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STATEMENT

by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation

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at the 68th Session of the UN General Assembly

September 27, 2013

Distinguished Mr. President,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

The international relations become increasingly complex and multi-dimensional while the developments in the world are even more rapid and less predictable. Under these circumstances as never before there is an urgent task to agree upon collective responses to the key issues of today. It is solely within the power of such a truly universal organization as the UN to address this task. Moreover, these solidarity efforts might be productive only if they reflect all the spectrum of views of the international community on the global challenges and threats, all historical experience and all cultural and civilizational diversity of the modern world.

For most of the members of the United Nations family this approach is an axiom. However, there is also another tendency within which the collective actions are understood primarily as the agreement with the viewpoint of one group of countries. Such views transpire in various areas – on issues of international security, settlement of the conflict situations, functioning of the world economy, the choice of the development models and core values.

Many problems of today's world have been reflected in the tragic situation in Syria and ambiguous development of events in the Middle East and North Africa on the whole. From the very beginning of the turmoil in this region Russia has consistently called for the elaboration of a common approach by the international

community, which would combine the support to the Arab peoples on the way of transformations and the understanding of the fact that objectively these processes would be lengthy and sometimes painful and that it would be quite important not to harm them by rude outside interference. We have emphasized the need to act in a balanced way and take into account that complex developments are taking place, which are associated, among other things, with a strenuous search for compromises among various ethnic and religious groups that make up the mosaic of the Arab societies. We have called consistently for the choice of the evolutionary way of development and peaceful settlement of crises through national dialogue and reconciliation.

Another point of view has manifested itself in the attempts to determine who is legitimate or is not among the leaders of the MENA region and impose the opinion regarding which side should be supported in the domestic national conflicts, and dictate from outside the ready-made prescriptions for democratic transformation.

The desire to portray in a simplified way the developments in the Arab worlds as the struggle of democracies against tyrannies or the good against the evil has long obscured the problems associated with the rising wave of extremism which spills over to other regions today as well. The terrorist attacks in Kenya have demonstrated all the gravity of this threat. It is common knowledge that the jihadist groups that comprise quite a few radicals coming from all parts of the world are the most combat-capable units of the opposition. The goals they pursue have nothing to

do with democracy and are based on intolerance and aimed at destruction of secular States and establishment of caliphates. It is hard to call as far-sighted the policy which on substance either mounts military persistence as in Mali or provides to the same groups support as in Syria.

The use of chemical weapons is admissible. This does not mean, however, that one can usurp the right to accuse and pass verdicts. All the incidents associated with the use of chemical weapons by whoever that might be in Syria must be investigated in a professional and unbiased manner and then examined by the UN Security Council exclusively on the basis of facts, rather than allegations and assumptions.

Recently, a common argument has been increasingly used to prove that the threat or use of force directly prohibited by the UN Charter is nearly the most effective method to address international problems, including settlement of national domestic conflicts. There are attempts to extrapolate such an approach also to the situation in Syria. This happens despite the fact that all the experience of such interventions with the use of force in the recent years has proven that they are ineffective, meaningless and destructive. This is an extremely dangerous path leading to the erosion of the foundations of today's world order and subversion of the WMD non-proliferation regimes.

It is alarming to hear the statements on the right to use military force to ensure one's own interests in the Middle East region under the pretext of the "remaining demand for leadership" in the international affairs. All the recent history testifies that

no State - no matter how big or powerful - can cope alone with the challenges of that scope faced by mankind today.

There is no doubt that leadership is required. However, today it can be only the collective leadership based on the agreed upon actions of the leading member of the international community with strict respect of the principles and norms of the international Law.

The growing understanding of this reality has opened the way towards achieving Russia-U.S. understandings on putting under international control and subsequent elimination of the Syrian chemical arsenals. This became possible thanks to the decision by Damascus to join the Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and fulfill relevant obligations following the expedited procedure. We expect that the decisions by the OPCW Executive Council and the UN Security Council will contribute to establishing a required framework for elimination of chemical arsenals in Syria.

The progress in chemical disarmament in Syria should give an impetus to implementation of the existing arrangements to convene a conference on establishing a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and means of their delivery in the Middle East. There are a number of complicated issues related to ensuring full participation of the countries of the region in the conference, but they cannot be referred to indefinitely. This is exactly the case when true leadership and will must be demonstrated for the common benefit.

People continue to die and peaceful civilians suffer every day in Syria. The religious minorities including Christian communities become victims of this conflict, which increasingly acquires a sectarian character. Virtually the only possibility today to put an end to this turmoil is to move from a deadlock the process of political settlement of the Syrian crisis. Russia continues to work energetically for the earliest convening of a peace conference to implement the Geneva Communiqué of July 30, 2012. We hope that following the government of Syria the opposition will also constructively respond to the Russia – U.S. initiative.

The Syrian crisis should not overshadow the task of addressing the Palestinian problem. We expect that the Israeli and Palestinian leaders will stand up to the level of their responsibility for the future of their people at the current critical stage when the parties resumed direct talks after a lengthy interruption. Duly recognizing the U.S. efforts in the Middle East settlement we believe it is necessary to intensify the activity of the Quartet, which remains the internationally recognized mechanism of assistance to the peace process in the region on the basis of the relevant decisions of the UN, the Madrid principles and the Arab Peace Initiative. It is also important to ensure a close involvement of the Arab countries in the activities of the Quartet.

The approaches based on negotiation are required as well with respect to other situations, including the Iranian nuclear program and the nuclear problem of the Korean Peninsula. As President Vladimir Putin noted in the recent article published in

the New York Times – we must stop using the language of force and return to the path of civilized diplomatic and political settlement.

This would help improve the international environment and contribute to increasing collective efforts to counter the global challenges, including terrorism and drug trafficking. Russia intends to pay a priority attention to these tasks during its presidency in the G8 in 2014. Today when the solid frame of the bipolar system has been long relegated to the past, the strengthening of the democratic foundations both within the States and in the international relations is becoming the sign of the times. This means in particular that the recognition of the right of peoples to independently determine their destiny and to choose the optimal forms of social and political structure and social and economic systems should become an undisputable norm of conduct. In the same way, the complex of exclusiveness and supremacy of one's own customs in the human rights area should be abandoned and instead the universal criteria enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights should be used as a guideline. Moreover, it is important to respect the traditional values that are common for all the religions.

It is obvious that a genuine partnership is hardly achievable without relying on the foundations of economic cooperation. The prevailing majority of States is interacting within the WTO and in this sense they are operating already in the common economic space. This creates the prerequisites for working towards harmonization of integration processes in various regions of the world instead of

trying to artificially confront them against each other by creating new division lines. Russia proceeds exactly from this understanding in its joint work with its partners towards the establishment of the Eurasian economic union.

Russia attaches a great importance to achieving the Millennium Development Goals and drafting on their basis the global development agenda for the period after 2015. Its main priorities are – the eradication of poverty and support to economic growth through expanding the investment opportunities and creating new jobs. Enhancement of energy and transport infrastructure, fight against infectious diseases and road safety are among the most urgent issues.

Cooperation between States should rely on efficient mechanisms and sufficient resource basis. We support in this context the further strengthening of the coordinating role and potential of the UN Economic and Social Council. During its presidency in the Group of 20, Russia is consistently conducting its policy towards the development of its interaction with the United Nations. We consider the resolution of the General Assembly on the relations between the UN and G20 to be a realistic program of cooperation for a long-term perspective.

I firmly believe that by joining our efforts on the basis of true respect and taking account of the interests of all and everyone we will be able to move forward towards achieving the high goals proclaimed in the UN Charter.