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Press release on submitting a written reaction to the US response concerning security guarantees

On February 17, 2022, US Ambassador to Russia John Sullivan, summoned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia, was handed the following reaction to the earlier received US response to the Russian draft treaty between the Russian Federation and the United States of America on security guarantees:

- General Characteristics

We note that the United States has failed to give a constructive response to the basic elements of the Russia-drafted treaty with the US on security guarantees. This is with regard to the renunciation of NATO's further expansion, the revocation of the "Bucharest formula" on prospective NATO membership for Ukraine and Georgia, and desisting from the creation of military bases on the territory of states, which were formerly constituent entities of the USSR and which are not members of the Alliance, including the use of their infrastructure to conduct any kind of military activity, as well as the return of the NATO military potentials, including strike capabilities, and NATO infrastructure to their status as of the year 1997, when the Russia-NATO Founding Act was signed. These provisions are of fundamental importance for the Russian Federation.

The United States has disregarded the package nature of the Russian proposals, intentionally picking out only the "convenient" topics, which, in turn, were "twisted" to create advantages for the United States and its allies. This approach, as well as the accompanying rhetoric of US officials, can only support the justified doubts about Washington being really committed to remedying the European security situation.

Russia is concerned about the increasing US and NATO military activity in the direct vicinity of Russia's borders, whereas its "red lines," core security

interests, and sovereign right to defend them continue to be ignored. The ultimatums on withdrawing Russian forces from certain areas of Russia's territory, accompanied with threats to toughen sanctions, are unacceptable and undermine the prospects for reaching genuine agreements.

Given the lack of readiness on the part of the United States and its allies to come to terms on firm and legally binding guarantees on Russia's security, Moscow will have to respond, including by implementing certain military-technical measures.

- Ukraine

No "Russian invasion" in Ukraine, something officials in the United States and their allied countries have been predicting since last autumn, is happening or being planned; thus, claims of Russia's responsibility for an escalation cannot be seen as anything but an attempt to exert pressure and devalue Russia's security guarantees proposals.

Mentioning Russia's obligations under the 1994 Budapest Memorandum in this context is irrelevant to the intra-Ukrainian conflict and does not apply to the circumstances of Ukraine's internal conflict. Ukraine's loss of territorial integrity is the result of internal processes in that country.

Accusations against Russia in the US response of having occupied Crimea also hold no water. A coup took place in Kiev in 2014 whose initiators, with support from the United States and its allies, pursued a course to build a nationalist state infringing on the rights of Russians and the Russian-speaking population as well as other "non-titular" ethnicities. It is not surprising that in that situation, Crimeans voted for reunification with Russia. The decision of the people in Crimea and Sevastopol to reunite with the Russian Federation was made through the free expression of will by exercising the right to self-determination under the UN Charter. There was no use of force or threat of force. Which country Crimea belongs to is a settled matter.

Should Ukraine be accepted to NATO, a tangible threat will arise that the Kiev regime may try to get Crimea back using force and dragging the United States and its allies (under Article 5 of the Washington Treaty) into a direct armed conflict with Russia, with all the consequences that come with it.

The recurring statement in the US response of Russia having allegedly heated up the conflict in Donbass, is groundless. The conflict was strictly an intra-Ukrainian affair. Settling this conflict is only possible by implementing the Minsk agreements and the Package of Measures, with the order of priority and responsibility clearly stated in it and unanimously confirmed by UN Security

Council Resolution 2202, including by the United States, France and the UK. Kiev, Donetsk and Lugansk are named as the parties to the conflict in paragraph 2 of the "Package of Measures" approved by this resolution. None of these documents say anything about Russia's responsibility for the conflict in Donbass. Russia and the OSCE act as intermediaries in the main negotiation format – the Contact Group – and, along with Berlin and Paris, in the Normandy format that develops recommendations for the belligerent parties and monitors compliance with these recommendations.

The following steps have fundamental importance for the de-escalation of the situation in Ukraine: forcing Kiev to comply with the Package of Measures, ceasing weapon supplies to Ukraine, recalling all Western advisors and instructors, NATO countries' forgoing any joint drills with the Armed Forces of Ukraine and withdrawing any earlier supplied foreign weapons from the territory of Ukraine.

In this respect, it should be noted that, during the news conference following the talks with French President Emmanuel Macron in Moscow on February 7, 2022, President Vladimir Putin stressed that we are open to a dialogue and urge everybody to “think about creating stable security conditions for everyone, equal for all participants in international affairs.”

