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Briefing by Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova, Moscow, March 29, 2022

61-77 minutes

Upcoming ministerial conference of Afghanistan's Neighbouring Countries in the PRC (Tunxi)

On March 31, Tunxi (PRC) will host a third ministerial conference of Afghanistan's Neighbouring Countries (Russia, China, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan). Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov will head the Russian delegation.

The participants plan to discuss the coordination of regional efforts on humanitarian and socio-economic assistance for Afghanistan and to compare approaches on countering the threats of terrorism and drug trafficking from Afghan territory.

On the sidelines of the meeting, the foreign ministers of Afghanistan's neighbours will conduct talks with a Taliban delegation; the participants in the expanded Three will hold a meeting on Afghanistan at the level of special representatives (Russia, PRC, the United States and Pakistan); and some participants will hold bilateral meetings. We will update you and announce the meetings. Please monitor the Foreign Ministry website and our social media pages.

After his visit to China, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov will go

for a regional tour and will take part in a number of bilateral meetings in Moscow next week. We will inform you about his schedule in more detail a bit later.

Update on Ukraine

At present, the Russian armed forces' [special military operation](#) is being carried out in Ukraine. According to the country's leadership, it proceeds in strict accordance with the plan. Russian President Vladimir Putin emphasised that its goals and objectives would be fulfilled.

The Russian military is doing everything possible to avoid civilian casualties. They do not attack civilian targets, and they open humanitarian corridors daily to help evacuate civilians from harm's way. Since the beginning of the operation, as of March 28, 469,000 people, including 97,000 children, have been evacuated from Ukraine, the DPR and the LPR. As many as 9,500 temporary refugee accommodation centres are operational in Russia. Russia is supplying humanitarian aid, essential supplies, medications and food to the republics of Donbass and Ukraine. Russia has delivered over 5,000 tonnes of humanitarian cargo since March 2.

Despite the fact that people in Ukraine need urgent humanitarian assistance, the Western countries are increasing supplies of all types of weapons to Ukraine, including small arms, anti-tank guided missiles, anti-tank missile systems, man-portable air defence systems, ammunition and equipment. The United States is especially good at pouring billions of dollars into it. Poland acts as a transit point. Armed Ukrainian units are shelling rural and urban communities and killing civilians with Western weapons. Donetsk, Makeyevka, Gorlovka, Yasinovataya, and Dokuchayevsk as well as other towns in

Donbass are regularly shelled by the Ukrainian military with heavy weapons, including the Tochka-U missile system. However, the West prefers not to see this.

The Ukrainian neo-Nazis' treatment of civilians remains terrifying. People are taken hostage, used as a human shield, and are not allowed to leave combat zones. It was reported recently that the Crimean Tatars living in the liberated Kherson region were being threatened by radicals from the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People. They force these people to stage anti-Russia rallies and threaten to kill their relatives, including children, who remain in the territory controlled by the Kiev regime.

The neo-Nazis' treatment of captured Russians and DPR and LPR citizens horrified the world. So much for modern democracies. The other day, the world shuddered from seeing the harrowing footage of the atrocities committed by Ukrainian militants, who not only abuse Russian prisoners of war, but also reveal their ferocious nature. They shoot them in the legs and then leave them without medical help. This is savage cruelty bordering on sadism. The Ukrainian militants seem to enjoy this. All war crimes are recorded, and the perpetrators will be held accountable.

Don't even try to pretend that what everyone has seen never happened. I have read numerous materials posted by bloggers and journalists. They say that war is "dehumanising." No. These extremists and militants have long been dehumanised. This process and the fact that it is supported by the West (morally, politically, financially and with weapons) have led to the situation at hand. They have been doing exactly that for eight years in Donetsk and Lugansk. They buried people alive, killed children, and held civilians in basements. The militias who fell into their

“paws” learned firsthand about the sadism and cannibal cruelty of Ukrainian nationalist battalions. They were mistreated not because they participated in hostilities, they got it in retaliation for not surrendering to the nationalist ideology and not swearing allegiance to those who were considered enemies as defined by the Nuremberg Tribunal verdicts. They did not bow to evil and upheld everything that has always been considered (and included on paper in legal acts) the correct, righteous and dignified thing to do.

The situation with four Russian Rosatom subsidiary employees who delivered special cargo to the Rovno NPP under contract is egregious. For more than a month now, the Ukrainian authorities have kept them locked in a railway car at the station. We demand that the Ukrainian side release our citizens and ensure their safe return home. We call on the IAEA to assist us in this matter.

Ukrainian embassies abroad continue to recruit volunteers and mercenaries to participate in the hostilities (I have mentioned this on many occasions). The authorities of the countries where this recruitment is carried out largely turn a blind eye to this violation of international standards, including Article 41 of 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations which says that using diplomatic missions for purposes incompatible with their function is illegal. If it is legal, though, let these countries tell us so directly. Better yet, let them do so in public, so they won't go back on their words later, as they usually do. If they believe that embassies can engage in recruiting activities, let them say so openly so that people in these and other countries are aware of it as well. But if that happens, no one should be surprised to see the processes that start unfolding en masse after this kind of revelation.

The talks between the Russian and Ukrainian delegations started on February 28 and have been ongoing for a month now. The agenda includes Ukraine's permanent neutral and non-aligned status and security guarantees, its demilitarisation, denazification, the recognition of modern territorial realities, and restoration of the status of the Russian language and the rights of its Russian-speaking citizens.

In other words, we are talking about Ukraine returning to its original statehood as enshrined in the 1990 Declaration of State Sovereignty. We hope that during the next round of talks in Istanbul the Ukrainian delegation will be constructive in its approach.

Over the past eight years, the people of Donbass have been affected by shelling, blockades and genocide, and the people of Ukraine have suffered from discrimination and abuse on the part of the nationalist regime. What Ukraine needs today is not a supply of Western weapons, but humanitarian aid and progress in the talks in order to achieve peace and stability and put an end to this years-long inferno. Pretending that eight previous years didn't exist is not going to work for anyone.

Day of Unity between the Peoples of Russia and Belarus on April 2

On April 2, Russia and Belarus celebrate the Day of Unity between their peoples. This day marks the signing of the Treaty on the Formation of the Community of Russia and Belarus in 1996. The document confirmed the two countries' commitment to continue strengthening bilateral ties based on a common years-long history, spiritual closeness and friendship.

