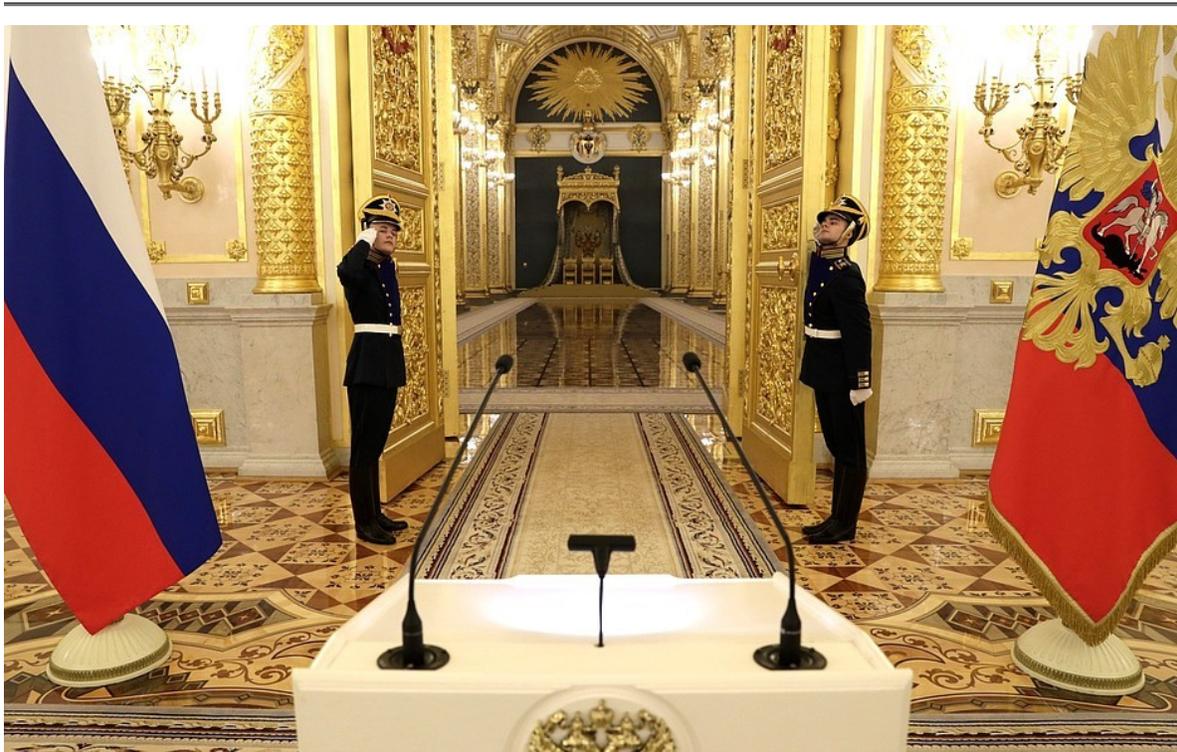


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Ceremony for presenting foreign ambassadors' letters of credence

17-22 minutes





7 of 11

Ceremony for presenting letters of credence. Photo by Rossiya Segodnya

Letters of credence were presented to the President of Russia by Lubomir Rehak (Slovak Republic), Dang Minh Khoi (Socialist Republic of Vietnam), Abdullahi Yibaikwal Shehu (Federal Republic of Nigeria), Maju Kake (Republic of Guinea), Hassan Abdi Daoud (Federal Republic of Somalia), Lesley Akyaa Opoku-Ware (Republic of Ghana), Werner Almhofer (Republic of Austria), Mohamed Mahmoud Dahi (Islamic Republic of Mauritania), Davlatshoh Gulmahmadzoda (Republic of Tajikistan), U Lwin Oo (Republic of the Union of Myanmar), Rodrigo de Lima Baena Soares (Federative Republic of Brazil), Augusto da Silva Cunha (Republic of Angola), Giorgio Starace (Italian Republic), Janitha Abewickrema Liyanage (Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka), Akambi Andre Okounlola-Biaou (Republic of Benin), Juan Fernando Holguin Flores (Republic of Ecuador), Rolando Enrique Barrow Noad (Republic of Panama), Yuri Pavel Santacruz Perdomo (Republic of El Salvador), Marcos Gomez Martinez (Kingdom of Spain), and Pavan Kapoor (Republic of India).

