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STATEMENT
by H.E. Mr. Sergey V. LAVROV,
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation,
at the 74th session of the UN General Assembly

September 27, 2019

Distinguished Mr. President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The 75th anniversary of the United Nations which was established as a result of the Victory in World War II and the realization of the need for a collective mechanism to maintain international peace and security, is getting closer. Regrettably, the events of the Cold War, which started soon after, prevented this tremendous creative potential from being unleashed.

The hope arose again almost 30 years ago when the Berlin Wall symbolizing confrontation of the two irreconcilable systems fell. It was the hope for the possibility to finally turn the grievous pages of wars – not only hot but also cold – and to join efforts for the benefit of all mankind.

However, we have to admit – although World War III was prevented thanks to the UN, the number of conflicts on the planet has not declined and enmity has not weakened. New most acute challenges emerged – international terrorism, drug trafficking, climate change, illegal migration, the growing gap between the rich and the poor. It is getting harder to address these and many other challenges from year to year. The fragmentation of international community is only increasing.

In our view, the reason for the current state of affairs lies, first and foremost, in the unwillingness of the countries which declared themselves winners in the Cold War to reckon with the legitimate interests of all other states, to accept the realities of the objective course of history.

It is hard for the West to put up with its weakening centuries-long dominance in world affairs. New centers of economic growth and political influence have emerged and are developing. Without them it is impossible to find sustainable solution to the global challenges which can be addressed only on the firm basis of the UN Charter through the balance of interests of all states.

Leading Western countries are trying to impede the development of the polycentric world, to recover their privileged positions, to impose standards of conduct

based on the narrow Western interpretation of liberalism on others. In a nutshell, “we are liberals, and we can do anything”. Pursuing these aspirations, the West is less frequently recalling international law and more often and importunately dwelling upon the “rules-based order”.

The aim of such a concept is obvious – to revise the norms of international law which no longer suit the West, to substitute it for the “rules” adjusted to its self-serving schemes which are elaborated depending on the political expediency, and to proclaim the West and only the West as an indisputable source of legitimacy. For instance, when it is advantageous, the right of the peoples to self-determination has significance and when it is not – it is declared “illegal”.

In order to justify revisionist “rules” the West resorts to manipulation of public consciousness, dissemination of false information, double standards on human rights, suppression of undesirable media, bans on practicing journalism. Moreover, the West got “apt students” among its wards on the post-Soviet territory.

Instead of equal collective work, closed formats beyond legitimate multilateral framework are being created, and approaches agreed upon behind closed doors by a narrow group of the “select few” are then declared “multilateral agreements”. This is accompanied by the attempts to “privatize” the secretariats of international organizations, to use them in order to advance non-consensual ideas in circumvention of universal mechanisms.

Attacks on international law are looming large. The US withdrawal from the JCPOA endorsed by UNSC Resolution 2231 is broadly discussed. Washington not just repudiated its obligations enshrined in this Resolution but started demanding from others to play by American “rules” and sabotage its implementation.

The United States set a tough course for abolishing the UN resolutions on international legal framework of the Middle East settlement. It suggests waiting for some “deal of the century”, meanwhile it has taken unilateral decisions on Jerusalem and the Golan Heights. A two-state solution to the Palestinian issue – which is essential

for satisfying the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people and providing security for Israel and the whole region – is under threat.

Apparently, when NATO members were bombing Libya blatantly violating the UNSC resolution, they were also guided by the logic of their “rules-based order”. It resulted in the destruction of Libyan statehood, and international community is still disentangling the disastrous repercussions of NATO’s adventure with African countries affected the most.

“Hidden agendas” in countering terrorism remain – despite the universally binding Security Council decisions on listing terrorist organizations, some countries made it a “rule” to cover terrorists and even to engage in cooperation with them on the ground as it is happening, for instance, in Afghanistan, Libya, and Syria. The United States has already been saying it loud that Hayat Tahrir al-Sham is a rather moderate structure which “can be dealt with”. As recent discussions on the situation in the Syrian Idlib showed, the United States wants to induce members of the UNSC to such unacceptable logic.

The West also has its own “rules” regarding the Balkans where it is pursuing an open course for undermining the UNSC decisions on Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina settlement.

Universal conventions together with the SC resolutions are an integral part of international law. The West would like to substitute even them for its “rules” as it happened in the OPCW whose Technical Secretariat was illegally granted “attributive” functions through unlawful manipulations and unscrupulous pressure in direct violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and exclusive prerogatives of the Security Council.