Exactly one year later, on April 2, 1997, Moscow and Minsk reached a new level of integration by signing the Treaty on the

Union of Belarus and Russia. That document, which will mark its 25th anniversary this year, included even more ambitious goals – to build up comprehensive cooperation, and to ensure the socioeconomic development, security and defence capabilities of the two states. Subsequently, these objectives were reflected in the Treaty on the Creation of a Union State, signed on December 8, 1999.

All these years, the union development process has been steadily advancing. Citizens of Russia and Belarus are already used to equal rights when it comes to freedom of movement, choice of residence, employment, education, social security and pensions. Our economic interaction has deepened; mutual trade has grown; industrial cooperation has strengthened; and major joint projects have been implemented.

A new package of integration documents approved by the Supreme State Council of the Union State on November 4, 2021 was a most important milestone on this path. It included 28 industry-related union programmes, as well as an updated Military Doctrine and Migration Policy Concept of the Union State. These documents were aimed at harmonising our laws in various areas and pave the way for a unified macroeconomic and monetary policy, as well as for common markets, migration and defence spaces.

Russians and Belarusians are reliable allies, and have always been. Moscow and Minsk are closely coordinating their policies on a wide range of issues, jointly defending national interests in the international arena, and confronting common challenges and threats, including the illegitimate sanctions pressure from the West. The purpose of our cooperation is to strengthen security in the region, and to ensure the steady development of our countries and the wellbeing of the two fraternal peoples.

We invite all Russians and Belarusians to take part in the celebration of this important date in bilateral relations. For example, visit the exhibition opening on April 2 at VDNKh in Moscow or attend the Bolshoi Theatre gala night in Minsk. On March 31, we invite everyone to join the stream of the Expert Media Forum dedicated to the Day of Unity between the Peoples of Russia and Belarus on the website of the Standing Committee of the Union State.

Greetings to the citizens of Russia and Belarus on this occasion.

Update on cargo traffic at the Polish-Belarusian border

The Foreign Ministry has been recently receiving many reports about the cargo transport problems on the Polish-Belarusian border, including complaints from drivers. One of them was a letter from Andrey Kurushin, director of the Association of International Automobile Carriers.

We are doing all we can in trying to cooperate with Polish officials. I used the word “trying” for a reason because Warsaw is doing its best to prevent this cooperation. We informed Polish Ambassador to Russia Krzysztof Krajewski that it is unacceptable to block trucks from Russia at the Koroshin border crossing. We promptly sent a note to the Polish Foreign Ministry, demanding measures to prevent the illegal restrictions on Russian auto carriers.

The situation improved for some time, but now demonstrators are blocking the passage of trucks while the Polish authorities do next to nothing about it. The lines of trucks stretch for many kilometres, and these are not just road trains with Russian and Belarusian number plates but any cargo transport moving from Poland to Belarus and Russia.

Unfortunately, considering the legal nihilism (in reality this is

blatant disrespect for the norms of laws regulating bilateral relations) of the Polish authorities and their readiness to act even to the detriment of their own businesses, we can expect various unfavourable scenarios with international cargo shipments on the Polish-Belarusian border. We would like to avoid them. We have sent Warsaw all the signals expressed in the relevant documents.

Demolishing a monument to Soviet soldiers who liberated Poland

On March 23, another monument to Soviet soldiers who liberated Poland was demolished in the village of Chrzowice, Opole Province. The monument was put up in 1949 at the site where 620 Red Army soldiers from the 1st Ukrainian Front were killed.

This is not the first time we have seen this shameful phenomenon, this war against Soviet monuments in Poland. A Polish Defence Minister once said that Auschwitz had been liberated by Ukrainians because the death camp was taken by one of the USSR's Ukrainian Fronts. This argument played to Warsaw at the time, as they, with their sick logic, thought. Now, although the point at issue is the monument to the Ukrainian Front Red Army soldiers killed in the war, this argument fails. This is beyond the defective logic; there is no logic here.

The Kiev regime is not afraid of lies. Speaking to members of parliament from different countries, President Vladimir Zelensky said how his country honoured the heroes of World War II and of the Great Patriotic War and holds them sacred, meaning there is no Nazism in Ukraine. Where is Ukraine now? They see what is happening. They have never raised their voice or sent documents in protest, or brought up issues regarding any

monument put up in Europe, for example Eastern Europe, in memory, among other things, of ethnic Ukrainians. By no means. The same way they are doing now.

Everything Vladimir Zelensky or his representatives try to say now is lies and untruths. They only do it to tell the members of parliaments around the world another “fairy tale” about Ukraine’s efforts to fight neo-Nazism and various manifestations of it or oppose fascism and so on. How are you fighting it? You did not fight to preserve a single monument. You have never found time to get off your warm seats in Ukrainian embassies in the countries where this happened to stand up for a single monument or to just make sure they were in good condition.

We did this. We have never shifted responsibility to anyone. We understand that this is for the memory of our ancestors. Ukraine has never protested against the demolition of or acts of vandalism against monuments to their heroes, whom only now do they call this when they talk to the Western community. In reality, deep inside, in their hearts and their private lives they never thought they were heroes. They hated them quietly and mischievously and openly demolished these monuments and bas reliefs in their country or splattered paint over them and replaced them with monuments to Stepan Bandera or Roman Shukhevic. The latter are the genuine ideologists of modern neo-Nazism in Ukraine.

Everything being done in Poland now violates the existing bilateral agreements and the standards of a civilised society. Suffice it to say that by now only about a hundred memorials have survived of the 561, which in 1997 were included, with Polish agreement, on the List of Memorial Sites of the Defenders of the Fatherland Killed on the Territory of Poland. The collective West as a whole and each individual country

defaulted on their legal obligations and the principles of respect for law as such. There are many examples of this.

The destruction of the memorial in Chrzowice was particularly abhorrent as they tried to give the event ceremonial significance: the demolition of the monument was aired live in the presence of Polish officials. I hear numerous speculations to the effect that this was the right thing to do since Russia is conducting its special military operation. Allegedly, nothing would have happened if Russia had not been involved in this operation. But it would have! They would have done it “under the radar” through the hands of some criminals or barbarians in the dead of the night so they would never have had to find those who desecrated or destroyed the monument, as usual.