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Speech at ceremony for presenting letters of credence

President of Russia Vladimir Putin: Ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon.

I am delighted to welcome you to the Kremlin. Due

to the unfavourable pandemic situation, we have to hold the ceremony to present your letters of credence in this limited format. I hope you all understand.

I am also happy to personally congratulate all of you on the official start of your diplomatic assignment in the Russian Federation and I wish you every success in fulfilling the honourable and responsible mission entrusted to you, to expand and strengthen ties between the states you represent and Russia. We are genuinely interested in your work being successful and rewarding.

It goes without saying that you can fully count on the support and assistance of the Russian authorities, ministries and agencies, as well as on a benevolent attitude and constructive approach on the part of businesses, the political community and the public in Russia.

I would like to express my confidence that your professional activity in Russia will involve interesting meetings, events, and contacts – well, this infection is bound to go away someday, we must defeat it and life must go back to normal. I really do hope that you will have opportunities to travel around our vast country on business and for pleasure, to get to know its multinational people, various religions, rich history and culture. And I hope that your stay in Russia will leave with the best impressions.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Recently, in my speech at the expanded [meeting](#) of the Foreign Ministry Board, I outlined the priorities of Russia's foreign policy and gave a detailed overview of the current difficult international situation, as well as approaches to settling acute global

and regional problems.

We are consistently pursuing the idea that it is possible to effectively cope with the numerous challenges and threats only through joint efforts of the entire global community.

Developments around the coronavirus pandemic constantly remind us about this, too. The vile infection is far from defeated, and, of course, it will not be possible to tackle it in one single country. Unfortunately, in real life everything is different, and the term “vaccine nationalism” is already in use, which, alas, reflects the real state of affairs not only on the commercial vaccine market, but also in providing assistance to countries in need.

In fact, I believe that without joining the efforts of all states, without establishing mutually beneficial and equal cooperation it will be impossible to address such difficult global problems and achieve success in fighting climate change, or countering terrorism and organised crime, or ensuring sustainable development.

This is why we have called on all our international partners to act together, collectively, based on the central coordinating role of the United Nations and the founding principles of interstate communication envisaged in its Charter.

At the same time, we express our concern not only over the fact that the international community is acting separately and cannot unite to address truly important problems, but also over how some of our partners are behaving towards our country, towards Russia, trying to restrain our development in every possible way, to exert sanctions pressure and, moreover, to escalate tensions near our borders.

By the way, the threat on our western border is really growing,

and we have mentioned it many times. It is enough to see how close NATO military infrastructure has moved to Russia's borders. This is more than serious for us.

In this situation, we are taking appropriate military-technical measures. But, I repeat, we are not threatening anyone and it is at the very least irresponsible to accuse us of this, given the real state of affairs. This would mean laying the blame at the wrong door, as the Russian saying goes.

In my speech at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs I already stressed that the priority facing Russian diplomacy at this juncture is to try to ensure that Russia is granted reliable and long-term security guarantees.

While engaging in dialogue with the United States and its allies, we will insist on the elaboration of concrete agreements that would rule out any further eastward expansion of NATO and the deployment of weapons systems posing a threat to us in close proximity to Russia's territory. We suggest that substantive talks on this topic should be started.

I would like to note in particular that we need precisely legal, juridical guarantees, because our Western colleagues have failed to deliver on verbal commitments they made. Specifically, everyone is aware of the assurances they gave verbally that NATO would not expand to the east. But they did absolutely the opposite in reality. In effect, Russia's legitimate security concerns were ignored and they continue to be ignored in the same manner even now.

We are not demanding any special terms for ourselves. We understand that any agreements must take into account

the interests of both Russia and all other states in the Euro-Atlantic region. A calm and stable situation should be ensured for everyone and is needed by all without exception.

That said, I would like to stress that Russia is interested precisely in constructive collaboration and in equitable international cooperation, and this remains the central tenet of Russian foreign policy. I hope that you will convey this signal to the leaders of your states.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Heads of 20 diplomatic missions are present today at the ceremony. As per tradition, let me say a few words about the relations between Russia and every country you represent.

We are interested in developing relations with the Slovak Republic on the principles of good neighbourly relations and mutual respect, considering the spiritual and cultural closeness of the two nations and common pages of history in fighting against Nazism.

