

**Address by Sergey V. Lavrov, Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation,
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On 11 September 2001 the world changed and rallied in the fight against the threat of terror that was common for all and had no boundaries. The world displayed an unprecedented solidarity by rejecting old phobia and stereotypes. It seemed that the global antiterrorist coalition had become a new reality that from then on would define the development of international relations which would be free from double standards and beneficial to all.

The coming together in the face of deadly threats coming from Al Qaeda and other elements of “terrorist internationale” made it possible to achieve tangible success at the first stage. After that, however, problems began to grow.

A painful blow to the unity of the antiterrorist coalition was delivered by the war in Iraq when – as it turned out later – under the false pretext of the fight on terror and nuclear arms proliferation international law was violated. In a wholly artificial way, the deepest crisis was created, and it is far from having been resolved so far.

More and more questions are being raised as to what is going on in Afghanistan. First and foremost, what is the acceptable price for losses among civilians in the ongoing antiterrorist operation? Who decides on criteria for determining the proportionality of the use of force? And why are the international contingents, which are present there, unwilling to engage in the combat against the proliferating drug threat that results in an ever increasing suffering to the countries of Central Asia and Europe?

These and other factors give reasons to believe that the anti-terrorism coalition is in the face of crisis. Looking at the core of the problem, it seems that this coalition lacks collective arrangements – i.e. equality among all its members in decision-making on the strategy and, especially, operational tactics. It so happens that in order to control a totally new situation as it evolved after 9/11, instead of the required genuine cooperative effort, including a joint analysis and coordination of practical steps, the mechanisms designed for a unipolar world started to be used, where all decisions were to be taken in a single center while the rest were merely to follow.

The solidarity of the international community fostered on the wave of struggle against terrorism turned out to be somehow “privatized”.

The inertia of the unipolar world ideology also revealed itself in other spheres of international life, including unilateral steps on AMD and militarization of outer space, attempts to bypass the parity in arms control regimes, expansion of politico-military blocs, and the politicization of issues of access to energy resources and their transport.

The illusion of a unipolar world confused many. For some people, it generated a desire to make an all-in stake on it. In exchange for total loyalty they expected to receive a *carte blanche* to resolve all their problems using any means. The emerging all-permissiveness syndrome that they developed went out of all possible control on the night of 8 August when the aggression was unleashed on South Ossetia. The bombing of the sleeping city of Tskhinval, the killing of civilians and peacekeepers trampled under foot all settlement agreements putting an end to Georgia’s territorial integrity.

Russia helped South Ossetia to repel this aggression, and discharged its duty to protect its citizens and fulfill its peacekeeping commitments. The recognition of the independence of South

Ossetia and Abkhazia by Russia was the only possible step to be taken to ensure their security and the very survival of their people, taking into account the previous experience of the chauvinistic attitude of the Georgian leaders – starting with Georgian leader Z.Gamsakhurdia who, back in 1991, under the slogan of “Georgia for Georgians” ordered the deportation of Ossetians to Russia, abolished the autonomous status of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and later unleashed a bloody war. That time, an end was put to the war at the cost of innumerable human lives, and the peacekeeping and negotiation mechanisms were established with the approval of UN and OSCE. However, the current Georgian leadership pursued a persistent policy of undermining these mechanisms through continuous provocations, and finally trampled under foot the peace process by launching a new murderous war on the night of August 8.

This problem is now closed. The future of the peoples of Abkhazia and South Ossetia has been reliably secured by the Treaties between Moscow and Tskhinval, and Sukhum. With the implementation of Medvedev – Sarkozy plan, which we are strongly committed to, the situation around the two republics is going to be finally stabilized. What is important is that the plan should be implemented strictly by all the parties. We are concerned, however, by the attempts to rewrite it *post factum* to please Tbilisi.

I believe everyone has been tired of playing extras for the Georgian regime whose words haven't got any bit of truth and whose foreign policy is aimed exclusively at provoking confrontation in the world in the pursuit of their own objectives which are running counter both to the interests of the Georgians and to the goal of ensuring security in the Caucasus.

Today, it is necessary to analyze the crisis in the Caucasus from the viewpoint of its impact on the region and the international community as a whole.

The world has changed yet again. It has become absolutely clear that the solidarity expressed by all after 9/11 needs be revived through the concepts untainted by geopolitical expediency and built on the rejection of double standards when fighting against any infringements upon the international law – whether it be on the part of terrorists, belligerent political extremists or any others.

The crisis in the Caucasus has proved again that it is both impossible and dangerous to resolve the existing problems in the blindfolds of the unipolar world. The price we will pay in lives and destiny of people is too high.

We cannot tolerate any more attempts to resolve conflict situations by breaking off international agreements or by the unlawful use of force. If such a venture goes unchecked, we will risk a chain reaction.

One may not abstractly invoke ‘responsibility to protect’ and be outraged when this principle is used in practice in strict conformity with Article 51 of the UN Charter and other norms of international law. In South Ossetia, Russia defended the very highest of our common values, the most essential human right – the right to live.

The existing security architecture of Europe did not pass the test of the recent events. The attempts to adjust it to the rules of unipolarity have led to a situation when this architecture proved incapable of containing the aggressor or preventing the supplies of offensive weapons, contrary to all existing relevant codes of conduct.

