

Statement by H.E. Mr. Sergey V. LAVROV, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, at the 72nd session of the UN General Assembly

21 September 2017

Distinguished Mr. President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Last December, the UN General Assembly adopted the resolution on "Promotion of a democratic and equitable international order", which clearly stipulated the inadmissibility of interference into internal affairs of sovereign States, non-recognition of coups d'état as a method of change of power and the need to exclude from the international communication the attempts of unlawful pressure of certain States on others, including extraterritorial application of national jurisdiction.

The prevailing majority of Member States of this Organization voted in favor of this resolution. The countries that, despite the goals and principles of the UN Charter, are trying to dominate in global affairs and impose models of development, as well as their own 'values' on States and peoples, guided by the logic of unipolarity that undermines the international law, turned out to be outvoted.

Nevertheless, the world keeps changing. It is gratifying to note, as the U.S. president Donald Trump unequivocally stated from this podium last Tuesday, that: it is important to comply with the principles of sovereignty in the international affairs; it is necessary to ensure leadership by example and not impose one's will on other nations; the countries with different values, cultural patterns and aspirations can not only coexist, but also work hand in hand on the basis of mutual respect. I believe that anyone can sign under these words, especially, if the U.S. foreign policy is conducted precisely on this basis.

Sovereignty, refraining from interference into internal affairs, equality of people and mutual respect – Russia has always adhered to these principles and will continue to uphold them. For the last quarter of a century, Russia, no matter the challenges it faced, made in good faith its part of the way to eliminate the legacy of the Cold War, has done a lot to strengthen confidence and mutual understanding in the Euro-Atlantic region and the world. This, however, has not been reciprocated by our Western partners, overexcited by the illusion of the 'end of history' and still trying to accommodate

rudimentary institutions of block-to-block confrontation era to the modern day realities. NATO aspires to recreate the Cold War climate and refuses to bring to life the principle of equal and indivisible security across the OSCE area, solemnly declared in the 1990s.

The West structured its policy according to the principle of "who's not with us is against us", having chosen the path of reckless eastward NATO expansion and provoking instability in the post-Soviet space and encouraging anti-Russian sentiments. This policy is precisely the root cause of the protracted conflict in South-Eastern Ukraine. Despite the efforts being undertaken in the Normandy format and the Contact Group, Kyev invents more and more tricks to bog down the implementation of its obligations on implementing the Minsk Package of Measures of 12 February 2015, endorsed by the UN Security Council.

But even under those circumstances Russia is aiming at constructive work and the search for mutually acceptable ways to implement the Minsk agreements. In response to the expressed concerns regarding the current state of affairs in the field of security, President Vladimir Putin launched an initiative to establish the UN Mission for the protection of OSCE observers in Donbass. A relevant draft resolution has been tabled in the UN Security Council. We hope that the Russian proposal will facilitate the settlement of the internal Ukrainian crisis that broke out as a result of the anti-constitutional coup perpetrated by the ultra-radicals. We are looking forward to constructive interaction on those issues with our European and US partners, without zero-sum games.

Being here, at the UN headquarters, we must not forget about the origins of the United Nations. The rulings of the Nuremberg Tribunal served as a warning against leaving in oblivion the lessons of World War II and the disastrous consequences of the attempts to rule the destinies of the world by trampling lawful interests of other nations and peoples. It is an outrage to use one's concern for freedom of expression as an excuse to condone radical movements that profess neo-Nazi ideology and stand up for heroization of Nazis and their associates. Consistent efforts are required to put a secure shield against neo-Nazism, revanchism, extremism and xenophobia, and enhance international and intercultural harmony.

By instigating hatred and intolerance, terrorists, extremists and nationalists destroy and desecrate the objects of historic, religious and cultural value. Civilized Europe tolerates the demolition of monuments to the liberators of the continent and heroes of WWII whose victory laid the foundation of the United Nations. We deem it necessary to pay without delay a priority attention to this issue at the UN General Assembly and UNESCO in order to provide for corresponding legal framework to prevent of such actions. Russia intends to submit relevant proposals.

It is inadmissible to remain indifferent to either the shameful phenomenon of non-citizenship persisting in Europe, or the suppression of minority languages in violation of the Conventions of the Council of Europe.