Now they are out in the open. They are doing this not just openly but ceremoniously to the cameras, maybe to get into the history books so as not to blame it on “delinquents” later. But they are not delinquents; this is the official approach. We saw and recorded the whole thing. But there is one thing that has changed: the secret is out. Things that used to be carefully concealed or given an “air of civility” have come out in such a terrible and unsavoury light.

The show (the ceremonious demolition of the monument to the Red Army soldiers of the 1st Ukrainian Front) was led by Karol Nawrocki, head of the Institute of National Remembrance, a body responsible for Poland’s current “history policy,” who explained that such monuments “glorify totalitarianism” while the red stars “symbolise the crimes of the Communist regime” and “along with the Nazi swastika are responsible for unleashing World War II.” “The red star has no place in a free, independent and democratic Poland,” declaimed Mr Nawrocki.

However, neither he nor any of the other Polish “figures” recalled the main point: had it not been for the hundreds of thousands of people with the red stars who fell as they fought Nazism in Chrzowice and countless other Polish cities, towns or just out in the open, they would not have today’s “free, independent and democratic Poland.” Quite likely, neither would they be in existence. They have everything at the cost of our heroes’ lives. As has always been the case.

First their collective “civilised democracies” raise monsters. Then our boys have to go and fight those monsters.

Didn’t Hitler come to power through democratic means, as historical documents show? Yes, he did. He was proud of the German democracy in the 1930s. The people of Germany who supported him wore insignia and gave the Nazi salute. The cult of Nazism and the man-hating ideology were imposed, including an entire range of things that are, in principle, unacceptable for civilised people and ordinary human beings, in general. The whole of Europe applauded him, they lauded him to the skies, and they loved him. They pushed him to attack the East, but they got him in the West instead. Those who are now being blamed for everything took over later on. Just like in the 1930s and the 1940s, all these criminal acts were concocted in the West, and the East had to sort things out. Let’s recall a song by Vladimir Vysotsky; everything is just the same today. The only difference is that they bred monsters on the territory of Ukraine.

This seemed to be a wonderful plan because no one believed that anything like this would emerge in Ukraine, a country that was drenched in blood of the atrocities perpetrated by the Nazis and Nazi collaborators.

President Vladimir Zelensky said that, as a representative of the

Jewish nation, which knows what Holocaust is all about, he cannot permit such things to happen. This is good camouflage. What do we see today? We can see video footage showing prisoners being tortured. This does not happen overnight. These things come out after being hidden deep inside the people who perpetrate such acts. History repeats itself. We discussed this many times. It is necessary to correct mistakes. For eight years, and before 2014, we warned the world about a terrible monster being created and raised on the territory of modern Ukraine. We warned that this would lead to a collapse.

At that time, the people who installed monuments in gratitude to Red Army soldiers on the territory of Poland understood whom these monuments honoured: the soldiers who had given their lives to liberate the people of Poland. The price of liberation also included unborn generations of this country's citizens. And the grandchildren of those Polish citizens who had been saved and liberated by the Red Army were not burdened by the historical memory and elementary human emotions, such as gratitude, dignity and decency, and they have no misgivings about perpetrating vile deeds, live and in an official setting.

The 79th anniversary of ending the Battle of Rzhev

The Battle of Rzhev raged during the Great Patriotic War in the Rzhev-Vyazma salient from January 8, 1942 until March 31, 1943, and comprised four strategic offensive operations involving elements of the Red Army's West and Kalinin fronts. Its top objectives were to destroy the main elements of the Wehrmacht's Army Group Centre, to liberate Rzhev, Sychovka and Vyazma and to eliminate the Rzhev-Vyazma salient, which served as a bridgehead for German troops.

Elements of the 30th Army of the Red Army's Western Front

liberated Rzhev on March 3, 1943. Before the war, the town had a population of 56,000, and only 362 people, including prisoners at the Old Believers' Intercession Church, remained there on liberation day. The retreating Nazis herded 248 people, the town's entire surviving population, inside this church on Kalinin Street and planted a mine there. The starving people of Rzhev spent two days inside the church, suffering from cold and hearing the explosions outside. They expected to die every minute. On the third day, Soviet field engineers removed the explosives from the basement, located and defused the mine. By late March, the frontline receded from Moscow by another 130-160 kilometres.

Does this ring any bells? The ideology is the same, that is, to gather civilians, drag them inside basements and force them to hide inside shelters. The idea is to deploy military equipment there, hide behind the backs of civilians, under the pretext of liberating them, and to fight. The logic remains the same. When a country's armed forces are defending their fellow citizens, they are telling people to use humanitarian corridors, first and foremost, and they are trying to ensure their safety. However, this concerns the regular armed forces, rather than people who are contaminated with neo-Nazi ideas. This is an established fact, and it has nothing to do with emotions and specific viewpoints. Television coverage can be different. This is what television channels are doing all over the world.

The Battle of Rzhev ranks among the bloodiest engagements of the Great Patriotic War. According to official statistics, Soviet forces lost over one million soldiers near Rzhev, including about 400,000 killed and missing in action, soldiers who died of their wounds, as well as those taken prisoner.

The Battle of Rzhev pinned down substantial elements of the

Wehrmacht's Army Group Centre for a long time and seriously depleted them; the Germans were also forced to divert reserve units from other fronts. The Red Army's active operations made it possible to thwart a number of large-scale German offensives.

On March 2, 1978, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet (Parliament) of the USSR issued a decree on awarding the Order of the Great Patriotic War First Class to the town of Rzhev for the courage displayed by its residents in the struggle against the Nazi invaders during the Great Patriotic War. On October 8, 2007, the President of Russia signed Executive Order No. 1345 on conferring the title City of Military Glory on the town of Rzhev.

On June 30, 2020, the Rzhev Memorial to the Soviet Soldier was unveiled in the Tver Region in an official ceremony.

President of Russia Vladimir Putin and President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko attended the event. The Rzhev Memorial honours Soviet soldiers who were killed in the Battle of Rzhev in 1942 and 1943.

I visited the monument earlier this year, and I strongly recommend everyone to go there. This is highly important for understanding our history. A wonderful local museum provides a detailed insight into those events.

45th anniversary of Soviet-Mozambican Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation

March 31 marks the 45th anniversary of the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the People's Republic of Mozambique, which laid a solid legal foundation for long-term bilateral relations. Russian-Mozambican interaction is based on strong ties of friendship and cooperation, which developed during the struggle of the Mozambican people for independence, and

which continue to develop today.

