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Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's remarks at the General Debate of the 77th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, September 24, 2022

19-24 minutes

24 September 2022

Madame President,

Colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen,

We are meeting at a both challenging and dramatic moment. Crisis situations are growing, and the international security situation is deteriorating rapidly.

Instead of engaging in honest dialogue and searching for compromises, we must deal with misinformation, as well as coarsely staged incidents and provocations. The policy line adopted by the West undermines trust in international institutions, which are tasked with coordinating various interests and international law as a guarantee of fairness to protect the weak from arbitrary rule. We are witnessing these negative trends in their quintessential form here in the United Nations, which rose from the rubble of German fascism and Japanese militarism and was established to promote friendly relations

among its members and to prevent conflict among them.

The future world order is being decided today, as any unbiased observer can clearly see. The question is whether this world order will have a single hegemon that forces everyone else to live by its infamous rules, which only benefit this hegemon and no one else. Or whether this will be a democratic and just world free from blackmail and intimidation against the unwanted, as well as free from neo-Nazism and neo-colonialism. Russia firmly opts for the second option. Together with our allies, partners, and like-minded countries, we call for efforts to make this a reality.

The unipolar global development model, which served the golden billion who for centuries had been fuelling its excessive consumption by relying on Asian, African, and Latin American resources, is receding into the past. Today, with the emergence of sovereign states that are ready to stand up for their national interests, an equal, socially-minded and sustainable multipolar architecture is taking shape. However, Washington and the ruling elites in Western countries that have fully submitted themselves to this rule have been viewing these objective geopolitical processes as a threat to their dominance.

The United States and its allies want to stop the flywheel of history. Having declared itself victorious in the Cold War at some point in the past, Washington elevated itself almost to the rank of the messenger of the Lord God on Earth, endowed with no obligations, but only sacred rights to act with impunity wherever it wants. Any state can become the next target for such actions, especially if this state displeases the self-proclaimed masters of the world in some manner. Everyone remembers how wars of aggression were unleashed under far-fetched pretexts against Yugoslavia, Iraq, Libya, in which hundreds of thousands of

deaths were claimed among civilians. Were the West's legitimate interests at stake in any one of these countries? Have they banned English or languages of other NATO member states, or Western media, or culture? Have they labelled Anglo-Saxons as subhuman or used heavy weapons against them? What were the outcomes of the reckless undertaking by the United States in the Middle East? Have they helped improve the human rights situation or promote the rule of law? Have they helped stabilise the socioeconomic situation or improve the people's livelihoods? Name a country where life has changed for the better following Washington's forceful intervention.

In its attempts to revive the unipolar model under the label of a rules-based order, the West has been imposing dividing lines everywhere, following the logic of bloc-based confrontation where you either with us or against us. There is no third option available or compromises. The United States persisted with its irrational policy to expand NATO to the east and bring its military infrastructure closer to Russia's borders. Now the US wants to subjugate Asia. At the June NATO Summit in Madrid this self-proclaimed defensive alliance, announced the indivisibility of security for the Euro-Atlantic and the Indo-Pacific region. Closed frameworks are being created as part of the Indo-Pacific strategies, which undermine ASEAN's open and inclusive regional architecture that has taken shape over decades. Building on all these developments, they decided to play with fire regarding Taiwan, even promising it military support.

Clearly, the notorious Monroe Doctrine is becoming global in scope. Washington is trying to turn the entire globe into its own backyard while it uses illegal unilateral sanctions as a tool for coercing those who disagree. For many years now, these unilateral sanctions have been imposed in violation of the UN

Charter and used as a tool for political blackmail. The cynicism of this practice is obvious. The restrictions take a toll on ordinary people, preventing them from accessing basic goods, including medicines, vaccines, and food. The blockade imposed by the United States on Cuba for more than 60 years now is one such egregious example. For quite some time now, the UN General Assembly by an overwhelming majority has been demanding with great resolve that this blockade be immediately lifted. The Secretary-General, whose duties include facilitating the implementation of the General Assembly resolutions, must pay special attention to this problem. He also has a special role to play when it comes to mobilising efforts to overcome the food and energy crises that have resulted from uncontrolled money printing in the United States and the EU during the pandemic, as well as the European Union's irresponsible and unprofessional actions on hydrocarbon markets. Defying the most basic common sense, Washington and Brussels compounded the situation by declaring an economic war against Russia. This resulted in higher global prices of food, fertiliser, oil, and gas. We welcome efforts by the Secretary-General, who helped broker the July 22, 2022, Istanbul Agreements. However, these agreements must be carried out. So far, most of the ships carrying Ukrainian grain have not been directed to the poorest countries, while the United States and the EU have yet to fully remove the financial and logistical obstacles that prevent Russia from exporting its grain and fertiliser. We have been saying for several weeks that 300,000 tonnes of fertiliser have been held up at European ports and have been proposing to ship them free of charge to the African countries that need them, but the European Union has not responded.

Official Russophobia has taken on unprecedented and

grotesque dimensions in the West. They do not have the scruples anymore to declare their intention to not only defeat our country militarily, but also to destroy and fracture Russia. In other words, they want a geopolitical entity that is too independent to disappear from the world's political map.