Throughout the ages, world history has proved that the lasting settlement of disputes is possible only through dialogue and finding the balance between basic interests of conflicting parties. Unfortunately, blatant pressure, instead of diplomacy, is more and more prevailing in the arsenal of a number of Western countries. The application of unilateral sanctions, above those introduced by the UN Security Council, is illegitimate and undermines the collective nature of international efforts. Today, the world is watching with alarm as the U.S. imposes yet a new set of restrictions against Iran which, on top of all, are extraterritorial in nature and threaten the realization of Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action that became one of the key factors of international and regional stability.

The faultiness of unilateral sanctions policy has been long proven by the example of more than half a century of the U.S. blockade of Cuba, the immediate lift of which for decades has been called for by almost all the UN Member States. It's time to listen to these calls.

The confrontation around the DPRK is unfolding dangerously. We resolutely condemn the nuclear missile adventures of Pyongyang in violation of the UN Security Council resolutions. However, the buildup of military hysteria is not only dead-end but also deadly. It goes without saying that all the UN Security Council resolutions must be implemented. But all of them, along with sanctions, contain provisions on the need to resume talks. We launch an appeal to stop blocking these provisions. There is no alternative to the political and diplomatic methods of addressing the nuclear problem of the Korean Peninsula based on dialogue among all interested parties. We call on responsible members of international community to support the Russia-China roadmap contained in the joint statement of 4 July, made by the Foreign Ministries of Russia and China.

Instigation to turmoil and threats of power interference for the sake of the so-called democratization of Venezuela or actions to undermine the legitimate government of any country are inadmissible. In any internal conflicts the international community must encourage the parties to national reconciliation and compromise.

The attempts to ignore differing opinions, to recur to dictate and ultimatums or the use of force in circumvention of the UN Charter have never done any good. The outburst of international terrorism, millions of refugees, unprecedented flows of illegal migration are mainly rooted in the adventurous change of "unsuitable regimes" of the recent years, including armed interventions that brought havoc and destruction in the Middle East

and Northern Africa and paved the way for terrorists in all the parts of the world where they have never been before.

Despite the fact that ISIL is pulling back in Syria and Iraq, considerable additional effort is required to stabilize the region. It should be recalled that it is necessary to fight not only ISIL, but also al-Nusra, the latter being tolerated for whatever reason by the U.S. coalition members.

The developments in Syria give grounds for cautious optimism. The 6th International Meeting on Syria in Astana, held on 14-15 September 2017, has finalized the work on the four de-escalation zones agreed upon with the participation of Russia, Iran, Turkey, the U.S., Jordan and the UN and supported by many other countries. These agreements have created conditions for further progress towards the implementation of Resolution 2254 on the basis of direct dialogue between the government and the opposition aimed at joining their efforts to eliminate as soon as possible the terrorist hotbed and restore peace all over the country, and its unity, and resolve acute humanitarian problems.

The most urgent task is to increase the supplies of humanitarian aid and demine the liberated territories. We are convinced that all those who sincerely wish peace to Syria and its people must join their efforts in this process under the leadership of the UN, and without any preconditions.

The cases of use of chemical weapons in the region are a separate issue. All these cases must be investigated honestly and professionally, without any attempts to manipulate OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism.

The solving of humanitarian tasks and reconciliation of conflicting parties are also relevant for other crises in the region, including the situation in Libya, Yemen, and Iraq. In all these situations, just like in any other conflicts, Russia pursues a balanced policy and works with all parties without exception.

Speaking of the Middle East and North Africa regional issues, we cannot put aside or forget the UN decisions on the Palestinian problem and the Arab Peace Initiative. We attach great importance to the restoration of the Palestinian Unity and welcome the efforts of Egypt in this direction. Russia is ready to assist in any way possible was the resumption of direct talks between Israel and Palestine, and cooperate with Quartet partners and Arab League for this purpose. The unresolved Palestinian problem continues to be exploited by the extremists who recruit more and more adept.

The never-ending bloody terrorist attacks around the world illustrate the illusory nature of the attempts to create 'isolated safe havens'. Extremism and terrorism can only be fought jointly, without double standards or hidden agendas, and relying on the main responsibility of States, as envisaged in the UN Global Counter-terrorism Strategy.

We welcome the reform of counter-terrorism activity of the UN system, initiated by Secretary-General and approved by the General Assembly. We view the appointment of Russia's representative as head of the new UN Office of Counter-Terrorism as the recognition of Russia's role in combating this evil. We thank everybody for their support.

