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## **Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's statement at the General Debate at the 78th session of the UN General Assembly, New York, September 23, 2023**

Mr President,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Many previous speakers have expressed the idea that our shared planet is experiencing irreversible change. Right in front of our eyes, there is a new world order being born. Our future is being shaped by a struggle, one between the Global Majority in favour of a fairer distribution of global benefits and civilisational diversity, and the few who wield neocolonial methods of subjugation to maintain their elusive dominance.

Rejections of the principle of equality and a total inability to reach agreement has long been the signature of the collective West. Being accustomed to looking down on the rest of the world, Americans and Europeans often make promises, take on commitments, including written and legally binding ones, and then they just do not fulfil them. As President Vladimir Putin pointed out, it is the West that is truly an empire of lies.

Russia, like many other countries, knows this firsthand. In 1945, when we, together with Washington and London, were vanquishing our enemy on the front lines of World War II, our allies in the anti-Hitler coalition were already making plans for Operation Unthinkable, a military operation against the Soviet Union. Four years later, in 1949, the Americans drafted Operation Dropshot to deliver massive nuclear strikes on the USSR.

These ghastly senseless ideas did remain on paper. The USSR created its own weapon of retaliation. However, it took the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, with the world balancing on the brink of a nuclear war, for the idea of unleashing it and the illusion of winning with it to cease being the underlying basis of US military planning.

At the end of the Cold War, the Soviet Union played a decisive role in reuniting Germany and agreeing on the parameters of a new security architecture

in Europe. At the same time, the Soviet, and then the Russian leadership, was given specific political assurances regarding the non-expansion of the NATO military bloc to the east. The relevant records of the negotiations are in our and in Western archives and they are openly accessible. But these assurances of Western leaders turned out to be a hoax as they had no intention whatsoever of upholding them. At the same time, they were never bothered by the fact that by bringing NATO closer to Russia's borders they would be grossly violating their official OSCE commitments made at the highest level not to strengthen their own security to the detriment of the security of others, and not to allow the military or political domination of any country, group of countries, or organisations in Europe.

In 2021, our proposals to conclude agreements on mutual security guarantees in Europe without changing Ukraine's non-aligned status were rudely rejected. The West continued its ongoing militarisation of the Russophobic Kiev regime, which had been brought to power as a result of a bloody coup, and to use it to wage a hybrid war against our country.

A series of recent joint exercises by the United States and its European NATO allies was something unprecedented following the end of the Cold War, along with the development of scenarios for the use of nuclear weapons on the territory of the Russian Federation. They stated their aim of inflicting a “strategic defeat” on Russia. This obsession has finally blurred the vision of irresponsible politicians who have grown accustomed to impunity and bereft of the basic sense of self-preservation.

Washington-led NATO countries are not only building up and modernising their offensive capabilities, but are also shifting the armed confrontation into outer space and the information sphere. An attempt to extend the bloc's area of responsibility to the entire Eastern Hemisphere under the pernicious slogan of “indivisible security of the Euro-Atlantic and the Indo-Pacific region” has become a new dangerous manifestation of NATO expansionism. To this end, Washington is creating subordinate military-political mini alliances such as AUKUS, the US-Japan-Korea trilateral summit, and the Tokyo-Seoul-Canberra-Wellington Quartet, pushing their members into practical cooperation with NATO, which is bringing its infrastructure into the Pacific theatre. It is obvious that these efforts are targeting Russia and China, as well as the collapse of the inclusive regional architecture of ASEAN, and generate risks for a new hotbed of geopolitical tension on top of the European one, which has already reached its boiling point.

One certainly has the impression that the United States and the “Western

collective” fully subordinate to it have decided to give the Monroe Doctrine a global dimension. These ideas are both illusory and extreme, but this does not seem to stop the ideologists of the new edition of Pax Americana.