How have Russia's actions over the past decades actually infringed upon the interests of its opponents? Could it be that they cannot forgive us because it is the position of our country that made the military and strategic detente possible in the 1980s and 1990s? Or that we voluntarily dissolved the Warsaw Treaty Organisation, depriving NATO of its *raison d'être*? Or that we supported Germany's reunification without any conditions and contrary to the positions of London and Paris? That we withdrew our armed forces from Europe, Asia, and Latin America, and recognised the independence of the former Soviet republics? That we believed the promises by the Western leaders that they would not expand NATO to the east by a single inch, and when this process started, we agreed to basically legitimise it by signing the Russia-NATO Founding Act? Could it be that we infringed on the West's interests when we warned it that bringing its military infrastructure closer to our border would be unacceptable to us?

With the end of the Cold War, Western arrogance and American exceptionalism have taken on an especially destructive nature. Back in 1991, US Under Secretary of Defence Paul Wolfowitz frankly acknowledged during a conversation with NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe Wesley Clark that after the end of the Cold War they could use their military as they pleased... and that they have five or maybe ten years to clear out surrogate Soviet regimes like Iraq and Syria before a new superpower emerges to challenge them. I am certain that one

day we will learn from someone's memoirs how the United States built its Ukraine policy. However, Washington's plans are already obvious.

Could it be that they cannot forgive us for supporting, at the request of the United States and the European Union, the agreement reached between then President of Ukraine Viktor Yanukovich and the opposition to resolve the February 2014 crisis? Germany, France, and Poland guaranteed these agreements, but the next morning the leaders of the government coup trampled upon them, humiliating the European mediators. The West simply shrugged and looked on in silence as the putschists started bombing eastern Ukraine where people refused to accept the government coup. They looked on when those behind the coup elevated Nazi accomplices involved in atrocious ethnic cleansings against Russians, Poles, and Jews during World War II to the rank of national heroes. Did we have to sit idly in the face of Kiev's policy to impose a total ban on the Russian language, education, the Russian media and culture, its insistence that Russians be expelled from Crimea, and when it declared war against Donbass? The authorities in Kiev back then, as well as the current leadership, have designated these people as creatures, not people – this is what we hear from the country's most senior official. How could we tolerate this?

Or maybe Russia interfered with Western interests when it played a key role in stopping the hostilities unleashed by Kiev neo-Nazis in eastern Ukraine, and then insisted that the Minsk Package of Measures be implemented, as approved unanimously by the UN Security Council in February 2015, but then buried by Kiev with the direct involvement of the United States and the European Union?

For many years, we have been repeatedly offering to agree on

the rules for co-existence in Europe based on the principles of equal and indivisible security as set forth at the highest level in the OSCE documents. Under this principle, no one can seek to reinforce one's security at the expense of the security of others. The last time we came forward with a proposal to work out legally binding agreements to this effect was in December 2021, but all we got in response was an arrogant refusal.

Considering the inability of the Western countries to engage in talks, and the fact that the Kiev regime was continuing the war against its own people, we were left with no choice but to recognise the independence of the Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics and launch a special military operation to protect Russians and other people in Donbass, while also removing threats to our own security, which NATO has been consistently creating on Ukrainian territory, and which is de facto right on our border. This operation is being carried out in execution of the treaties of friendship, cooperation, and mutual assistance reached between Russia and these republics under Article 51 of the UN Charter. I am certain that in this situation any sovereign, self-respecting state that realises the responsibility it has to its own people would do the same.

The West is now in a temper tantrum over the referendums in Ukraine's Lugansk, Donetsk, Kherson, and Zaporozhye regions. However, people there are simply reacting to the advice from the head of the Kiev regime, Vladimir Zelensky. In one of his interviews in August 2021, he advised all those who consider themselves Russians to leave for Russia for the benefit of their children and grandchildren. This is what people living in the regions I have mentioned are doing, taking the land where their ancestors had lived for centuries with them.

It is obvious to any unbiased observer that for the Anglo-Saxons

who have completely subjugated Europe, Ukraine is merely an expendable material in their fight against Russia. NATO declared that our country poses an immediate threat to the United States in its quest for total dominance, while designating the People's Republic of China as a long-term strategic challenge. At the same time, the collective West, led by Washington, is sending intimidating signals to all other countries without exception: anyone who disobeys can be the next in line.

One of the consequences of the crusade declared by the West against unwanted regimes is that multilateral institutions are declining at an ever-increasing pace. The United States and its allies use these institutions as tools for achieving their selfish interests. This is the approach they have been sticking to in the United Nations, its Human Rights Council, UNESCO, and other multilateral associations. The OPCW has been de facto privatised. There are fierce attempts to undermine efforts to set up a mechanism as part of the Biological Weapons Convention to ensure the transparency of hundreds of military biological programmes the Pentagon has around the world, including along Russian borders and across Eurasia. Irrefutable evidence discovered on Ukrainian territory demonstrates that these programmes are far from innocuous.

