone is comfortable. Javier did recognize that the current situation suits most Europeans. It does the Americans. But the third pillar – as you called us – of European security, Russia is not comfortable.

It is an invitation to a dialogue like this. And I would really welcome a phase of these discussions, perhaps later down the road, when we answered all questions and started developing some constructive ideas. There is a hope that this will happen. We have already encouraged some think tanks in Russia, Germany and France. And they're working together, arranging for a series of conferences to advance a variety of ideas. In any case, we just want a second opinion on everything: on missile defense, on the Istanbul commitments linked to the CFE, and on the expansion of NATO as a space of democracy and security.

Question: Mr. Lavrov, what's your level of ambition for these new security arrangements? Are they really about Russia having the right of veto on hard security arrangements on the continent of Europe, what you referred to as second opinion? Or could they really be used to forge a common position between NATO and Russia in terms of common external threats outside Europe, for example, nonproliferation with regard to Iran, also North Korea?

Foreign Minister Lavrov: No to the first question, yes to the second one, but not only with regard to Iran and North Korea. It is about our own feeling of security. Yes, to forge a common position. I just said we don't have any recipes, we want an honest discussion.

On forgetting history, if it is about forgetting the basis of Russia-NATO cooperation then it's some honest discussion I would say. So I hope this is not an invitation to forget everything which we committed ourselves to. And I already quoted some examples when these commit-

ments were not delivered on the other side of the Russia-NATO Council.

Secondly, we are not perfect. Nobody's perfect, as the line goes from the famous movie. And I hope that this is also realized by everyone, including our American partners. The message which President Obama sent yesterday to the Iranian people and government, I believe, is an example of how people should be self-critical, including the people at the very top. And this is an example to follow.

On missile defense we are generally in favor of joint cooperation on an equal basis. But we are told that this is a particular issue, that a threat from the south to Europe and to the United States can only be repulsed by this particular response, and when we try to provide our own analysis, offering alternatives, they tell us that maybe this can also be handy, but the major part of the system will be theirs. Even in the United States, the Budget Office of Congress circulated a report which has at least three alternatives to the third positioning area in Poland and the Czech Republic. American scientists speak about using drones to counter the threat of a missile attack in West Asia and East Asia. Yes, we are ready to cooperate on those threats. We take them seriously. But we want to cooperate on an honest basis where no one by definition or ex officio has any intellectual priority. Let's think together.

On Siberia and the Russian Far East, we are indeed going to enhance our investment in those areas. We welcome foreign investments including from Japan, South Korea. We are discussing specific projects and the attraction of businesses. Javier, in August 2008 you said you were concerned. We were outraged. It was a blatant aggression violating the international commitments of Georgia to which President Saakashvili had subscribed and he gave orders to kill peacekeepers and civilians. So I can agree that it was an absolutely unacceptable behavior and I hope – this, by the way, concerns our proposals for the discussion of European security – that we will reiterate in a legally binding document that no one should use force to resolve conflicts under international observation.

And lastly with regard to your concern about the gas crisis, I hope that you will also talk to the transit countries. Two years ago when this happened for the first time, you in Brussels suggested that we should develop an early warning mechanism. We said, "Fine, yes, but let's include the transit countries in this early warning mechanism." There was no reaction from Brussels, and there is still none. I don't know how this was discussed and why we lost all this time and did not develop this early warning thing involving the producers, consumers and the transit countries.

By the way, if you look at the eastern part of Russia, you will see that we sell hydrocarbons to China. We have now begun to sell liquefied gas to Japan, we

have many customers there and there never was an interruption in supply. So can you think of why this is happening, why it's only in the western direction that we have an interruption every now and then? We are prepared to discuss this openly, we think we reached a fair deal with our Ukrainian colleagues, a deal was welcomed by Europe having helped to negotiate it; so let's stick to these deals, and let's just make sure that everyone is involved in this early warning mechanism and hopefully in its functioning smoothly.

Tomas Moneretas: Could Russia try to seduce its neighbors instead of threatening them?

Foreign Minister Lavrov: On this one the answer's very easy. Seriously speaking I believe, I mean if you want to make a funny point and to be happy with yourself, you have the right to do so. I want Russia to be understood. Russian foreign policy is not about fear; it's about fairness. That's what we want. And when we, every now and then, see unfairness in dealing with our partners, when promises are being broken, commitments are not delivered we do have concerns.