Games with Conventions obliging all countries to provide linguistic, educational, religious and other rights of national minorities continue. Even here our Western colleagues are guided by their “rules” – they turn a blind eye to the open denial of national minorities’ relevant rights and indulge the retaining of an ignominious

phenomenon of statelessness in Europe.

The course for the revision of international law is more frequently observed in the persistent policy of rewriting the history of World War II, justifying an increasing number of manifestations of neo-Nazism, vandalism against the monuments to the liberators of Europe and Holocaust victims.

The key principles of the UN Charter – non-interference in internal affairs, non-use of force or the threat of force – are also undergoing durability tests.

We are now facing the attempts to add Venezuela to the list of countries whose statehood was destroyed before our eyes through aggression or coups inspired from abroad. Like the overwhelming majority of the UN members, Russia is rejecting the attempts to return the “rules” dating back to the times of Monroe Doctrine to Latin America, to change from outside regimes in sovereign states descending to the methods of military blackmail, unlawful coercion and blockade as it happens in relation to Cuba in defiance of the UN resolutions.

Next year marks the 60th anniversary of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples adopted at the initiative of our country. However, a number of Western states are still clinging to the old “rules”, ignoring this Declaration and other decisions of the General Assembly on decolonization addressed directly to them, while keeping former overseas territories under their control.

This November marks another anniversary – 20 years since the adoption of the Charter for European Security and the Platform for Co-operative Security. These documents set out principles of cooperation for all countries and organizations in the Euro-Atlantic region. Heads of states and governments solemnly declared that no one should provide his own security at the expense of other’s security. Regrettably, the consensus reached back then today is substituted for taken as a “rule” NATO practice, the organization which continues thinking in terms of searching for enemies, while moving its military infrastructure to the East to the Russian borders and increasing its

military budgets, although they already exceed the Russian one more than 20 times. We call on NATO to return to the agreements on shaping equal and indivisible security in the OSCE area. Recently, responsible European politicians have been speaking in favor of it, which, in particular, was demonstrated during the meeting of the Presidents of the Russian Federation and France in August.

The Asia-Pacific region needs a reliable and open architecture. It is dangerous to yield to the temptation and divide it into conflicting blocs. Such attempts will contradict the task to join efforts of all countries in the region in order to effectively address the continuing threats and challenges there, including the task to resolve a whole range of issues on the Korean Peninsula exclusively by peaceful means.

Actions taken by the United States, which, following its withdrawal from the ABM Treaty, destroyed the INF Treaty with the overwhelming support of all NATO members, caused a huge damage to the global system of strategic stability which had been established for decades. Now the United States is questioning the future of the New START Treaty, refusing to ratify the CTBT. Moreover, it has lowered the threshold for the use of nuclear weapons in its doctrinal documents. The United States is setting course for transforming cyberspace and outer space into the arena for military confrontation.

In order to prevent further escalation of tensions, Russia proposed several initiatives. President Vladimir Putin announced the decision not to deploy land-based intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles in Europe or other regions if and as long as the Americans refrain from doing it. We called on the United States and NATO to join such a moratorium. We have also repeatedly suggested Washington that we start negotiations on prolonging the New START Treaty. Together with China we support the harmonization of a legally binding document on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. So far, the reaction of the United States and its allies has not been encouraging.

We are alarmed by the protracted lack of answer to our proposal made to

American colleagues already a year ago – to adopt a high-level Russian-American statement on unacceptability and inadmissibility of the nuclear war which by definition cannot have a winner. We call on all countries to support this initiative.

Today I would like to make an announcement – at the current session of the General Assembly we are introducing a draft resolution on Strengthening and Developing the System of Arms Control, Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Agreements. We invite everyone to conduct substantial talks. The adoption of the resolution would greatly contribute to the creation of conditions for a successful hosting of another NPT Review Conference next year.

Russia will continue to work persistently in order to strengthen universal security. In this sphere, we are acting with utmost responsibility, exercising restraint in enhancing defence capacity – obviously, without any damage to the effective delivery of national security and in full compliance with international law.