Russia is committed to the goal of achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world. Under the existing treaty regimes in the area of arms control and non-proliferation, the complete elimination of nuclear weapons should become the final result of the process of universal and total disarmament ensuring equal and indivisible security. The attempts to 'outlaw' the nuclear weapons without taking into account modern realities and turning a blind eye to all the factors that impact the strategic stability today only make this common goal more distant and undermine the consensus regimes of NPT and CTBT.

We launch an appeal to say 'no!' to the militarization of information space. We must prevent the transformation of ICTs into an arena of politico-military confrontation and their use as an instrument of pressure, economic damage, and propaganda of ideas of terrorist and extremist ideology.

The UN must focus its efforts on elaboration of the rules of responsible behavior in the digital sphere that meet the security interests of all states.

Russia has drafted a universal convention on countering cybercrime, including hacking. We propose to open its discussion as early as during the current session.

It is obvious that in the future the world will continue to confront a whole range of new long-term challenges affecting all our civilization. We have no right to waste our energy, time and efforts on geopolitical games. This demands collective rather than unilateral approaches.

The process of shaping the polycentric world order is an objective trend that reflects the redistribution of global balance of forces and increasing the factor of cultural and civilizational identity of peoples. All of us, even those used to bossing the world around, will have to adapt to this reality. It is in our common interests not to try and contain this natural process. The world order should become equitable and democratic, just as the founding fathers of the UN envisioned it. Globalization should not antagonize, but play a unifying role, taking into account the interests of all states without exception and contributing to stable and secure future for all humanity.

Without mutual trust, it is impossible to expect effective implementation of the ambitious Sustainable Development Goals or the Paris Climate Agreement, or the solution of global tasks of food security, population, healthcare that are crucial to the developing countries.

The fundamental principles of international relations should include the recognition of political pluralism, freedom of choice and the rule of law. It is necessary to stop relying on military alliances, and provide support and security guarantees to the States that opted for neutrality. As for economy, it is necessary to work on reducing the obstacles to trade and investment, and stop politicizing the economic relations. The international Olympic movement and sports in general should be depoliticized.

It is necessary to educate, first of all, the youth, in the spirit of respect for cultural and civilizational diversity of the modern world. We invite everybody to the 19th World Festival of Youth and Students that will be hosted by Russia in Sochi in less than a month. Another major international event held at the same time will be the 137th Interparliamentary Union Assembly in Saint Petersburg with its main topic for discussion: "Strengthening of peace and security through intercultural and interreligious dialogue". Let us encourage this dialogue among various cultures and religions, and stop using historic events to instigate hatred and phobias.

The philosophy of coexistence, conjugation and harmonization of interests of various countries is the grounds for President Vladimir Putin's proposed concept of great Eurasian partnership open to all States of Asia and Europe and aimed at the formation of common economic and humanitarian space on the basis of the principle of indivisible security. It goes without saying that equal rights for all, citizens or states, are a universal requirement as stated, as a matter of fact, in the UN Charter.

Indeed, these just and equitable principles are the grounds for the activities of various institutions in which Russia actively participates: Commonwealth of Independent States, Collective Security Treaty Organization, Eurasian Economic Union, Shanghai Cooperation Organization SCO, and BRICS. In the same way, we build our relations with ASEAN, African Union, CELAC, and other associations of Asian, African and Latin American countries. Through joint efforts we achieve a more balanced approach in the work of such institutions as the G-20, APEC, IMF, and IBRD.

We believe in the vitality of this Organization, and would like that the Secretary-General play an active role in facilitating the full realization of its potential based on the goals and principles of the UN Charter and respecting the prerogatives of the UN intergovernmental bodies. A specially tailored approach is required for the ideas of peacekeeping reform where there should be no abrupt shifts or abandonment of invaluable experience accumulated over the decades.

Two millennia ago, the Roman philosopher Seneca (in his Moral letters to Lucilius) wrote: "We are born to live together". The UN founding fathers came closest to the realization of this fact. They were convinced (as they enshrined in the UN Charter) that God-given coexistence on one planet must compel all of us to unite in order to prevent the scourge of new wars. To be able to do it today we need to revive the culture of dialogue, search

for the balance of interests against the instincts of instant solutions and the desire to "punish the disobedient". In essence, it is a matter of preserving humanity in all its wealth and diversity.

Russia has always been and remains open to joint work with all those who show reciprocal readiness to cooperate on the basis of equality. We will continue to uphold these principles in the UN activities the interest of improving global governance and true democratization of international relations.