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**Address by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov at Plenary Meeting of  
Conference on Disarmament, Geneva, March 7, 2009**

369-07-03-2009

Esteemed Mister Chairman,

Esteemed Mister Secretary General,

Esteemed Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Just slightly more than a year has passed since my previous address at this forum. Quite a few efforts have been taken to improve the international situation during this time. But there was no radical turn for the better. Moreover, there was noted a further strengthening of the conflict potential in the world that led away from tackling the vital problems of reinforcing international stability and laying a favorable groundwork for consecutive steps in the field of disarmament and nonproliferation.

Today the world has to acknowledge its inability to overcome a stalemate in the field of multilateral disarmament. The stalemate situation in the Conference's activities that has continued for over 10 years clearly reflects an unfavorable state of affairs in the maintenance of international security. Attempts made by groups of "like-minded states" can ensure a solution of particular disarmament tasks, but in the long run such activities have serious limiters and may essentially lead to the erosion of existing mechanisms, among them our Conference. The global financial and economic crisis undoubtedly creates some additional difficulties, as it narrows the resource base for implementing disarmament and conversion programs.

At the same time it is obvious that in conditions of globalization a way out of the crisis cannot be found on lines of military preparations and war, as was the case in the 30s of the last century. Unfortunately, the Cold War institutionalized the militarization of international relations. This inertia should be renounced.

Russia is aware of its special responsibility as a nuclear state and permanent member of the UN Security Council for nuclear disarmament and strengthening of the weapons of mass

destruction nonproliferation regime. Our country has fully met its obligations under the START 1 and implementation of the Moscow Treaty SORT is well under way. It is now time to take new steps in this area aimed at making the world more secure.

We welcome the statements made by the new United States administration in favor of multilateral approaches to the maintenance of international security and disarmament. We are prepared, as was suggested by our American partners, to "reset" our relations. Yesterday we talked about this in detail with the United States Secretary of State, Hilary Clinton. I am encouraged by the results of our talks yesterday. I expect the first personal contact of Presidents Dmitry Medvedev and Barack Obama to be productive. Conclusion of a new legally binding Russian-American treaty on strategic offensive weapons could become a priority step in that direction.

Allow me to read out the statement of President of the Russian Federation Dmitry Medvedev on this issue:

“On December 5, the Treaty on the Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms – the START Treaty – will expire. The importance of this instrument for ensuring international peace and stability can hardly be overestimated. It played a historic role in ensuring strategic stability and security and in reducing the arsenals of strategic offensive arms. As a result of its implementation the world became more secure.

“Today, we are facing a pressing need to move further along the road of nuclear disarmament. In accordance with its obligations under the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons Russia is fully committed to reaching the goal of a world free from these most deadly weapons.

“As early as 2005 we proposed to the USA that a new agreement should be concluded to replace the START Treaty. It could be based on all that is best and effectively working in the present Treaty, but at the same reflect present-day strategic realities.

“In taking this decision, we considered, inter alia, the fact that the limits set by the Start Treaty were reached way back in 2001. The number of strategic carriers and warheads assigned to them is significantly less at present. Thus, the START Treaty currently not only does not limit Russia and the USA in the nuclear-missile sphere, but actually makes it possible to build up the quantity of strategic offensive arms.

“Our approach to that agreement is as follows. A future agreement should be legally binding. It is of no less importance that the instrument should be forward-looking - and should limit not only warheads, but also strategic delivery vehicles, i.e. intercontinental ballistic missiles, submarine launched ballistic missiles and heavy bombers.

“We also deem it necessary to exclude possible deployment of strategic offensive arms outside national territories.

“I will emphasize – Russia is open to dialogue and is prepared for negotiations with the new

United States Administration. I fully share the commitment of US President Barack Obama to the noble goal of ridding the world of the nuclear threat and see here fertile ground for joint work.

“I believe that constructive cooperation in this area will contribute to the overall improvement of Russian-American relations.

D. Medvedev”

Esteemed Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today we are witnessing a growing number of international initiatives on nuclear disarmament, such, for example, as the Hoover Initiative, the ‘Global Zero’ initiative, the Evans-Kawaguchi Commission, the Luxembourg Forum and the plan of British Prime Minister Gordon Brown. Russia appreciates the focus of these initiatives on solving global security issues on a multilateral basis and is willing to positively contribute to their consideration.

However, progress towards “global zero” can only be achieved through strengthened strategic stability and strict adherence to the principle of equal security for all. In its turn this suggests the need to carry out a set of measures required for a sustainable and consistent disarmament process. Among such measures:

- advancement of nuclear disarmament by all nuclear-weapon states, with their "gradual" engagement in efforts already being undertaken by Russia and the United States;
- to prevent weaponization of outer space;
- to prevent operational deployment of conventionally tipped strategic offensive weapons, i.e. the building of the so-called “compensatory” potential;
- to ensure that states do not possess a “nuclear upload potential”;
- to prevent attempts aimed at using membership of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty to implement military nuclear programs; and
- to ensure verifiable cessation of conventional capabilities' development coupled with efforts to resolve other international issues, including settlement of regional conflicts.

I would like to draw particular attention to the relationship between offensive and defensive arms. Real progress in nuclear disarmament cannot be achieved in a situation where unilateral efforts to develop strategic ABM systems undermine this relationship. This is fraught with erosion of strategic stability and disbalancing of the system of checks and balances that ensures global parity.

Acting in the spirit of strategic openness, we propose a constructive alternative to unilateral plans in this crucial area, i.e. to unite efforts of all states interested in counteracting potential missile threats. The package proposal with regard to developing cooperation remains on the negotiating table. We will develop and elaborate it. We stand ready for joint work – on the basis of equal partnership.