We should take a comprehensive look at security problems. President Dmitry Medvedev, speaking in Berlin on 5 June, proposed an initiative of developing a Treaty on European

Security, a kind of “Helsinki-2”. This work could be started at a Pan-European summit with the participation of states as well as all organizations active in this region.

The Treaty is meant to create a reliable collective system that would ensure equal security for all states, and in a legally binding form enshrine the basics of relations between its participants with a view to strengthening peace and ensuring stability, and finally – promote an integrated and manageable development across the vast Euro-Atlantic region. It is a process involving all participants who would reaffirm their commitment to fundamental principles of the international law, such as the non-use of force and peaceful settlement of disputes, sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in internal affairs as well as the inadmissibility of strengthening one’s own security by infringing upon the security of others. We also need to ponder together the mechanisms to ensure compliance with these fundamental principles.

Of course, such a treaty should organically fit into the legal framework of the UN Charter and its principles of collective security.

The Cold War distorted the nature of international relations and turned them into an arena for ideological confrontation. It is only now, after its end, the United Nations, created on the basis of polycentric vision of the world, can fully realize its potential. Today as never before, it is important that all States reaffirm their commitment to the United Nations as a non-alternative global forum with a universal mandate and generally recognized legitimacy, as a center for open, candid and frank debate and coordination of the world policies on a just and equitable basis free from double standards. This is an essential requirement to ensure that the world regains its equilibrium.

The multitude of challenges that the humanity is facing calls for a comprehensive strengthening of the UN. In order to keep up with the times, the United Nations requires further rational reforming to gradually adapt to changing political and economic realities. On the whole, we are satisfied by the progress of this reform, including the first results of the activities of the Peace Building Commission and the Human Rights Council. As regards the expansion of the UN Security Council membership, we will welcome the proposals that do not divide the UN member States but rather facilitate the search for mutually acceptable compromises and lead to a wide agreement.

The increasing importance belongs to the promotion of dialogue and partnership of civilizations. Russia supports the Alliance of Civilizations, as well as other initiatives in this area. We reaffirm our proposal to create a consultative Council of religions under the UN auspices which would take into account the ever increasing role of religious factor in the international life. This will contribute to strengthening moral principles in global politics, which are so important to us.

Recently, among the priorities of the UN some new pressing issues have emerged on its agenda such as prevention of climate change and food and energy security. These problems are global in nature; they are interrelated and can only be addressed through global partnership at a new qualitative level – with an active involvement of governments, science and business community, and civil society.

A special urgent attention and synergy of efforts is called for by the current financial crisis. President of France put forward from this rostrum important initiatives aimed at cooperative, joint search for the ways to revitalize the international financial system involving the leading economies of the world. In this context we support further development of partnership among present G8 members with key states of all developing regions. The Economic and Social Council of the UN could play its role as well.

Russia will continue to participate in a most responsible manner in the work of various bodies of the UN system and in all other formats in search for an equitable solution of all these problems.

The mechanisms for international development assistance that are being established in Russia will help increase the extent and efficiency of our participation in the international efforts to fight hunger and disease, promote wider access to education, and overcome energy deficiencies; this will be our additional contribution to the attaining of the Millennium Development Goals. It is absolutely clear that in so doing we will pay a special attention to assisting the states that are close to us.

All countries have partners with whom they share traditional friendly relations based on common history and geography. It is harmful to artificially undermine these relationships for the benefit of geopolitical schemes or against the will of peoples. We will continue to work together with all our neighbors, and first of all, with the CIS countries; we will continue to further develop integration processes within the CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organisation) and EurAsEc to preserve and promote our common heritage of culture and civilization, which in a globalizing world is an important resource of the Commonwealth and each of its member States. This is why we have a special interest in cooperating with these countries and for the same reason they view Russia as an area of their special interests. We will develop our relations exclusively on the basis of equality, mutual benefit, respect and consideration of each other's interests, and in compliance with existing agreements, especially, those on the peaceful settlement of disputes. This is how we intend to develop our relations in other regions of the world – and do so openly, on the basis of international law, and without any zero-sum games. This is the policy that was set up in the Concept of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation approved by President Dmitry A. Medvedev this July.

Russia is consistently implementing its network diplomacy and promoting cooperation in various possible formats: SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organization), BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, China), partnership mechanisms with EU, ASEAN, Organization of Islamic Conference, League of Arab States and regional organizations in Latin America.

The events of August provide us with yet another occasion to rethink the responsibility for what actually happened. Distortion of reality hampers international efforts to settle conflicts and crises, and revives the worst practices of the era of the Cold War.

If we want to protect the truth from becoming "the first victim of war" once again, we need to draw relevant conclusions, especially, regarding further elaboration of a provision in the 1970 Declaration on Principles of International Law which states that *States shall refrain from propaganda of war of aggression*. The Guidelines on Protecting Freedom of Expression and Information in Times of Crisis recently endorsed by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe go along the same lines. We propose that the UN should also pronounce itself on this issue -- this time in a universal context.

The obvious global consequences of the Caucasian crisis also show that the world has changed for everyone. There are fewer illusions now, and fewer pretexts to shirk answers to the most pressing challenges of the modern times. This is precisely the reason why we can hope that the international community based on common sense will finally manage to put together a program of collective actions for the 21st century.