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A D D R E S S

**by Sergey V. Lavrov, Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation,
at the 63rd Session of the UN General Assembly**

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On 11 September 2001 the world had changed and rallied together in the combat 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 became a new reality that from now on would define the development of international relations free from double standards and beneficial to all.

The cohesion in the face of deadly threats coming from Al Qaeda and other elements of “terrorist international” made it possible to achieve tangible success at the first stage. But later, 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 -- under the false pretext of fight on terror and nuclear arms proliferation the international law was violated. Artificially, the deepest crisis was created, and it is far from being resolved up until now.

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

These and other factors give reasons to believe that the anti-terror coalition is in the face of crisis. Looking at the core of the problem, this coalition seems to lack collective arrangements – i.e. equality among all its members in deciding on the strategy and, especially, operational tactics. It so happened that in order to control a totally new situation as it evolved after 9/11, instead of required genuine cooperative effort, including joint analysis and coordination of practical steps, the mechanisms intended for a unipolar world started to be used, meaning that all decisions were to be taken in a single center while the rest had just 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 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, enlargement of politico-military blocs, and politicization of the issues of access to energy resources and their transit.

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 by any means. The all-permissiveness syndrome that they developed went rampant, out of all possible control, on the night before 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 thus putting an end to the territorial integrity of Georgia.

Russia helped South Ossetia to repel aggression, and carried out its duty to protect its citizens and fulfill its peacekeeping commitments. The recognition of independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia by Russia was the only possible measure to ensure their security and the very survival of their peoples, taking into account all previous record of the chauvinistic attitude of the Georgian leaders -- starting with the Georgian leader Z.Gamsakhurdia who, 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 war. That time, the war was brought to an end 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 to undermine these mechanisms through continuous provocations, and finally trampled under foot the peace process by launching a new murderous war on the night before August 8.

This problem has been closed out now. 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 and our strong commitment, the situation around the two republics is going to be finally stabilized. This 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 think everyone has been tired of playing a static role as extras for 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 have nothing in common with 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 on the whole.

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

The crisis in the Caucasus proved again that it is impossible or even disastrous to try to resolve the existing problems in the blind folds of the unipolar world. The price we have to pay in lives and destiny of people is too high.

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

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

The existing architecture of security in Europe did not pass the strength test in 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 the existing relevant codes of conduct.

We should take a comprehensive look at security problems. President D.A. Medvedev, speaking in Berlin on 5 June, proposed to develop 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 working in this region.

The Treaty is meant to create a reliable collective system that would ensure equal security for all states, and, record in a legally binding form the basics of relations between its participants with a view to strengthening peace and ensuring stability, and finally – promoting 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 non-use of force and peaceful settlement of disputes, sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs, and inadmissibility of strengthening one’s own security by infringing upon security of others. We also need to conceive together the mechanisms to ensure compliance with these fundamental principles.

Naturally, 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 turning them into an arena for ideological confrontation. Only now, after the Cold War is over, the United Nations, created on the basis of polycentric vision of the world, can fully realize its potential. As never before, it is now important that all States reaffirm their commitment to the United Nations as a non-alternative world forum with a universal mandate and generally recognized legitimacy, as a center for open and frank debate and coordination of the world policies on a just and equitable basis free from double standards. This is an essential requirement, if the world is to regain 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 be able to gradually adapt itself

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 recently established 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 facilitate the search for mutually acceptable compromises and are instrumental to a wide agreement.

The increasing importance in the process of reforms belongs to 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 establish a consultative Council of religions under the UN auspices which takes into account the ever increasing role of religious factor in the international life. It will contribute to fostering moral principles in international affairs which are so important for 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 of global character, they are interrelated and can be addressed only through global partnership at a qualitatively new level -- with an active involvement of governments, science and business community, and civil society.

A particular urgent attention and synergy of efforts is called for by the current financial crisis. Important initiatives were put forward from this rostrum by the President of France aimed at cooperative 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 of present G8 members with the 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 responsible manner in the work of various bodies of the UN system and in other formats in search for an equitable solution of all these problems.

The mechanisms of 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 deficiency; this will be our additional contribution to the attaining of Millenium development goals. It is only natural that in so doing we will pay a particular attention to assisting the states that are closer to us.

All countries have partners with whom they share traditional friendly relations, 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, develop integration processes within the CSTO and EurAsEc to preserve and promote our common heritage of culture and civilization, which, in a globalizing world, constitutes a major resource of the Commonwealth as a whole, and each of its member States. This is why we have a special interest to cooperate with these countries and for the same reason they perceive Russia as an area of their special interests. Therefore, we are going to develop our relations exclusively on the basis of equality, mutual benefit, respect and consideration of each other's interests, and compliance with the existing agreements, especially, those on the peaceful settlement of disputes. From this prospective we are prepared also 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. Exactly that policy was stipulated in the Concept of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation approved by President D.A. Medvedev this July.

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

The August events provide another occasion to rethink the responsibility for honest rendering of events. Distortion of reality hampers international efforts to settle conflicts and crises, and revives the worst practices of the “Cold War” era.

If we want to protect the truth from becoming "the first victim of war" once again, we need to draw relevant conclusions, especially, with regard to further elaboration of a provision in the 1970 Declaration on Principles of International Law stating 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 impact of the Caucasian crisis reveals also that the world has changed for everyone. There are fewer illusions now, and fewer pretexts to escape answers to the most pressing challenges of the modern times. It is precisely the reason why we can hope that the international community based on a common sense will finally manage to put together a program of collective actions for the 21st century.