We are witnessing an assertive push to privatise the UN Secretariat and imbue its work with a neo-liberal discourse, which ignores the cultural and civilisational diversity in today's world. In this connection, we call for paying attention to ensure equitable geographical representation, as required by the UN Charter, of member states within the Secretariat so that no one single group of countries dominates it.

There is an intolerable situation with the failure by Washington to perform its obligations under the agreement between the UN

Secretariat and the US Government regarding the headquarters of the United Nations in terms of ensuring normal conditions that enable all member states to take part in UN's work. The Secretary-General has his own obligations under this agreement. Inactivity is unacceptable here.

Efforts by certain countries to undermine the Security Council prerogatives are of course a matter of concern. Clearly, the Council, and the UN in general, must adapt to today's reality. We see opportunities for injecting more democracy into the work of the Security Council but only – I would like to make special emphasis on this – through broader representation of African, Asian, and Latin American countries. This applies in particular to India and Brazil as key international actors and worthy candidates for becoming permanent Council members, subject to enhancing Africa's standing at the same time.

Today, it is essential like never before that all member states reaffirm their clearly stated commitment to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter without any reservations. This would be the first and necessary step to restoring their collective responsibility for the human destinies.

This was precisely the purpose of establishing the Group of Friends in Defence of the Charter of the United Nations. Co-founded by Russia, it already includes about two dozen countries. The group strives to ensure strict compliance with the universal norms of international law as a counterweight to pernicious unilateral approaches. We call on everyone who shares this position to join in. In this context, we believe that the Non-Aligned Movement, BRICS, the SCO, and ASEAN have considerable positive potential.

By aggressively imposing their vision of democracy on all

countries as a social model, our Western colleagues categorically refuse to follow the norms of democracy in international affairs. The situation with Ukraine is the most recent example. Russia has gone to great lengths to justify its position and has been doing this for several years now. But the West announced that it disagreed. One would think that it would be up to the other members of the international community to decide on their position: to support one side, or the other, or remain neutral. Is this not the way this is done in democracies when politicians competing against one another make their case and try to win popular support? However, the United States and its allies are denying others the freedom of choice. They are threatening and twisting the arms of anyone who dares to think independently. They use threats to force others to join in sanctioning Russia. They have not been very good at it, but it is obvious that actions of this kind by the United States and its satellites are a far cry from democracy. In fact, it amounts to dictatorship, pure and simple, or at least an attempt to impose it.

One gets the firm impression that Washington, as well as Europe, which is subjugated to Washington's rule, use only prohibited methods to retain their vanishing hegemony. Time and again, they have used illegal sanctions instead of diplomatic methods against strong competitors, be it in economics, sports, information space, cultural exchanges, or overall in people-to-people contacts. Take, for example, the visa issue for delegates to international events in New York, Geneva, Vienna, and Paris. These are also attempts to remove competitors and insulate multilateral discussions from any alternative points of view.

I strongly believe in the need to defend the United Nations and to rid it of anything confrontational or superficial so that it re-emerges as a platform for honest discussions to balance the

interests of all member states. It is this approach that guides us in our efforts to promote our national initiatives within the United Nations.

It is a matter of principle that we achieve a universal ban on the deployment of weapons in outer space, which is the purpose of the draft international treaty prepared by Russia and China. The UN Conference on Disarmament is reviewing it.

Defending cyberspace deserves special attention, including efforts to agree on ways to ensure international informational security within the General Assembly Open-Ended Working Group, as well as drafting a universal convention on countering the use of ICTs for criminal purpose within the Special Committee.

We will continue supporting the Office of Counter-Terrorism and other counter-terrorist entities within the United Nations.

We also remain committed to promoting closer ties between the UN and the CSTO, the CIS, and the EAEU in order to coordinate and unite our efforts across Greater Eurasia.

Russia calls for the stepping up of efforts to settle regional conflicts. We believe that priority objectives include overcoming an impasse in establishing an independent Palestinian state, restoring statehood in Iraq and Libya after they were ruined by NATO's aggression, neutralising threats to Syria's sovereignty, putting national reconciliation on a stable footing in Yemen, and overcoming NATO's devastating legacy in Afghanistan. We are working to revive the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on the Iranian nuclear programme in its original form, and to bring about a fair and comprehensive resolution of the problems the Korean Peninsula faces. The multiple conflicts in Africa require that we resist the temptation to play a zero-sum game there and

instead consolidate external actors to support the African Union's initiatives. The situation in Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina causes concern, where the United States and the EU are stubbornly seeking to break apart the international legal framework as set forth in UN Security Council Resolution 1244 and the Dayton Peace Agreement.

Madame President,

In times of change, people tend to rely on and find solace in the wisdom of their predecessors who went through hardships that were just as challenging. Former UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld, who remembered the horrors of World War II, aptly noted: "The United Nations was not created in order to bring us to heaven, but in order to save us from hell." These words have never been more relevant. This means that we must all recognise our individual and collective responsibility for creating conditions that would facilitate development for future generations in safety and harmony. For this, everyone will have to demonstrate political will.

We are ready to work in good faith and strongly believe that the only way to ensure the world order's stability is to go back to the roots of UN diplomacy, which are based on the respect for sovereign equality of states as the key statutory principle for a genuine democracy.