Our countries have achieved a high level of political dialogue. The official visit of the President of Mozambique to Russia in 2019 was an important event in this regard. Moscow and Maputo closely coordinate their actions at multilateral platforms, primarily in the UN, provide mutual support for candidates to leadership positions at various international bodies, defend the basic principles of a multipolar world order, security and the rule of law.

Our interparliamentary, humanitarian and other ties are growing stronger. Trade and economic cooperation are showing positive trend, with an important role played by the Russian-Mozambican Intergovernmental Commission on Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation established in 2018.

We congratulate our Mozambican friends on the 45th anniversary of this treaty.

Acceptance of applications for the 2022 Primakov International Prize

The Russia-Islamic World Strategic Vision Group has opened a call for entries and publication of works for the 2022 Primakov International Award. Applications will be accepted until November 1, 2022.

The award is presented for creative and/or scientific and educational work, which has made a significant contribution to strengthening mutual understanding and cooperation between the Russian Federation and the countries of the Islamic world, to the mutual enrichment of cultural and national traditions, and to the development of dialogue between faiths and civilisations.

Creative works written in Russian (for the CIS countries),

English and Arabic are eligible for the award. The award places no restrictions on the authors' age, citizenship, place of residence or place of publication of their research.

The works nominated for the award should be published and presented to a wide readership abroad within 2021-2022.

More details for submitting applications are available on the Russia-Islamic World Strategic Vision Group website.

Answers to media questions:

Question: Can you comment on State Duma deputy Mikhail Delyagin's provocative statement threatening Azerbaijan?

Maria Zakharova: I noticed that the presidential press secretary, Dmitry Peskov, had already commented on this. We fully share this assessment. We regard any such statements as absolutely inadmissible and irresponsible. They in no way reflect the official position of the Russian leadership whose aim is to promote allied interaction and strategic partnership with Baku. We are confident that the State Duma's leadership will also come up with a relevant assessment of Mr Delyagin's provocative remarks.

Question: Can you comment on the Strategic Compass, the EU's new military and political doctrine approved on March 25?

Maria Zakharova: The EU's doctrinal document on security and defence, which Brussels calls the Strategic Compass, and which was approved on March 25, is not, in all fairness, up to the level of an independent strategy and cannot serve as a true and reliable navigator in an increasingly complex geopolitical situation.

This is yet another indication of the EU's unwillingness to carry

out an unbiased analysis of why the European security situation has deteriorated and to identify ways of normalising it.

Its very first lines declare the intention to build up confrontation with Russia whose international actions have been branded as a long-term and direct threat to European security. Even this formula is far removed from the realities. We are Europe. Look at the map, at the part of Russia that is European by comparison with the territory occupied by the EU countries? This is where they should start. The EU is trying yet again to shift the blame to our country for the majority of challenges and problems it is facing. They don't think it necessary to do justice to Russia's place and role on the European continent or to recognise the legitimacy of our security interests. They have distorted beyond recognition the circumstances of Mikhail Saakashvili's military adventure in attacking South Ossetia in August 2008. They are hushing up the facts of the unconstitutional coup in Kiev and the subsequent democratic vote in Crimea in support of its reunification with Russia in 2014. It is just a false mirror. They are dismissing the stabilising role of Russian peacekeepers in Transnistria. But Brussels is not ashamed to cover up for its Kiev clients, who spent eight years sabotaging the Minsk Package of Measures for settlement in Donbass and who were nurturing plans to "mop it up" by force.

There is a trend towards the EU's militarisation and its coalescence with the United States and NATO (if earlier we said that they were twins, today NATO has "gobbled up" the EU ideologically by politicising its agenda, although the EU has been created as an economic community). The Compass describes the two as the most important and reliable strategic partners of Brussels. Thereby they have made yet another step

towards devaluing the ambition to enhance the EU's own "strategic autonomy," an ambition its leaders have repeatedly stated. The discrepancy between this claim and the EU's real-life obedience to Washington with regard to the majority of regional agendas outlined by the document is just one of many contradictions the Compass abounds in. Brussels declares that there is no room for the use of force in the 21st century but simultaneously has a stake in rushing lethal weapons to third countries and creating a EU combat potential to carry out military interventions elsewhere. They reject the spheres of influence concept, but at the same time set the goal of strengthening their presence in eastern and southern neighbourhood countries lest "others take their place." They declare a commitment to free choice of means to ensure states' own security and yet deny that right to Russia's ally, Belarus.

One has to state that the Strategic Compass that is now available to Brussels has failed to meet its main intended purpose of providing a comprehensive analysis of the military and political situation within and outside the EU. It has fallen victim to the anti-Russia anomaly present in the EU space. As a result, they have a time-serving and propaganda-laced document. The compass arrow is hopelessly out of order. The attempt to move in the direction it shows will not lead the EU to peace and stability. This is already obvious. More likely, it will lead to an escalation of tension, a deeper split on the continent, and the loss of the EU's own positions and international influence.

We call on the European Union to renounce its confrontational approach towards Russia and its allies, an approach that is doomed to failure by definition. They should return to the principles of the UN Charter and the 1975 Helsinki Final Act of

the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe regarding equality, the right of peoples to choose their own destiny, and cooperation between states.

When I first saw the news headlines saying that Brussels now has a “strategic compass,” the name of Jules Verne immediately popped up in my mind. You may remember his fascinating book, *A Captain at Fifteen*. One of its characters, a Portuguese ruffian, who wanted to get to a slave-trading country, put a hatchet under his ship’s compass. Naturally, the ship changed course. I hope the United States will not put its war hatchet under Brussels’ “strategic compass” so that it can avoid going off course once and for all.

Question: How can you comment on the appeal from Turkish Presidential Spokesperson Ibrahim Kalin asking Moscow to drop its recommendations to Kiev to recognise the independence of Donbass and Crimea’s accession to Russia?

Maria Zakharova: We are grateful to Turkey for its mediation and the efforts that this country has been willing to make, specifically, with respect to holding Russia-Ukraine talks and settling the situation in general.

At the same time, we believe that this statement runs counter to the declared mediation. It is not an issue for Turkish representatives to comment on.