And what I would also say, following up on what Javier said now, yes, between Russia and the European Union and between Russia and NATO we have documents on which we base our relationships and those are very valuable relationships. With you we have the four common spaces and the four roadmaps to build those four common spaces, and we stated in that very important document that integration processes in the entire Soviet space and in the European Union should be compatible, they should not be mutually exclusive and they should be mutually supportive.

Besides, Javier mentioned the Eastern Partnership. We are accused of trying to intimidate or pressure others. What is the Eastern Partnership? Is it not a case of intimidating and pressuring others, including Belarus which you care so much about – this we would like to understand? And when my good friend, Karel Schwarzenberg, publicly says that in the case of recognition by Belarus it can forget about the Eastern Partnership, how are we to call this – threats, blackmail or democracy at work?

We were told originally that the Eastern Partnership is about cooperation, including with Russian participation to some extent. And then after this type of statements we have questions – is it about pulling countries from the positions which they are supposed to take freely?

And one more remark concerning Russia, NATO, Afghanistan and mutual interest: our Ambassador, who is in this room, has been trying recently to get consent that Russia could be part of the format which NATO uses to discuss Afghanistan with the Central Asian countries. It took him a lot just to make the point. If you want us to cooperate on Afghanistan why do you talk to us separately and to Central Asia separately;

why not hold talks between NATO and the Collective Security Treaty Organization, which is very active in suppressing the drug trafficking in Afghanistan? We have been knocking on the NATO door with this question for five years now.

I will address the three comments made. On the privileged relationship we have repeatedly explained that we cannot consider countries with whom we are bound by centuries-old relations as something not important to us. By the same token Russia is a privileged territory for them. They have millions of their migrant workers earning their salaries in Russia to help their families. The links among us are so numerous that it's impossible to ignore it and I hope this is understood.

We're not against any one of our neighbors having good relations, common projects and tasks with the European Union. We have been talking to the EU for the last several years, explaining to them that isolating Belarus is a mistake. We have been talking to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, where Belarus was temporarily deprived of its status as an invited guest. To rectify this situation, we will promote a conference between Belarus and the European structures – so we have nothing against this. On the contrary we will only benefit if both Russia and the European Union stick to the principle "we don't play games in this neighborhood and we do not serve countries with the wrong ultimatums of 'you're either with us, or against us'."

Several years ago there were voices from one of the European capitals close by, saying exactly this: that these countries must decide who they are with. We don't want situations where some of our western friends travelling in Central Asia would tell the receiving presidents, "You have to choose. You're either going to be a colony of Russia or you will be part of the free world." This is unacceptable. It is a game in which the lawful rights of these countries are totally ignored and no respect is shown for the countries themselves. So the answer is, yes, we want to do it together, we want to do it openly, we understand the interest of the European Union and the United States in Central Asia: it's about hydrocarbons, it's about transit routes, it's about fighting terrorism and it's about nonproliferation. So we understand the interests, but we want these interests to be promoted by understandable and transparent means, not by some under the carpet whispering into their ears.

I understand these emotions. I can only say I hope the Georgian people will eventually have leaders who will put the interests of the Georgian people at the top of the list and not give orders to kill people whom they themselves declared to be their citizens, and who will respect their neighbors and live in peace with everybody.

On Iran I would only say I agree with what Javier said. What to do to make

sure that Iran does not have a nuclear bomb – first of all there is no proof that Iran has ever intended to make the bomb. So long as the IAEA works in Iran, it monitors all the centrifuges producing low enriched uranium for fuel purposes. To convert it into weapons-grade uranium you need to do manipula-

tions which would immediately be spotted by IAEA cameras; or if the cameras are switched off, we will also know that something took place which is wrong.

It's negotiations, it's respect and it's engagement of Iran in all the areas which we have indicated in the Three

Plus Three paper offered to Iran, including security dialogue, not only on Iraq, which is natural, but on the entire spectrum of problems in the Near and Middle East: Palestine, Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon. Iran must be engaged as a constructive part of the solution, not as part of the problem.

Transcript of Concluding Remarks by Russian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Alexei Borodavkin at the Special Conference on Afghanistan convened under the aegis of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Moscow, March 27, 2009

The Special Conference on Afghanistan convened under the aegis of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization has just concluded its work. Many states, including non-SCO members, and international organizations, among them the United Nations, took part. This is evidence of the fact that the SCO has become the international platform on which it is advisable and useful to discuss the problems facing the struggle against terrorism, the narcoterror and organized crime in the region surrounding Afghanistan.