The global minority is doing its utmost to slow down the natural course of events. In the Vilnius Declaration of the North Atlantic Alliance, the “growing partnership between Russia and China” is described as “a threat to NATO.” Speaking recently to his ambassadors abroad, President Emmanuel Macron said he was sincerely concerned about the expansion of BRICS, seeing it as evidence that the situation was getting “more complex” and that this runs the risk of “weakening the West and our Europe in particular.” That there was a “our international order where the West has occupied and occupies dominant positions is being revised.” He made a few revelations: if someone somewhere is convening without our participation, is becoming closer without us or without our consent, that poses a threat to our dominance. NATO's pushing into the Asia-Pacific region is seen as something good, but the expansion of BRICS is a threat.

However, the logic of the historical progress is undeniable, the main trend of which being that states constituting the global majority are strengthening their sovereignty and defending their national interests, traditions, culture, and ways of life. They no longer want to live under anybody's yoke; they want to be friends and trade with each other, but also with the rest of the world – only on an equal footing and for mutual benefit. Associations such as BRICS and the SCO are on the rise, providing the countries of the Global South with opportunities for joint development and defending their rightful role in the multipolar architecture, which is emerging beyond anyone's control.

Perhaps for the first time since 1945, when the United Nations was established, there is now a chance for genuine democratisation of global affairs. This inspires optimism in all those who believe in the rule of law internationally and want to see a revival of the UN as the central coordinating body for global politics – a body where decisions are made by consensus, based on an honest balance of interests.

For Russia, it is clear that there is no other option. However, the United States and its subordinate “Western collective” continue to spawn conflicts that artificially partition humanity into hostile blocs and hamper the achievement of its common goals. They are doing everything they can to prevent the formation of a truly multipolar and fairer world order. They are trying to force the world to play by their notorious and self-serving “rules.”

I would like to urge Western politicians and diplomats once again to carefully re-read the UN Charter. The cornerstone of the world order established

after World War II is the democratic principle of the sovereign equality of states, large and small, irrespective of their form of government, or their domestic political or socioeconomic structure.

However, the West still believes that it is superior to everybody else, in the spirit of the notorious statement made by EU diplomacy chief Josep Borrell that Europe is a blooming “garden,” while everything around is a “jungle.” He is not bothered by the fact that in this garden, there is rampant Islamophobia and other forms of intolerance towards the traditional values of most world religions. Burnings of the Quran, desecration of the Torah, persecution of Orthodox clergy and the disdain of the feelings of believers have all become commonplace in Europe.

In gross violation of the principle of sovereign equality of states, the West is using unilateral coercive measures. Countries that are victims of these illegal sanctions (and there are increasing numbers of them) are well aware that these restrictions harm first and foremost the most vulnerable strata of society. They provoke crises in food and energy markets.

We continue to insist on an immediate and full cessation of the United States' unprecedented inhumane trade, economic, and financial blockade of Havana and for the lifting of the absurd decision to declare Cuba a state sponsor of terrorism. Washington must, without any preconditions, abandon its policy of the economic suffocation of Venezuela. We call for the lifting of unilateral US and EU sanctions against the Syrian Arab Republic, which openly undermine its right to development. Any coercive measures that circumvent the UN Security Council must be ended, as must be the West's weaponised practice of manipulating the Security Council's sanctions policy to exert pressure on those they find objectionable.

The Western minority's obsessive attempts to “Ukrainise” the agenda of every international discussion while pushing onto the backburner a number of unresolved regional crises, of which many have been in place for years and decades now, have become a blatant manifestation of its self-centered policy.

Full-fledged normalisation in the Middle East cannot be achieved without resolving the main issue, which is the settlement of the protracted Palestine-Israel conflict using as its basis UN resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative put forward by Saudi Arabia. The Palestinians have been waiting for more than 70 years to have their own state, which was solemnly promised to them, but which the Americans, who monopolised the mediation process, are doing everything in their power not to allow this. We call for a pooling of efforts of all responsible countries to create the conditions for a resumption of direct Palestine-Israel

negotiations.