Question: On March 26, US President Joe Biden once again publicly insulted Vladimir Putin by calling him a “butcher” and said that the Russian President “cannot remain in power.” The US Department of State has already explained Biden’s words as his emotions talking and said that his statement was not an official position of Washington.

However, this and other incidents are clearly not helping the relations between the two countries. How will the Foreign Ministry respond in case the US leader makes similar statements in the future? Would you consider severing diplomatic relations with the United States if it continues to take more unfriendly steps?

Maria Zakharova: First of all, our high-ranking representatives have already commented on those words in a statement by the Presidential Executive Office. Second, it is surprising but these words caused more outrage in the United States itself. I saw new comments by American officials and public figures being reported in the media every hour. More than that, representatives of NATO countries also commented, using different tones. Some said that making such statements was unacceptable. Some directly condemned and demanded that Mr Biden retract his statement and others said it was regretful that the US President could not restrain his temper.

I hope that the US President will not commit something irreparable and dangerous for the entire world driven by this kind of emotions – that is, since the White House and the Department of State wrote that incident off as emotional.

We start to realise that emotions are beginning to prevail over reason, professionalism, restraint and logic. Hopefully, his emotional state will not bring the world to the brink of a catastrophe.

We spoke about Russia-US relations in great detail during the previous briefing and various interviews. In particular, Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov provided an in-depth comment on this agenda.

We proceed from the understanding that a dialogue in various

formats is necessary, with due consideration for the current reality in the development of bilateral relations. We have consistently noted that Washington, at different stages (starting with an active phase when the Democrats were in power and continued throughout President Barack Obama's two terms; then their approach mutated towards destroying the bilateral relations), was split between two fronts: fighting with the Republicans and the Republican President in its own country, and simultaneously with Russia. Now, with renewed vigour, they are finally driving at full speed into what they started planning in the 2010s. We have noted that and said where it could lead to. If they hoped or wanted to take this road and follow this road to the end, they should say it outright. Our view is that the development of the bilateral relations is not for appearances or perfunctory. It serves a purpose of improving the relations between nations in different areas where it is important, beneficial, interesting, helpful and necessary. We have always supported this kind of approach. Even during the most acute phases of confrontation, we reaffirmed our intention to build equal relations with Washington.

If the Americans make the choice that we see them leaning towards and which is, clearly, destroying bilateral relations, then they are to bear responsibility. How they are going to do this further is not for me to answer. You should address this question to them.

Question: The next round of Russian-Ukrainian talks will be held in Istanbul on March 29. Why has Istanbul been chosen as the venue? Will Turkey be involved as a third party, as an intermediary at the talks? Do Sergey Lavrov's words about the lack of trust for your Western partners mean that Moscow trusts Ankara, which supplied weapons

and Bayraktar drones to Ukraine?

Maria Zakharova: I wouldn't focus attention on the venue of the talks. It is not the main point. Initially, Ukraine presented many demands as regards the venue of the talks. It was not an issue for us. It is only important for the Ukrainian negotiators. The main and most important thing for us is the talks themselves, which the Kiev regime had asked for. As for the venue, it is a minor detail.

I would like to remind everyone that the talks began in Belarus. We are talking about continuing the negotiations outside Ukraine and Russia. They were first held in Belarus. We are grateful to our Belarusian partners for organising everything quickly, like brothers should.

As for why the talks are being held in Turkey now, and whether this contradicts the previous approach, it is a matter of politics. Politics is known to respond to different factors as they arise. However, there are also matters of principle. We have not abandoned them. I would like to say that Turkey has taken a more balanced and independent position than other countries amid the Western restrictions. Our Turkish partners have not joined the US and European sanctions against Russia, and they continue to act in the Black Sea straits in accordance with international law, despite some countries' calls to close the straits to Russian ships, and Turkey is also keeping its air open to Russian aircraft. Despite some delicate issues and our differences regarding Turkey's attitude to the situation in Ukraine, including on the matter of Crimea over the past years, which we discussed openly during our talks, the Russophobic campaign has not swept the Turkish government and people. They have not joined the anti-Russia hysterics that is engulfing the West.

Ankara's balanced position is one of the reasons why we accepted our Turkish friends' offer of assistance in the talks with Ukraine. We hope that our Turkish partners will help to make the current meeting with the Ukrainian delegation as effective and productive as possible.

I would like to use this occasion to express gratitude to Belarus. It has hosted three rounds of in-person talks.

Several other countries have offered their assistance. But today and tomorrow the talks will be held in Istanbul.

You have asked about mediation. This is not mediation, but the provision of a venue for the talks by Belarus, Turkey, or any other country. The talks themselves are being held between the Russian and the Ukrainian delegations. The issues on the agenda, including the neutral and non-bloc status for Ukraine, its demilitarisation and denazification, the restoration of the official status of the Russian language, and the recognition of the new territorial reality, concern our two countries.

I suggest that you go by the comments made by Vladimir Medinsky and other negotiators to understand what is taking place at the negotiating table.

Question: On March 24, Poland's Deputy Foreign Minister Marcin Przydacz said that Warsaw did not rule out the expulsion of the Russian ambassador, but that such a decision had not yet been taken. What does the Foreign Ministry think of such statements? Has the Foreign Ministry given any warning about the consequences for the Polish side in the event that a decision to expel the Russian ambassador is implemented? Can Russia impose preventive restrictions on the Polish diplomatic mission, and will it respond tit for tat?

Maria Zakharova: Warsaw has long been fully engaged in destroying bilateral relations. However, the Poles have recently "optimised" their actions. They believe that such an opportunity should not be missed. They have cast aside any remaining conventions and decency and abandoned the requirement to follow at least some legal standards. This is confirmed by the recent declaration of 45 employees of Russian foreign missions in Poland as "persona non grata" and the unprecedented blocking under absurd pretexts of our Embassy's accounts in Warsaw. The above-mentioned statement by Mr Przydacz, which he made in response to a question about possible further action by Warsaw in an interview with RMF-24 radio station, is of a similar vein. At the same time, he made it clear that this topic has not been discussed yet in practical terms. It is the destruction of bilateral relations although not de jure, but de facto....

One can only explain such statements by their over-the-top Russophobia and their own long-standing problems. At that, the well-known principle of reciprocity has long been in force in diplomacy. We resort to it. In this case, the situation will be no exception. We are going to act according to the same principle. None of the hostile Polish encroachments will remain unanswered.

