

On the Russian Initiative concerning a European Security Treaty

Presented by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov at the Special Head of Delegation Meeting at the 16th Session of the OSCE Ministerial Council, Helsinki, December 4, 2008

There is neither a false bottom nor a hidden agenda in our idea of a European Security Treaty. There is a desire to agree on understandable rules of the game, to gradually reestablish trust, the undermining of which lies at the root of all problems, and to avoid having to rely exclusively upon national means rather than cooperation among states to ensure security

It is obvious that no one stands to lose from this; everyone will gain. Our initiative does not presuppose “marginalization” or alienation of any one of the countries or international organizations. On the contrary, it envisages from the outset the participation of all states of the Euro-Atlantic area and all the multilateral associations concerned with security issues here, OSCE, CIS, CSTO, EU and NATO, in the development and conclusion of the Treaty. Again – in the spirit of the central provision of the Charter for European Security: “Within the OSCE no State, group of States or organization can have any pre-eminent responsibility for maintaining peace and stability in the OSCE area or can consider any part of the OSCE area as its sphere of influence.” I hope that this still does not sound like sedition to Brussels.

The conclusion of the Treaty would make it possible to ensure a qualitatively new level of military-political protectedness for all our states, by the cheapest method. This is a positive alternative to a further accumulation of mutual suspicions and “fears,” to a chain of unilateral decisions triggering symmetrical or asymmetrical responses of the same kind and to a new arms race spiral.

Twenty years have passed since the end of the Cold War. There is no systems confrontation. But in questions of states’ security we still rely upon schemes and tools of the past. We think that if we take off the ideological blinkers, we can arrive at a new quality in cooperation among states in the realm of hard security.

The proposed format of the future agreement is not fortuitous. We suggest that the strength of a renovated system of Euro-Atlantic security be ensured by imparting to the appropriate mutual obligations a legally binding character. Herein will be the obvious “added value” of the Treaty, compared with the provisions of the previously adopted CSCE/OSCE and Russia-NATO Council documents. That format also presupposes, naturally, the elaboration of mechanisms which would help ensure compliance with the Treaty, including – when needed – immediate consultations and a toolbox to work out a collective reaction to specific situations.

In a first and rough estimate, we see the key conceptual blocks of the future Treaty as follows:

- a legally binding confirmation and a uniform interpretation of the basic principles of security for states and relations between them in the Euro-Atlantic area, including inadmissibility of the use of force;
- equal security guarantees for the states of the Euro-Atlantic area based on the renunciation of ensuring one’s own security at the expense of the security of other Treaty participants – in full conformity with the Charter for European Security;

- as part of the fulfillment of the obligations under the same Charter – a real abandonment of claims by individual states or their groups to exclusive rights to the maintenance of peace and security in the Euro-Atlantic area;
- the determination of basic principles for the development of the regimes of arms control, confidence building, restraint and reasonable sufficiency in military building;
- imparting a new quality to cooperation in countering the spread of WMD, terrorism, drug trafficking and other kinds of transfrontier organized crime;
- elaborating uniform approaches to the principles, procedures and mechanisms of conflict prevention and settlement.

All of this is reflected in the draft elements of a European Security Treaty which we have circulated.

If the initiative for concluding this kind of Treaty and our thoughts on its content generally appear reasonable to you, we would propose that consideration be given to further steps; for we can define the substance of the future Treaty only by working together. No one will be able to impose anything on anyone. The final product of the upcoming negotiations should result from joint brainstorming, which will enable meeting the concerns of each of our states and finding mutually acceptable collective solutions.

We believe that the OSCE by definition can and should make its weighty contribution to this endeavor. This follows both from its tasks, which conform to the goals of the future Treaty, and from the fact that it is the most representative Euro-Atlantic organization, whose composition organically coincides with the range of states parties to the future Treaty.

At the Russia-EU summit in Nice on November 14, French President Nicolas Sarkozy and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev proposed that a summit be held on this theme.

Clearly, we are not talking about a classic regular OSCE meeting at the highest level. We envision it as a thematic meeting, and then not only the heads of our states, but also leaders of the CIS, CSTO, EU and NATO and, of course, the OSCE would participate in it.

I hold that the summit could take a collective decision to launch negotiations on a European Security Treaty along with determining the appropriate negotiation platform.

Surely, the summit has to be well prepared. There is an interesting proposal to form a high-level expert group consisting of special representatives – sherpas – of the participating states. Of course, sherpas from all the aforesaid organizations must also be in.

I feel that the very launching of negotiations on the Treaty will immediately have a useful effect and facilitate improving the military-political situation in the Euro-Atlantic area. It would also be important for all of us, as President Sarkozy urged, to refrain from any unilateral steps capable of further complicating the situation in the process.

At the end of the formal and informal discussions at this OSCE Ministerial Council meeting, we will present our specific proposals on how to further organize practical work on a European Security Treaty, including the convocation of a pan-European summit.