It is gratifying that the Arab League has got its second wind and is stepping up its role in the region. We welcome the return of Syria to the Arab family, and we welcome the start of the normalisation process between Damascus and Ankara, which we are shoring up with our Iranian colleagues. All these positive developments reinforce the efforts in the Astana format to promote a Syrian settlement based on UN Security Council Resolution 2254 and the restoration of Syria's sovereignty.

We do hope that with the assistance of the UN, the Libyans will be able to properly prepare for general elections in their long-suffering country, which for more than ten years has been struggling to get back on its feet after the NATO aggression that destroyed the Libyan state and opened the floodgates to the spread of terrorism to the Sahara-Sahel region and to waves of millions of illegal migrants to Europe and other areas. Analysts note that as soon as Gaddafi abandoned his military nuclear programme, he was immediately eliminated. Thus, the West has created the most dangerous risks for the entire nuclear non-proliferation regime.

We are concerned by Washington and its Asian allies who are whipping up military hysteria on the Korean Peninsula, where the US is building up its strategic capabilities. Russian-Chinese initiatives to consider humanitarian and political tasks as priorities have been rejected.

The tragic development of the situation in Sudan is nothing less than the result of another failed Western experiment to export its liberal democratic dogma. We support constructive initiatives to expedite the settlement of the Sudan's domestic conflict, primarily by facilitating direct dialogue between the warring parties.

When we see the nervous reaction in the West to the latest events in Africa, in particular in Niger and Gabon, it is impossible not to recall how Washington and Brussels reacted to the bloody coup in Ukraine in February 2014 – a day after an agreement was reached on a settlement under EU guarantees, which the opposition simply trampled on. The United States and its allies supported the coup, hailing it as a “manifestation of democracy.”

We cannot fail to be concerned by the ongoing deteriorating situation in the Serbian province of Kosovo. NATO's supply of arms to the Kosovars and assistance to help them establish an army grossly violates the key Resolution of the UN Security Council 1244. The whole world can see how the sad story of the Minsk agreements on Ukraine is being repeated in the Balkans. There was a stipulation that the republics of Donbass were to have a special status; however,

Kiev openly sabotaged this with the support of the West. Such is the case now, when the European Union does not want to force its Kosovo protégés to implement the agreements that were reached between Belgrade and Pristina the 2013 to establish the Community of Serb Municipalities of Kosovo, which would have special rules regarding their language and traditions. In both cases, the EU acted as a guarantor for the agreements, and apparently, they share the same fate. When we see the EU as the sponsor, we can expect the same outcome. Now Brussels is imposing its “mediation services” on Azerbaijan and Armenia, along with Washington, thus bringing destabilisation to the South Caucasus. Now that the leaders of Yerevan and Baku have actually settled the issue with the mutual recognition of the countries’ sovereignty, the time has come for establishing peaceful existence and trust-building. The Russian peacekeeping troops will contribute to this in every possible way.

As for other decisions of the international community that remain on paper, we call for the completion of the decolonisation process in accordance with the resolutions of the General Assembly and for an end to all colonial and neo-colonial practices.

A vivid illustration of the “rules” by which the West wants us all to live is the fate of its commitments that were made in 2009 to provide developing countries with \$100 billion annually to finance climate change mitigation programmes. If you compare what happened to these unkept promises with the amounts that the US, NATO and the EU have spent on supporting the racist regime in Kiev – an estimated \$170 billion over the past year and a half – you will come to realise what the “enlightened Western democracies” with their notorious “values” really think.

In general, it is time to reform the existing global governance architecture, which has long been failing to meet the needs of our time. The United States and its allies should abandon their artificial restraints on the redistribution of voting quotas in the IMF and the World Bank and the West must recognise the real economic and financial weight of the countries of the Global South. It is also important to unblock the work of the WTO Dispute Settlement Body without delay.