Now, they say from time to time in the media that it is necessary to "try an extraordinary move" - for sure, "they will respond", "offer a hand of friendship", "do not retaliate", but "rise above it" or "demonstrate good will." We have already demonstrated this. I am not talking about patience. We have repeatedly spoken about it and officially published the information.

When US President Barack Obama was preparing to leave the Oval Office and the White House, he decided, for some

unknown reason, apparently in "revenge" for Clinton's failure to win the election, to slam the door and went on to expel an unprecedented number of Russian diplomats. We showed a "gesture of goodwill" and restraint and rose above it. We did not expel anyone from the US Embassy in Moscow; on the contrary, we invited them to New Year's Eve events with their families, showing that we can and do ignore certain petty (although it was not petty, of course) things. We realised that it was petty resentment that motivated the Americans. Was this somehow perceived at a proper level? It got even worse. Apparently, they saw it as weakness. They started expelling, insulting, making up certain pretexts, launched a whole propaganda campaign, and then the Skripals were added. Then it turned out that Trump's daughter showed him pictures of some unfortunate ducks, which moved him so much that he expelled Russian diplomats again.

By the example of a great power - the United States, we demonstrated, to ourselves and others, our goodwill and desire to rise above someone else's self-interest for the sake of future peoples and bilateral relations. How did it end? In the exact opposite direction.

I noted the episode when French President Emmanuel Macron spoke to his French electorate. A citizen of that great country came up to him and said that President Emmanuel Macron was telling them everything about Ukraine while he, a simple citizen, was unable to fill his car with petrol. For him this is the vital thing. As an example, he cited the fact that petrol in France had gone up by 30 cents and it was ruining his life. I was thinking how far removed they were from the policies of NATO, which includes France, and in many ways the EU, which also includes France. All that matters to them is a 30-cent increase in petrol prices. They have given no thought to how countries like Syria,

Libya or Belarus as well as Donetsk and Lugansk have been living under their sanctions for years. What kind of petrol do they use there? Our country has been subjected to massive sanctions attacks since 2014 (and some were imposed before that). But we overcame everything, established import substitution without creating problems or global crises in various areas. On the contrary, we overcame all difficulties without disrupting global value chains.

If every person, every citizen of France, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy could understand, how much pain, bitterness and devastation their governments are bringing to various regions of the world, and petrol prices there are not just 30 cents higher, but entire industries have disappeared because of the sanctions, because they had to re-adapt to the new realities, I think it would be a profound shock to them. But the citizens of Western countries are reliably protected from such shocks by the media, which does not tell them about such things.

Question: Does the Foreign Ministry plan to summon US Ambassador to Russia John J. Sullivan following Joe Biden's latest statements?

Maria Zakharova: We have summoned the US Ambassador and other US representatives on different occasions, and we have explained everything to them. In our March 21, 2022, press release, we noted unacceptable statements by the President of the United States. Before that, we also discussed and drew attention to similar developments.

In this case, US representatives at all levels, including the White House, the Department of State and even the Congress, with both parties speaking in one voice, which is something I have never seen before, disavowed Joe Biden's statements. In fact,

this is the first time that I have seen a sufficiently unanimous position rejecting statements by the US President who is a member of one of the parties. They usually become one voice when it comes to Russophobia. The US side itself disavowed this statement.

Question: Can you comment on the statements by the Mayor of Riga who has said that it is impossible to hold celebrations on May 9 while the conflict in Ukraine continues?

Maria Zakharova: Is this news? Earlier, they were forced to tolerate this holiday and St George ribbons, but they banned Red Army insignia. Today, they believe that they can write everything off, and that they no longer have to tolerate this. Speaking of local official authorities and political activists, they have never shared the feelings of gratitude that all normal people show for the memory of the fallen heroes of World War II and the Great Patriotic War. They act tolerant so as not to reveal their totally nationalist essence. Right now, they believe that everything is over, and that they no longer have to tolerate this. Developments in Ukraine are a pretext. The President of Latvia, the country's Prime Minister and the Mayor of Riga have suggested banning Victory Day celebrations in Latvia.

Latvia has long since had a bad reputation as a country attempting to falsify history and glorify Nazism at the highest level. We are recording numerous incidents where they desecrate memorials dedicated to those who gave their lives fighting Nazism.

All this amounts to evil revanchist restrictions. They are insulting the memory of the victims of World War II. We remember everything, and we will not forget this either. We are not

surprised that international institutions are failing to respond to this. They were called upon to protect freedom of speech, the interests of minorities and historical memory. However, they are catering to the time-serving interests of only one sphere. They are not even trying to be politically unbiased or simply objective, never mind remaining true to history.

Question: My question concerns the UN Security Council meeting on biological weapons laboratories in Ukraine. It appears that Russian diplomats in the UN are now facing prefabricated accusations from the West of alleged misinformation concerning facts about the operation of these biological labs, provided by Russia's Permanent Representative to the UN Vasily Nebenzya. Can we assume that in this context, the UN is capable of performing its functions as determined by the UN Charter?

Maria Zakharova: Please do not confuse statements made by countries' permanent representatives to the UN with statements made by the organisation itself.

As concerns the statements by the permanent representatives, in particular, the United States and its satellites, it is their indicative reaction. They were caught red-handed in the middle of extremely hazardous and unlawful military biological activity in Ukraine, directly threatening the Russian Federation. We reaffirm that the exposed facts violate Articles I and IV of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention.

We expect that the UN will play a key role in resolving this situation. Specifically, the UN Security Council could make a meaningful contribution to implementing Articles V and VI of the Convention, according to which state parties must consult with each other when addressing any issues that concern the

purpose of the Convention or its implementation, and must cooperate in any investigation into a potential breach of the obligations under the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention.

We have repeatedly stated that the effectiveness of the United Nations directly depends on whether its members have the political will to put their self-serving mindset on the back burner and devote themselves to equal cooperation with the aim of tackling the most pressing problems of modern times. The United Nations was coined as an autonomous organism rather than a platform seeking to promote the domination of a specific group of countries. This platform must ensure constructive cooperation between all the 193 member states.