We support the consolidation of efforts to combat international terrorism under the auspices of the UN. In the interests of mobilizing the potential of regional organizations to suppress the terrorist threat Russia initiated a Ministerial meeting of the Security Council with the participation of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

Among the most critical tasks of the world community is elaboration of generally acceptable approaches to the digital sphere management and understanding of the processes related to the creation of artificial intelligence. Last year, the General Assembly endorsed the beginning of the substantive work on discussing the rules of the responsible conduct of states in information space. Resolution on Combating Cybercrime was adopted at Russia's initiative. It is important to work for achieving legally binding agreements on all aspects of international information security.

We need to step up efforts to facilitate the settlement of numerous crises and conflicts in all regions of the world. The main point is to seek compliance with already

existing agreements from parties without allowing them to invent pretexts to refuse from implementing obligations already taken during negotiations. This also concerns conflicts on the post-Soviet territory, including the need to strictly follow the provisions of the Minsk Package of Measures to settle the crisis in the East of Ukraine.

In Syria, where major success in combating terrorism has been achieved, further advancement of the political process lead by the Syrians with the assistance of the UN is at the forefront. With the decisive contribution of Russia, Turkey, and Iran as guarantors of the Astana format, the establishment of the Constitutional Committee has been finished, which was announced by the UN Secretary-General António Guterres a few days ago. Post-conflict reconstruction and creation of conditions for the return of the refugees are the items on the agenda. Here the UN system is to play an important role.

Yet, on the whole, the Middle East and North Africa still face many challenges. We witness what is happening in Libya and Yemen. Prospects for the Palestinian settlement are on the verge of collapse. Efforts to play the “Kurdish card” – which is combustible for many countries – are alarming.

The Persian Gulf region is facing artificial escalation of tensions. We call on overcoming the existing disagreements through dialogue without baseless accusations. On our part, we made a contribution having presented this summer the renewed Russian concept of the collective security in this region.

Supporting the efforts of the African states to put an end to conflicts on their continent, yesterday Russia organized the meeting of the Security Council on strengthening peace and security in Africa. At the end of October, Sochi will host the first ever Russia-Africa Summit. We hope its outcomes will help increase the effectiveness of addressing modern challenges and threats and of work to overcome the problems of development African countries are facing.

The reform of the SC is aimed at improving the UN anti-crisis and peacekeeping activities. Given the realities of the multipolar world, the main task is to find a formula

which would correct an obvious geopolitical imbalance in its current composition and would ensure increased representation of African, Asian, and Latin American countries in the Council with the broadest possible agreement of the UN Member States.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dividing lines are harmful not only to the world politics but also to the economy. Its inclusive growth is curbed as a result of the WTO norms being substituted for other “rules” – methods of unfair competition, protectionism, trade wars, unilateral sanctions, and open abuse of the American dollar status. All this leads to the fragmentation of the global economic space, negatively affects people’s standards of living. We believe it necessary to get back to the substantial work both in the UN system organizations and in the G-20. To this end, we will contribute to the creation of favorable conditions, including through the opportunities offered by BRICS, where Russia will assume the chairmanship in 2020.

Together with other like-minded countries we support the harmonization of integration processes. This philosophy lies at the core of President Vladimir Putin’s initiative of the Greater Eurasian Partnership involving the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), SCO, ASEAN, and which is open to all other Eurasian states, including the EU countries. We have already started moving in this direction by interconnecting development plans of the EAEU and the Chinese project One Belt, One Road. Consistent implementation of these endeavors will contribute not only to increasing economic growth but also to laying a solid foundation in order to form the territory of peace, stability, and cooperation from Lisbon to Jakarta.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the run-up to the next anniversary of the United Nations, I would like to underline – the UN-centered system of the world order, despite all trials, is stable and has a great margin of safety. It is a kind of a safety net which guarantees – if the UN Charter is respected – a peaceful development of mankind through finding a balance of sometimes rather contradictory interests of various countries.

At the outcome of these 75 years the main conclusion is probably that the experience of de-ideologized cooperation of states at the face of common threat, gained in the years of that most severe war, is still relevant.

Today's challenges and threats are no less dangerous.

Only working together we will be able to address them. Half a century ago a prominent scientist and public figure, the Nobel Prize Laureate Andrei Sakharov wrote the following – The division of mankind threatens it with destruction. If mankind is to get away from the brink, it must overcome its divisions¹. It was the unity which was considered the key task of the UN by its Founding Fathers. Let us be worthy of their legacy and memory.

¹ Reflections on Progress, Peaceful Coexistence and Intellectual Freedom, June 1968