- Configuration of forces

We are noting that, in its response to Russian proposals, the United States insists that progress in improving the situation in the field of European security can only be achieved in conditions of de-escalation, as regards Russia's threatening actions directed against Ukraine. As we understand, this implies a demand that Russian forces be withdrawn from Ukrainian borders. At the same time, the United States is only ready to discuss mutual obligations to refrain from deploying permanent forces with combat objectives on Ukrainian territory and to consider the possibility of discussing the matter of conventional armed forces. As far as everything else is concerned, the US party remains silent on our proposals contained in Article 4.2 and Article 5.1 of the draft bilateral treaty and states that the current configuration of US and NATO forces is limited, proportional, and that it completely meets obligations under the Russia-NATO Founding Act.

We assume that the deployment of the Russian Federation's Armed Forces on Russian territory does not infringe and cannot infringe on fundamental US interests. We would like to recall that there are no Russian forces on Ukrainian territory.

At the same time, the United States and its allies have expanded their military infrastructure eastward and deployed troop contingents on the territory of new members. They circumvented the CFE Treaty's restrictions and used a very loose interpretation of the provisions of the Russia-NATO Founding Act on renouncing the additional permanent deployment of substantial military forces. The situation that has evolved as a result of these actions is unacceptable. We insist on the withdrawal of all US military units and weapons, deployed in Central and Eastern Europe, Southeastern Europe and the three Baltic states. We are convinced that national potentials in these zones are quite sufficient. We are ready to discuss this matter on the basis of Articles 4 and 5 of the Russian draft treaty.

- Indivisible security

While reading the US response, we failed to see any confirmation of the fact that the US party is fully committed to unflinchingly honouring the principle of indivisible security. Generalised statements that the US party takes into account this postulate directly contradict Washington's unwillingness to renounce a counter-productive and destabilising line to create advantages for itself and its allies at the expense of Russia's security interests. This is exactly what is happening as a result of the unrestrained implementation of NATO's policy, with the leading role of the US, aimed at the completely unlimited geostrategic and military development of post-Soviet space, including Ukrainian territory. We see this matter as particularly sensitive. All this is taking place in direct proximity to Russia's borders. They are therefore ignoring our "red lines" and basic security interests, and they are rejecting Russia's inalienable right to uphold them. It goes without saying that we find this unacceptable.

Additionally, we would like to recall that this principle is formalised in the preamble of the 2011 Treaty between the Russian Federation and the United States of America on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms. In February 2021, the parties agreed to extend the Treaty for another five years without any exemptions. This principle is also formalised in a number of fundamental OSCE and Russia-NATO documents, approved at the highest level, namely, in the preamble of the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, the 1990 Charter of Paris for a New Europe, the 1997 Russia-NATO Founding Act, the 1999 Istanbul Charter for European Security, the 2002 Russia-NATO Declaration signed in Rome, and the 2010 Astana Declaration of the OSCE Summit.

We note that the response that we received refers to Washington's

commitment to the concept of indivisible security. But the document downgrades it to the right of states to freely choose or change ways of facilitating their security, including allied treaties. This freedom is not absolute and accounts for only half of the well-known formula, formalised in the Charter for European Security. Its second part stipulates that, while exercising this right, the concerned parties should not strengthen their national security at the expense of other states' security. We cannot consider the letter that we received from NATO, dated February 10, 2022, as a reply to Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's message of January 28, 2022 on this matter, to US Secretary of State Antony Blinken. We requested a reply in a national capacity.

- NATO's open-door policy

The US is reiterating its "strong support" for NATO's "open-door policy." However, this policy runs counter to the fundamental commitments made as part of the CSCE/OSCE, above all the commitment "to refrain from strengthening one's own security at the expense of others." Moreover, this is not consistent with the alliance's policy documents either. According to a decision of the NATO Foreign Ministers meeting in Copenhagen on June 6-7 1991, the alliance "will neither seek unilateral advantage from the changed situation in Europe nor threaten the legitimate interests of any state," try to "isolate any country, nor to seek a new division of the Continent."

We call on the United States and NATO to return to fulfilling their international obligations with regard to maintaining peace and security. We expect concrete proposals from NATO members on the content and format of a legal confirmation of NATO refraining from any further eastward expansion.

- Package deal

We have noted the US' willingness to take specific actions with regard to certain arms control and risk reduction measures. We have also noted that Washington has finally recognised a number of Russia's respective proposals and initiatives advanced in recent years, as reasonable and justified.

At the same time, we must once again point out to the American side that the security guarantee proposals advanced by Russia call for a comprehensive and long-term resolution of the unacceptable situation that continues to develop in the Euro-Atlantic region. Above all, this involves creating a stable foundation for a new security architecture including an agreement on NATO refraining from further actions that harm Russia's security. This remains an unchangeable imperative for us. If this strong foundation is not built, any interrelated arms

control and military risk reduction measures that ensure restraint and predictability of military activity in certain areas – even if an agreement on this is reached – will not be sustainable in the long term.

Thus, Russia's proposal is a package deal and should be considered in its entirety, not item by item.