Unfortunately, today our political contacts are limited. However, if the Slovak side is ready, we could return to the mutually beneficial and constructive cooperation that our states supported for many years and that benefitted our nations.

Russia and Vietnam's comprehensive strategic partnership covers the political, economic and cultural spheres as well as many others. During the useful and substantive [talks](#) with President Nguyen Xuan Phuc held yesterday, agreements were reached to further expand Russian-Vietnamese cooperation. The talks reaffirmed that the position of Russia and Vietnam on topical issues on the international agenda are quite similar or completely identical.

The President of Vietnam is continuing his visit, and today he is having meetings with representatives of the Russian leadership, businesses, and public and political circles. An impressive package of documents that envisage implementation of large joint projects, including in the oil and gas sector, will be signed.

We regard Nigeria as a key partner of Russia on the African continent, with whom we have traditionally friendly relations. We [talked](#) with President Muhammadu Buhari during the Russia-Africa [Summit](#) held in Sochi two years ago. We hope that the Nigerian leadership will support Russia's initiative to hold another meeting between the Russian and African leaders in 2022.

As for specific areas of bilateral cooperation, we find expansion of the detailed dialogue on topical problems related to supporting stability on the global hydrocarbon markets, countering terrorism and religious extremism, to be quite promising.

We hope that political life in the Republic of Guinea, a country friendly to Russia, will soon stabilise, and that national accord will be attained. For many years, Russia has been channelling substantial investment into the Guinean economy. Our companies have been producing and processing mineral commodities in Guinea for many years. It is now time to implement new interesting projects, including those in the sphere of energy, infrastructure, fisheries and agriculture.

We advocate expanded cooperation with the Federal Republic of Somalia. Your Government is working actively to strengthen the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity, it is fighting terrorism and extremism, striving to create favourable conditions for the socioeconomic revival. And, of course, we hope that all

these efforts will be crowned with success.

Our relations with the Republic of Ghana are developing steadily. We are expanding our interaction in the field of trade and energy, including the peaceful nuclear development. We jointly produce minerals and hydrocarbons. And, of course, we will continue to train professionals for various sectors of Ghana's economy.

Russia and Austria are developing their relations on a constructive and pragmatic foundation, while relying on the principles of mutual respect and consideration for each other's interests. We are long-standing and reliable partners in the trade, investment and energy sphere. Mutual trade continues to expand despite the pandemic. In the first six months of 2021, bilateral trade soared by 26.5 percent, a very good indicator.

This country values Austria's policy of permanent neutrality, as well as Vienna's authority as a generally recognised negotiating venue for multilateral diplomacy.

There are favourable opportunities for expanding trade and economic ties with the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, including in the area of high-seas fisheries where we cooperate closely. We appreciate your country's substantial contribution to fighting terrorism in the Sahara-Sahel zone.

Next year marks the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations with Tajikistan which is a good friend and reliable ally of Russia. This year, Tajik friends successfully [presided](#) in the [Shanghai Cooperation Organisation](#) and the [Collective Security Treaty Organisation](#). Our countries cooperate closely within the framework of these organisations and also within the Commonwealth of Independent States,

and they coordinate their positions on topical regional matters.

In view of the complicated situation in neighbouring Afghanistan, Russia is providing assistance to its Tajik friends in maintaining security, including under a programme to modernise the armed forces of Tajikistan.

Ties between Russia and the Republic of the Union of Myanmar are traditionally friendly. We believe that our joint efforts can further develop our successful cooperation in the economic, military-technical and educational spheres.

We are in favour of resolving the problems related to the tense internal political and ethno-religious situation in the country without outside interference, by the Myanmar themselves, on the basis of a political dialogue.

Brazil is an important strategic partner of Russia. We work together at the [BRICS](#) forum and [G20](#). Given the fact that in 2022–2023 your country will become a non-permanent member of the [United Nations] Security Council, we will cooperate more intensely at the UN on the topical issues on the global agenda.

In addition to this, we will continue to progressively strengthen bilateral cooperation in the trade, economic, energy, scientific, and technological spheres, and others. We will be glad to see the President of Brazil in Russia.