During the conference, many interesting judgments and recommendations were voiced. It is gratifying that all colleagues and partners listened to and heeded these recommendations. I think that this is a new attitude in the international community to the opinion of the region surrounding Afghanistan, to the opinion of the neighbors bordering that country.

It seems to me that through all the statements ran the thought that efforts by the international community in stabilizing Afghanistan need rethinking. In this regard, the SCO Conference has constituted an important stage of the commencement of this work.

I believe it is clear to all that the efforts of the government of Afghanistan on security and the revival of statehood need additional help from the international community. Further, as the conference has confirmed, the neighbors of the country stand ready to assist Kabul, having a vital stake in an Afghan settlement, because they suffer from the terrorism

and drug trafficking threats spreading to both Central and South Asia.

As the debate has shown, all participants have voiced interest in seeing Afghanistan and Pakistan closely cooperate in an uncompromising struggle against terrorist structures within their territory.

It is understandable that normalizing the situation in Afghanistan with the backing of the international community, including the neighboring countries and regional organizations, presupposes a comprehensive approach that combines use of force to suppress terrorism and the illicit drugs trade with assistance to the economic and social reconstruction of the country. It is gratifying that many conference participants have affirmed the readiness to give Afghanistan such assistance on an increasing scale.

Presidential and provincial elections will constitute the most important political event of this year in Afghanistan. Conference participants were unanimous in the view that their results should reflect the real will of the Afghan people. In this case a power vacuum should not be allowed to occur in Afghanistan during the pre-election period, which extremists will not fail to use to destabilize the situation in the country.

The thought has resounded clearly that the UN Security Council's sanctions regime should continue to serve as a reliable shield against extremists' penetration into power in Afghanistan. Attempts to strike a deal with terrorist leaders should not be substituted for efforts de-

serving support, the efforts aimed at national reconciliation in Afghanistan.

Essentially, all speakers have correctly pointed out the necessity to raise the coordination of international assistance efforts in Afghanistan to a qualitatively new level, with the UN playing a key role. It was emphasized that in this context it is necessary to cast aside political prejudice and bias, to act jointly and to combine the capabilities of all states and all organizations.

Conference participants have acknowledged the importance of activating the SCO's capacities not just as a platform for dialogue on Afghan problems, but also as a promising participant of the international mechanism of practical cooperation in the fight against terrorist and narcotic threats. I want to highlight the interest which the conference participants have shown in the SCO-Afghanistan Statement and Plan of Action on combating terrorism, drug trafficking and organized crime. We have invited all concerned members of the international community – both states and international organizations – to take part in the implementation of the measures that are laid down in the Statement and Plan of Action.

After the Moscow conference, which has ended today, a forum in The Hague will follow where we shall be able to continue the all-round discussion of Afghan and regional problems. Such a broad international dialogue free of recent prejudice, involving all who can and want to help, is an important prerequisite for a successful resolution of the problems facing the international community.

A joint Declaration has been adopted at the end of the conference. I think you will be able to acquaint yourselves with it.

Statement by Russian MFA Spokesman Andrei Nesterenko Regarding the Issuance by International Criminal Court of an Arrest Warrant against Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir

On March 4, the Pre-Trial Chamber of the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for Omar al-Bashir, President of the Republic of Sudan, upon request from ICC Prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo as part of the investigation of the situation in the Sudanese province of Darfur, referred to the ICC by UN Security Council resolution 1593 (2005).

It has to be noted that the ICC Prosecutor's July 2008 request for an arrest warrant against al-Bashir had been received by the African and Arab communities with concern about the possible adverse implications for a peaceful settlement in

Sudan that this move could entail. The African Union, LAS, OIC and NAM had appealed to the UN Security Council to use the right envisaged by Article 16 of the Rome Statute to defer investigation or prosecution for one year.

The Russian side, guided by the interests of advancing a peaceful settlement in Darfur while ensuring justice and the norms of international law, treated that position with understanding. The question is on the UNSC agenda and Russia intends to take the most active part in its discussion.

It should also be remembered that Omar

al-Bashir as the head of a state which is not a party to the Rome Statute of the ICC enjoys the immunities of a top state official under general international law.

We hope that the leadership of Sudan in this situation will continue to search for a negotiated solution to the problem of Darfur in cooperation with the UN, African Union and other mediators. We are convinced that the Darfur conflict can only be settled politically, taking into consideration the interests of the sides, with an indispensable respect for the sovereignty, unity, independence and territorial integrity of Sudan. We stand ready to continue facilitating attainment of this objective.