Ensuring an effective and sustainable implementation of the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which is of pivotal importance for global security, and enhancement of its universality remains an indisputable priority. We deem it necessary to prepare toward the 2010 NPT Review Conference a number of coordinated recommendations ensuring the Treaty's further effectiveness as a major instrument for containing the threat of nuclear weapons proliferation. It is necessary to achieve strict compliance by its participants with their obligations embodied in the unity of three fundamental components – nonproliferation, peaceful uses of nuclear energy and disarmament. The May session of the Preparatory Committee for the Review Conference offers a good opportunity for agreeing on ways to reinvigorate talks on all these issues.

Strengthening of the international nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear arms limitation regime is inextricably linked to the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty. Russia ratified the Treaty in 2000. We have consistently advocated its early entry into force. The moratorium on nuclear tests, with all its importance, cannot serve as a substitute for legal obligations. Therefore we call upon all states whose accession is required for the Treaty's entry into force, to sign and ratify it as soon as possible. Of course, we have taken note of the positive signals from Washington concerning a possible shift in attitude to the CTBT and look forward to their embodiment into concrete decisions of the Administration of President Barack Obama.

Nuclear-weapon-free zones contribute to strengthening the nuclear nonproliferation regime, achieving peace and security regionally and globally. We welcome the completion of the ratification process by all participants of the Central Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, which has ensured its entry into force.

The task to strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime in the Middle East remains urgent. We consistently advocate this region to become a nuclear-weapon-free zone, and eventually, a zone free from all other types of weapons of mass destruction. In 1995 and 2000 the NPT states parties already took Middle East-related decisions. It is necessary to search for mutually acceptable ways of their implementation in the course of the upcoming NPT review events. We are ready for joint work on this task as well.

The verification activities of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) need to be made more effective. The Additional Protocol to the Safeguards Agreement, ratified by Russia in 2007, is an efficient tool of enhancing IAEA capacities in this field. We call on all countries to accede to it. The Additional Protocol should eventually become a universal norm of verification of states' compliance with their nonproliferation obligations under NPT and a substantial new standard in the field of nuclear exports.

Growing interest in peaceful nuclear energy is a trend of current economic development. Energy security and climate are necessarily linked to peaceful nuclear applications, which should be used more widely in full accordance with the NPT states parties' inalienable right to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. This opens up new opportunities for international cooperation, primarily to ensure stable and secure supplies of nuclear fuel for countries developing their nuclear energy sector, subject to due compliance with the requirements of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. The significance of multilateral approaches, which can offer an economically substantiated and practically feasible alternative to the creation at national level of all elements of the nuclear fuel cycle, increases.

Quite a few initiatives have also been advanced in this field over recent years. Russia has suggested working together to develop a global nuclear energy infrastructure by establishing multilateral centers that would provide nuclear fuel cycle services. It has already set up in conjunction with Kazakhstan the International Uranium Enrichment Center at the enrichment plant in Angarsk. We welcome accession to this Center by Armenia and Ukraine, and the interest shown by a number of other states in joining it. A buffer stock of low enriched uranium is planned to be created at the Center in Angarsk under IAEA control to provide secure fuel supplies in case of failure of market mechanisms.

Security of every state and of the entire world community can't be ensured unless we are able to adequately and timely respond to the threat of nuclear terrorism. The Russian-American Global Initiative to Combat Acts of Nuclear Terrorism put forward in 2006 has been a major contribution to this cause. The Initiative is already put on rails of practical implementation and acquires an extensive dimension – 75 states have acceded to it. We are convinced that the number of participants is going to rise. This is a good example of how it is possible to cooperate in the contemporary world in search of answers to new challenges and threats.

We support revitalization of multilateral diplomacy, primarily within the United Nations and the Conference on Disarmament and note the weighty role of the Conference in strengthening international security. We express our gratitude to all delegations and Conference Secretary-General Sergei Ordzhonikidze for their work on enhancing the effectiveness of this forum, including their persistent efforts to form consensus regarding the work program of the Conference.

Preventing weaponization of outer space is of particular importance among disarmament issues. When Russia and China introduced a draft international Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space here last February, we felt that it was easier to prevent weaponization of outer space than to get rid of new stockpiles of weapons afterwards. Averting an arms race in space will also contribute to ensuring predictability of the strategic situation and preservation of orbital property. All states enjoying the benefits of peaceful space should be interested in this.

Soon we plan together with China to submit for your consideration a document summing up

the outcome of the Conference debate and outlining our response to the comments received regarding the draft treaty. We hope that this instrument will become a good mainstay for future negotiations.

A year ago in this hall Russia also introduced draft Basic Elements of an international legal agreement on the elimination of intermediate-range and shorter range (ground-launched) missiles. We reiterate our call for a detailed discussion of this initiative that has gained a great deal of support. The proposals of French President Nicolas Sarkozy, supported by the European Union, to launch talks to ban ground-to-ground intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles is also consonant with our idea. We are ready for constructive dialogue on the search for ways to solve these problems both with the European Union and with all other partners with a view to agreeing on a universal regime for renunciation of this type of missiles.

We are also prepared to start talks on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons purposes (FMCT), which would become an important milestone in the processes of nuclear disarmament and strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

In conclusion I would like to point out the following. In our view, the efforts made to harmonize the priority items on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament in order to resume its substantive work are inextricably linked with the general search for ways to overcome the present-day crisis phenomena: be it in financial and economic, military and political, environmental or other areas. We can only solve the problems we are facing now through joint action, by restoring trust in global politics and making collective efforts meeting the interests of all states and the world community as a whole.

Russia is open to a constructive dialogue and stands ready to work jointly with its partners. The right moment has come today, for the first time after the end of the Cold War, for making real progress in resuming the global disarmament process on a broad agenda. I am convinced that we should not miss this opportunity.