In this regard, we would like to focus on the lack of a constructive reaction from Washington and Brussels to the most important elements of Russia's initiative that we have clearly identified. As for arms control, we consider such measures only in the wider context of a comprehensive package approach to resolving the security guarantees problem.

- Post-START and the security equation

The United States is suggesting that we start drafting measures on continuing the START Treaty immediately as part of the dialogue on strategic stability. However, in the process the Americans are trying to formalise an approach that has not been coordinated with us. This approach is focused exclusively on nuclear weapons. Moreover, it disregards the capability of these and other weapons to pose a direct threat to the national territory of the other side. This unilateral view contradicts the understanding reached at the Russia-US summit in Geneva on June 16, 2021 regarding the comprehensive nature of the strategic dialogue that is necessary to lay a foundation for future arms control and risk reduction measures.

Russia will continue to advocate an integrated approach to strategic issues. We suggest drafting a new “security equation” through a cooperative effort.

We have informed the Americans about the components of our concept – and this remains relevant – for example, during meetings on a strategic dialogue, and in the working document on the components, which we sent on December 17, 2021.

- Deployment of nuclear weapons outside national territory

In its response, the United States did not specifically respond to our proposal on withdrawing nuclear weapons from other countries to its own national territory and renouncing further deployment of nuclear weapons outside national territory. The Americans only mentioned the need to discuss the problem of non-strategic nuclear arms during a strategic dialogue, regardless of the peculiarities of their deployments or other factors that affect mutual security.

We would like to explain that our proposals are designed to resolve the problem of US nuclear weapons capable of striking targets on Russian territory

being deployed in non-nuclear NATO member countries, in violation of the NPT. This would include elimination of the infrastructure for the rapid deployment of such weapons in Europe and the cessation of the NATO practice of holding nuclear deterrence exercises with the participation of non-nuclear NATO countries. It is impossible to discuss non-strategic nuclear arms without removing this irritant.

- Ground-based intermediate- and shorter-range missiles

We consider this issue one of the priorities of the Russian-US dialogue on strategic stability. We believe this category of arms is an essential component of a new “security equation” that Russia and the United States must develop together.

We continue to proceed from Russia’s topical post-INF initiatives that are based on the idea of reciprocal, verifiable moratoriums on the deployment of ground-based intermediate- and shorter-range missiles in Europe. In principle, we are open to a substantive discussion of the ways of implementing it. In the process, we note that Washington still has a vague approach to the main parameters of the potential measures to control these weapons, primarily, coverage that should spread to all nuclear and non-nuclear arms in the given range.

We have noted that the United States is using the Russian approach that provides for mutual settlement of reciprocal concerns in the context of the earlier INF Treaty. It is possible to consider the US-proposed version of our idea on mutual verification measures as regards Aegis Ashore systems in Romania and Poland and some facilities in the European part of Russia in the future.

As President of Russia Vladimir Putin emphasised in his statement on October 26, 2020 (the US has repeatedly been informed about this idea since then), the potential transparency measures as regards Russian facilities on which agreement must be reached, could include control over the absence of the Russian 9M729 missile there. As a reminder, this is a goodwill gesture because the characteristics of 9M729 missile do not contradict the requirements of the former INF Treaty in any way and because the United States has not presented any evidence to prove its accusations against Russia. That said, the Americans ignored our voluntary demonstration of the 9M729 missile, its technical specifications and its launcher, on January 23, 2019 when this treaty was still in force.

- Heavy bombers and surface warships.

We have noted the American side's attention to Russia's idea on additional risk mitigation measures in relation to heavy bomber flights in the vicinity of the parties' national borders. We consider this a subject for discussion and we can see a potential for mutually acceptable agreements here. We would like to point out to an equally important element of Russia's package proposal related to the identical cruises by surface warships, which also involve serious risks.

- Military exercises and maneuvers.

The United States did not respond to the proposals in Paragraph 2 of Article 4 of the Russian draft agreement. Apparently, the American side believes that military tensions can be eased by increasing transparency and implementing additional danger reduction measures as part of the West's proposals on updating the Vienna Document.

We consider such an approach to be unrealistic, one-sided, and aimed at "X-raying" the Russian Armed Forces' activity. The confidence- and security-building measures under the Vienna Document of 2011 are relevant to the current situation. The necessary conditions should be created to start discussing the possibility of their upgrade. For this, the United States and its allies ought to renounce their Russia containment policy and take concrete, practical measures to de-escalate the military-political situation, including as proposed in Paragraph 2 of Article 4 of Russia's draft agreement.

As regards the prevention of incidents on the high seas and in the airspace above them, we welcome the US readiness for appropriate consultations. However, this work cannot replace the effort to solve the key problems highlighted by Russia.

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