There is an ever-increasing need to expand the composition the Security Council simply by eliminating the underrepresentation of countries from the World Majority – in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. It is important that the new members of the Security Council, both permanent and non-permanent, be able to use their authority in their regions, as well as in global organisations such as the Non-Aligned Movement, the Group of 77, and the Organisation of Islamic

## Cooperation.

It is time to look at fairer methods of making up the UN Secretariat. The criteria that have been in place for many years do not reflect the actual influence of states in global affairs and artificially ensure the excessive dominance of citizens of NATO and EU countries. These imbalances are further exacerbated by the system of permanent contracts, which link people to positions in host countries of international organisations' headquarters, the overwhelming majority of them located in capitals that promote Western policies.

A new type of association is being called upon to reinforce the reform of the UN, where there would be no leaders or followers, teachers or students, and all issues would be resolved based on consensus and balance of interests. One of those is certainly BRICS, which has significantly increased its authority following its summit in Johannesburg and has gained truly global influence.

At the regional level, there has been a clear renaissance of organisations, such as the African Union, CELAC, LAS, GCC, and others. In Eurasia, there is an increasing harmonisation of integration processes as part of the SCO, ASEAN, CSTO, EAEU, CIS, and China's Belt and Road project. A natural formation of the Greater Eurasian Partnership is underway as well, and it is open to all associations and countries on our shared continent without exception.

These positive trends, unfortunately, are being undermined by the increasingly aggressive attempts by the West to maintain their dominance in world politics, economics, and finance. It is in the common interest to avoid fragmentation of the world into isolated trade blocs and macro-regions. But if the United States and its allies do not want to negotiate on making the globalisation processes fair and equitable, those remaining will have to draw their own conclusions and think about steps that will help them make their socioeconomic and technological development not dependent on the neocolonial instincts of their former colonial powers.

The main problem lies with the West because developing countries are prepared to negotiate, including in the G20, as the recent G20 summit in India showed. The main conclusion in its report is that the G20 can and should be free of any political agenda and given the opportunity to do what it was created for: to work out generally acceptable methods for governing the global economy and finance. We have opportunities for dialogue and agreements. We must not miss this opportunity.

All these trends should be fully taken into account by the UN Secretariat as its statutory mission is to seek consent from all member states within the UN and not somewhere on the side.

The UN was established at the end of World War II and any attempts to revise this would undermine the foundations of the UN. As a representative of a country that made a decisive contribution to the defeat of fascism and the Japanese militarism, I would like to draw attention to a glaring trend to rehabilitate Nazis and their collaborators in a number of European countries, primarily in Ukraine and the Baltic States. A particularly alarming fact is that last year, Germany, Italy, and Japan for the first time voted against the UN General Assembly resolution condemning the glorification of Nazism. This regrettable fact calls into question the true repentance of these states for the mass crimes they committed against humanity during World War II and runs counter to the conditions under which they were accepted into the UN as fully-fledged members. We strongly urge you to pay special attention to this “metamorphosis” that runs counter to the approaches of the global majority and to the principles of the UN Charter.

Mr President,

Today, humanity is at a crossroads again, as has happened many times in the past. It is entirely up to us what will become of history. It is in our shared interest to prevent a downward spiral towards a large-scale war and avoid the final collapse of the mechanisms for international cooperation that were put in place by generations of our predecessors. The Secretary-General has put forward an initiative to hold a Summit of the Future next year. This can only be successful if a fair and equitable balance of interests of all member states is ensured and with due respect for the intergovernmental character of the organisation. At our meeting on September 21, the members of the Group of Friends in Defence of the UN Charter agreed to actively contribute to achieving this.

As Antonio Guterres said at a news conference shortly before this session, “if we want a future of peace and prosperity based on equity and solidarity, leaders have a special responsibility to achieve compromise in designing our common future for our common good.” This is an excellent response to those who divide the world into “democracies” and “autocracies” and dictate their neo-colonial “rules” to others.





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