NATO expansion plans prevent Transnistrian issue from being resolved, says Lavrov

MOSCOW, April 21. /TASS/. The Transnistrian issue would have been solved long ago, if some participants in the "5+2" negotiations (Moldova and Transnistria as parties to the conflict, Russia and Ukraine as guarantors and mediators, the OSCE as a mediator, the US and the EU as observers) did not pursue the objective to reinforce NATO, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said on Tuesday at a video conference round table with representatives of the Alexander Gorchakov Public Diplomacy Fund.

"We will not support attempts to drag Moldova, naturally, together with Transnistria, into NATO. That's ruled out. We will not support attempts to strip Moldova of its statehood. I guarantee that we will always be able to find a solution to the Transnistrian problem by respecting these principles, which I believe fully meet the fundamental interests of Moldova as a state and Moldova's people," Lavrov said.

"If all participants in the '5+2' process proceeded from that, I believe that the problem would have been solved long ago. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. Some of our Western counterparts still pursue a slightly different agenda, which stems primarily from their desire to reinforce and expand the North Atlantic Alliance," he stressed.

Russia's top diplomat added that Moscow had supported Moldova's sovereignty from the very beginning of that country's post-Soviet history.