Unfortunately, the collective West is persistent in its attempts to secure a monopoly on determining the future of the humankind, rehashing the world to its own liking and imposing its own idea of right and wrong on others – by substituting right with wrong and passing wrong off as right. The United Nations is one of the platforms where they are pursuing this irresponsible course, including in the context of the Ukraine issue. In addition to the biological warfare lab topic, the Western states are trying to politicise the vital issues of providing humanitarian aid to the Ukrainian population, which we have mentioned today.

Thus, by exerting incredible pressure on developing countries, they have managed to obstruct the adoption of our draft humanitarian Security Council resolution that was based on approved wording and focused on creating conditions for the safe evacuation of civilians.

Then, once again resorting to blackmail and threats, the Western countries pushed the General Assembly to adopt the humanitarian document co-sponsored by France and Mexico,

riddled as it was with unsubstantiated accusations against Russia. Meanwhile, a similar balanced draft developed by South Africa was taken off the table as a result of unbecoming procedural ploys. Where is this going? Is this going to bring us to a point where we listen to and hear one another or to a situation where we double-cross each other – which is what the collective West is doing right now? They are double-crossing, creating provocative situations that have nothing to do with politics. It is not an issue of political mastery or the art of diplomacy. These are direct provocations seeking to destroy the world order and control the international agenda despite logic and despite the fact that all this brings no added value. It is destructive. This is a fresh example of how the actions of a small group of countries can undermine the efforts of a core element of the modern system of international relations.

We can see that the “collective West” has not given up on the idea of promoting its abhorrent concept of “a rules-based world order” that implies forming non-inclusive mechanisms for making global decisions in circumvention of the UN. Moreover, these rules are literally made up ad hoc, below the radar, and have nothing to do with the generally recognised international legal norms enshrined in the UN Charter. This will disrupt the UN and undermine its authority.

For its part, Russia, along with other responsible members of the global community, continues to stand for the central coordinating role of the United Nations and calls for strict adherence to its Charter – precisely, the principle of the sovereign equality of states, with equal respect given to the opinions, interests and concerns of every UN member. We attach great importance to peoples’ right to self-determination, respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty. Concurrently, it is

important to understand how these principles relate to each other, particularly in the context of Ukraine.

I want to refer to the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, adopted by consensus in 1970. The declaration states that the provision on observing territorial integrity only applies to the “states conducting themselves in compliance with the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples <...> and thus possessed of a government representing the whole people belonging to the territory without distinction as to race, creed or colour.” Is this or has this been the case with the government of Ukraine? Of course not. How can it be that in a country where the majority speaks Russian, the law limits the use of this language in the media and official documents? People can think in Russian, speak Russian but they cannot use it officially. This wording of 1970 did not refer to European countries. It was difficult to image something like this happening in Europe, that a country on the European continent would segregate its residents based on faith, skin colour, etc. The provision was to apply to the crumbling colonial world order – and largely thanks to the proactive efforts of the Soviet Union, which stated that it was shameful for the phenomenon of colonialism to exist in the 20th century. I hope that those countries that indeed gained freedom and independence with the help of the Soviet Union, will remember this now. Today, we suddenly have to apply these words to a state that calls itself European – specifically, the Kiev regime that has denied its citizens (citizens, not even migrants) the right to use the Russian language. They are citizens, the indigenous population that has protected and defended this state for decades, creating its culture, the economy, the financial

system, etc. And at some point, the government began to tell them how to live their lives. This government was not just a group of people that landed in Ukraine from somewhere else but people who presented themselves as lawfully elected representatives. And that, despite the fact that the entire world witnessed two Maidans that toppled lawfully elected presidents in this country. The incumbent Ukrainian government that has subjected the Russian-speaking population in the eastern regions to genocide for eight years, does not comply with the principles established by the Declaration.

It is our belief that the UN values – values that have never lost their relevance for 75 years – must serve as guidelines in resolving this Ukrainian crisis in the context of the Donbass problem. The same approach should be applied to the 2014 events in Crimea, where the local population successfully exercised its legal right to self-determination, after an anti-constitutional coup, inspired from outside the country, and in the face of a real threat of physical extermination based on ethnicity.

Question: On March 26 this year, the government of the unrecognised Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR) introduced martial law on its territory. The Russian Defence Ministry reported that Azerbaijani troops had entered the zone of responsibility of the Russian peacekeeping contingent, in particular, the village of Farrukh (Parukh). Later reports said they pulled out, but the Azerbaijani side denied this. What is really happening on the demarcation line in the zone policed by Russian peacekeepers? Could this be a provocation by the Azerbaijani side (perhaps prompted by Turkey), an attempt to fish in troubled waters while Russia is focusing on Ukraine?

Maria Zakharova: I received a lot of questions on this score. I

will answer them at length. The Russian Federation's assessment of the recent incidents in the zone of responsibility of the Russian peacekeeping contingent is reflected in the Russian Foreign Ministry statement published on March 26. We urge the parties to ensure strict adherence to the November 9, 2020 top-level tripartite agreements on a full cessation of hostilities in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone.

The Russian Defence Ministry and the command of the Russian peacekeeping contingent are taking energetic steps to de-escalate the situation. At the same time, the peacekeepers are acting in strict accordance with the provisions of the above-mentioned statement by the three countries' leaders. The Russian Foreign Ministry is in constant contact with representatives of Baku and Yerevan. The Russian Defence Ministry bulletins publish daily updates about the situation on the ground.

We continue to make efforts to normalise relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia based on the existing agreements between the leaders of the three countries, including those on the delimitation/demarcation of the Azerbaijani-Armenian border and the unblocking of economic and transport ties in the region. We will continue to promote the conclusion of a peace treaty between Baku and Yerevan.

Question: Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan advised Islamic countries to remain neutral with regard to the situation around Ukraine and strive for unity and dialogue with trusted partners to avoid being drawn into a confrontation with Russia. In his keynote speech at the 48th session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, Imran Khan urged the Islamic countries and China to play a role in achieving consensus between Russia and Ukraine. Will

Russia welcome such efforts?

Maria Zakharova: We have already declared the goals of the special military operation, which include the demilitarisation and denazification of Ukraine, the elimination of threats to Russia's security emanating from Ukrainian territory due to NATO countries' military build-up there, as well as the protection of the residents of the DPR and LPR from the genocide unleashed by the Kiev regime. This is the gravest crime against humanity, and turning a blind eye to it violates every principle of humanism. Russia has not unleashed aggression against Ukraine. The entire history of our country shows that Russia does not start wars – Russia ends them.