Friendly relations with the Republic of Angola have withstood the test of time. What matters most is that, together with our Angolan friends, we intend to fully develop our comprehensive cooperation, to promote our political dialogue and carry on our joint work in trade, investment, and culture among other things. In particular, these things were discussed during the Angolan

Foreign Minister's visit to Russia in October.

The relations with the Republic of Italy are built on our strong traditions of cooperation, close historical and cultural ties, as well as a sincere liking between the two nations.

This year, Italy has successfully presided in G20 and held quite a fruitful [summit](#) of the group dedicated to countering the pandemic, restoring the global economy, and preserving the climate. We provided our comprehensive support to Italy's presidency. We have regular telephone conversations with Prime Minister Draghi to discuss current issues on the international, regional and bilateral agenda.

Let me mention that this year, the implementation of a large joint initiative, the Cross Year of Museums, continues in the cultural field.

Next year, we will mark the 65th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations with Sri Lanka. Good contacts have been established between foreign ministries, defence ministries and ministries of the economic bloc, as well as between parliaments. By the way, the Secretary of Russia's Security Council Nikolai Patrushev has just visited Colombo, on November 22.

Since 2009, Sri Lanka has been involved in the work of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation as a dialogue partner, and it contributes to efforts facilitating the security of the Eurasian region and its sustainable socioeconomic growth.

We continue to expand our interaction with the Republic of Benin. Notably, we are drafting an intergovernmental agreement

on military cooperation and a memorandum of understanding in the area of sport. Russian companies are interested in participating in joint geological prospecting, energy and infrastructure projects in Benin.

Ecuador ranks among Russia's three largest Latin American trade partners. Stable supplies of Russian hydrocarbons are an important factor in the sustainable development of the Ecuadorean economy. In turn, Ecuador's diverse agricultural produce is quite popular on the Russian market.

In August 2021, I had a [telephone conversation](#) with President of the Republic of Ecuador, Mr Guillermo Lasso, and we agreed to further promote bilateral ties, to maintain proactive political dialogue and expand interdepartmental contacts, including those between the prosecutor general's offices and emergency response services and to help implement joint projects in various fields.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the establishment of official diplomatic relations between Russia and the Republic of Panama, and we are determined to continue our political contacts, as well as trade and investment and cultural-humanitarian cooperation.

Russian businesses are attracted to Panama, a major logistic and financial centre, making it possible to deliver goods, services and capital to the entire vast Latin American region.

Next year, we will mark the 30th anniversary of establishing diplomatic relations with the Republic of El Salvador. We have established friendly and equitable interaction with this country, as well as traditions of mutually beneficial cooperation in various sectors.

An intergovernmental cooperation agreement on joint anti-crime efforts, especially those aiming to fight organised crime, is at the ratification stage. Russia is helping El Salvador to develop its hydropower industry. We are interested in further expanding our trade and economic cooperation, as well as educational and professional exchanges.

We attach great importance to contacts and cooperation with Spain, and they are progressing nicely. Next year, we will jointly celebrate the 45th anniversary of restoring diplomatic relations.

It should be noted that despite the pandemic, bilateral trade is improving. Joint projects are moving forward, mutually beneficial dialogue is being maintained at the political level, as are very active business and cultural ties.

Next week, I [will visit](#) India. During talks with Prime Minister Modi, we will outline new large-scale initiatives for the further development of the especially privileged Russian-Indian relationship, the Russian-Indian strategic partnership.

This partnership brings real mutual benefit to both states. Bilateral trade shows good dynamics; ties are actively developing in the energy sector, innovation, space, and the production of coronavirus vaccines and medicines. There is extensive cooperation in the defence sector, including through the creation of joint ventures.

India is one of the authoritative centres of the multipolar world with a foreign policy philosophy and priorities that are closely aligned with our own. I am convinced that, relying on strong traditions of friendship and mutual understanding, we will continue working together to expand the full range of Russian-Indian ties.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I just briefly touched on Russia's relations with the states you represent. I hope that with your active participation, these relations will be filled with new content, mutually beneficial projects, useful initiatives and, in general, will make rapid progress for the benefit of the people of our countries and in the interests of international security and stability.

I wish you success, good health and all the best. I am not sure, it is unlikely that we will be able to meet before the New Year in this composition – the New Year is just around the corner. So, Happy New Year!

Thank you for your attention. Thank you very much.