We have used every negotiating opportunity over the course of eight years. We accepted the guarantees offered by the West of their intention to put pressure on Kiev and persuade Ukraine to fulfil the obligations assumed in 2015 during negotiations. That never happened.

We call on all friendly states to support our efforts, in particular, at international platforms. At the same time, we understand and appreciate countries taking a neutral approach while withstanding strong pressure from Washington and its satellites. They are being subjected to all types of crude and cynical pressure including blackmail and intimidation.

We believe that the OIC member states, China and other sensible countries (I am referring to representatives of political elites) are capable of playing a constructive role in resolving the situation in Ukraine on the basis of reasonable proposals from the Russian Federation. Naturally, the specific details of their contribution require further discussion.

Question: According to media reports, Russia is drafting an

executive order on retaliatory visa measures that will limit entry to Russia for citizens of “unfriendly countries.” It is common knowledge that, due to the pandemic, people from a number of other countries had been banned from entering Russia for two years. Now that authorities are easing pandemic-related restrictions, will the same apply to restrictions on entering Russia?

Maria Zakharova: On March 28, 2022, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov spoke at a meeting of the United Russia General Council’s Commission on International Cooperation and Support for Compatriots Abroad. He said a presidential executive order on retaliatory visa measures was in the making. We can give the following explanation.

First of all, this regulatory legal act comes as a response to the European Union’s unfriendly actions. Notably, I am referring to the European Council’s decision to partially suspend the May 25, 2006 agreement between the Russian Federation and the European Community on the facilitation of the issuance of visas to the citizens of the Russian Federation and the European Union. The decision aims to abolish visa-free travel for holders of diplomatic passports, namely, Russian officials, including members of the Government of the Russian Federation, deputies of the State Duma of the Russian Federation and other representatives of the Russian party travelling to Europe on business.

We are noting that, despite Western attempts to complicate people-to-people ties and contacts, to wreck cultural and business ties, the Russian party has no intention of taking it out on ordinary Europeans, even if this would seem like a logical retaliatory step. At the same time, we are telling you that the draft executive order will not apply to foreign citizens already

legally staying in the Russian Federation.

Regarding the lifting of restrictions on the entry of foreign citizens to the Russian Federation amid the pandemic, the Emergency Response Centre to prevent the import and spread of the novel coronavirus in Russia reviews the relevant applications.

At the same time, a decision to ease entry regulations for foreign citizens travelling to the Russian Federation is made with due consideration for Rospotrebnadzor's assessment of the current epidemiological situation in any specific foreign state and the consequences of lifting the relevant restrictions.

To sum up, I would like to point out two things. First, this document is only a draft executive order. These comments are therefore preliminary. President of Russia Vladimir Putin will make the relevant decision. All subsequent comments will therefore follow after the document's approval. Second, the draft document's current version will not affect ordinary Europeans.

Question: Following a resolution adopted at the session of the Organisation of Islamic Conference at the initiative of Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan, the UN General Assembly adopted a landmark resolution proclaiming March 15 as the International Day to Combat Islamophobia. What is your opinion of that document? Should a resolution to combat Russophobia be adopted as well?

Maria Zakharova: There are over 190 nationalities and ethnic groups in Russia, where people profess over 60 faiths. We have a thousand years of experience in the coexistence of various faiths based on mutual respect. The principle of non-discrimination on grounds of faith and beliefs is set out in our fundamental law, the Constitution of the Russian Federation, as

well as in a number of by-laws.

In light of this, we pay special attention to international cooperation to prevent discrimination on grounds of faith, the persecution of believers and religious leaders, and the desecration of religious facilities. Russia has always favoured a comprehensive approach to religious issues based on equal understanding and attention to Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism and other traditional religions. At the same time, Russia has consistently called for exchanging experience and best practices to ensure interfaith peace and stability, primarily in multinational and multi-confessional societies.

In practical terms, we have been working on the international stage to implement our strategy against modern forms of racism, xenophobia and intolerance based on anti-Semitism, Christianophobia and Islamophobia, including through the annual initiative for adopting a UN General Assembly Resolution on Combating glorification of Nazism, neo-Nazism and other practices that contribute to fuelling contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. The last time it was adopted was at the plenary meeting of the 76th Session of the UN General Assembly held in New York in December 2021. That Russian initiative was co-authored by 58 countries, including 28 Muslim states.

We have taken note of the rapid growth of anti-Islamic sentiment fuelled by radical nationalist forces in some Western countries, especially in Europe, over the past decades. The growth of anti-Islamic rhetoric and discrimination against Islam as a religion is becoming menacing. We have pointed this out on numerous occasions and have indicated our fundamental policy of rejecting such manifestations.

In light of this, it is logical that Russia joined the group of countries that initiated the resolution on the International Day to Combat Islamophobia. We are convinced that this UN General Assembly resolution will help strengthen interfaith and intercultural dialogue and tolerance in the context of combating hate speech. We believe that religious phobias, such as Islamophobia, Christianophobia that exist in several countries, or anti-Semitism are absolutely unacceptable. We are ready to work with all interested parties to overcome these negative phenomena.

As for Russophobia, which is a form of discrimination against ethnicity, it has not just caused concern but also protests in Russia. We are witnessing an unprecedented wave of anti-Russia hysterics in the West. It has been growing for a long time and has acquired distorted forms. In the past it was presented as the rejection of our policies, but today the ban has been extended to everything Russian. This campaign has been initiated and is being fuelled by the Western elite and is being waged with reliance on the potential of popular social networks, which are controlled by the West. This has given rise to the righteous indignation of Russians and all rational people. Rallies in support of Russia have been held in many European countries. We believe that this Russophobia is a temporary phenomenon that is based on time-serving considerations and that it is being hyped up.

The unacceptability of discrimination on ethnic grounds has been sealed in international law and in special UN General Assembly resolutions on combating racism and discrimination and on protecting national and language minorities. In this context, we do not consider additional UN resolutions on Russophobia necessary at this time. We will wait to see how it

goes.

Question: How far have the negotiating parties progressed?

Maria Zakharova: I will not comment on this question. I see that news agencies are already publishing the statements by the Russian delegates. I suggest you go by the comments by Vladimir Medinsky, the chief Russian delegate at the talks with Ukraine.