THE FOREIGN POLICY CONCEPT OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Approved by
the President of the Russian Federation
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I. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The foreign policy concept of the Russian Federation is a system of views on the content and main areas in the foreign policy activities of Russia.

The legal basis of this concept consists of the Constitution of the Russian Federation, the Federal laws, other legislative acts of the Russian Federation that regulate the activity of Federal bodies of state power in foreign policy, generally recognized principles and norms of international law, and international treaties of the Russian Federation, as well as the Concept of National Security of the Russian Federation that was approved by Decree No. 24 of the President of the Russian Federation on January 10, 2000.

The international situation that has taken shape by the beginning of the XXI century has required reevaluation of the overall situation around the Russian Federation, of the priorities of Russian foreign policy and the possibilities of ensuring it with resources. Along with certain strengthening of the international positions of the Russian Federation, negative tendencies are in evidence as well. Certain plans related to establishing new, equitable and mutually advantageous partnership relations of Russia with the rest of the world, as was assumed in the Basic principles of the foreign policy concept of the Russian Federation, endorsed by Directive No. 284-rp of the President of the Russian Federation on April 23, 1993, and in other documents have not been justified.

The uppermost priority of the foreign policy course of Russia is to protect the interests of the individual and the society. Within the framework of that process, the main efforts should be directed towards attaining the following main objectives:

To ensure reliable security of the country, to preserve and strengthen its sovereignty and territorial integrity, to achieve firm and prestigious positions in the world community, most fully consistent with the interests of the Russian Federation as a great power, as one of the most influential centers of the modern world, and which are necessary for the growth of its political, economic, intellectual and spiritual potential;
To influence general world processes with the aim of forming a stable, just and democratic world order, built on generally recognized norms of international law, including, first of all, the goals and principles in the U.N. Charter, on equitable and partnership relations among states;

To create favorable external conditions for steady development of Russia, for improving its economy, enhancing the standards of living of the population, successfully carrying out democratic transformations, strengthening the basis of the constitutional system and observing individual rights and freedoms;

To form a good-neighbor belt along the perimeter of Russia's borders, to promote elimination of the existing and prevent the emergence of potential hotbeds of tension and conflicts in regions adjacent to the Russian Federation;

To seek concord and coinciding interests with foreign countries and interstate associations in the process of resolving the tasks that are determined by the national priorities of Russia, and on this basis, to build a system of partnership and allied relations that improve the conditions and parameters of international cooperation;

To uphold in every possible way the rights and interests of Russian citizens and fellow countrymen abroad; and

To promote a positive perception of the Russian Federation in the world, to popularize the Russian language and culture of the peoples of Russia in foreign states.

II. THE MODERN WORLD AND THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

The modern world is going through fundamental and dynamic changes that profoundly affect the interests of the Russian Federation and its citizens. Russia is an active participant in this process. Being a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council, possessing a substantial potential and resources in all spheres of vital activity and maintaining intensive relations with the leading states of the world, Russia exerts significant influence on the formation of a new world order.

The transformation of international relations, the end of confrontation, steady elimination of the consequences of the "Cold War," and the advancement of Russian reforms have substantially broadened the possibilities for cooperation in the world arena. The threat of a global nuclear conflict has been reduced to a minimum. While the military power still retains significance in relations among states, an ever greater role is being played by economic, political, scientific and technological, ecological, and information factors. Coming to the fore as the main components of the national might of the Russian Federation are its intellectual, information and communications capabilities, the well-being and education level of the population, the degree of combining of scientific and production resources, and concentration of financial capital and diversification of economic ties. The overwhelming majority of states are firmly set on pursuing market methods of managing the economy and democratic values. The major breakthrough in a number of key areas of scientific and technological progress leading to the formation of a single, worldwide information environment, the deepening and diversification of international economic ties add a global nature to interdependence of
At the same time, new challenges and threats to the national interests of Russia are emerging in the international sphere. There is a growing trend towards the establishment of a unipolar structure of the world with the economic and power domination of the United States. In solving principal questions of international security, the stakes are being placed on western institutions and forums of limited composition, and on weakening the role of the U.N. Security Council.

The strategy of unilateral actions can destabilize the international situation, provoke tensions and the arms race, aggravate interstate contradictions, national and religious strife. The use of power methods bypassing existing international legal mechanisms cannot remove the deep socio-economic, inter-ethnic and other contradictions that underlie conflicts, and can only undermine the foundations of law and order.

Russia shall seek to achieve a multi-polar system of international relations that really reflects the diversity of the modem world with its great variety of interests.

Taking into account mutual interests is the guarantee of effectiveness and reliability of such a world order. The world order of the XXI century must be based on mechanisms of collective resolution of key problems, on the priority of law and broad democratization of international relations.

Russia's interests are directly related to other tendencies as well, such as:

Globalization of the world economy. Along with additional possibilities for socio-economic progress, the expansion of human contacts, this tendency gives rise to new dangers, especially for economically weak states, and increases the probability of large-scale financial and economic crises. There is a growing risk of dependence of the economic system and information environment of the Russian Federation on outside impact;

Intensification of the role of international institutions and mechanisms in world economics and politics ("Group of 8", the IMF, the World Bank and others), caused by an objective growth of interdependence of states, and the need to enhance management of the world financial-economic system in contemporary conditions;

Development of regional and sub-regional integration in Europe, the Asia-Pacific region, Africa and Latin America. Integrated associations are acquiring an ever greater importance in the world economy, and are becoming a significant factor of regional and sub-regional security and peacemaking;

Military-political rivalry among regional powers, growth of separatism, ethnic-national and religious extremism. Integration processes, in particular, in the Euro-Atlantic region are quite often pursued on a selective and limited basis. Attempts to belittle the role of a sovereign state as the fundamental element of international relations generate a threat of arbitrary interference in internal affairs. The problem of proliferation of the weapons of mass destruction and means of their delivery is acquiring serious dimensions. Unregulated or potential regional and local armed
conflicts a pose threat to international peace and security. The growth of international terrorism, transnational organized crime, as well as illegal trafficking in drugs and weapons are beginning to exert significant influence on global ad regional stability.

The threats related to these tendencies are aggravated by the limited resource support for the foreign policy of the Russian Federation, making it difficult to uphold its foreign economic interests and narrowing down the framework of its information and cultural influence abroad.

Yet the Russian Federation has a real potential for ensuring itself a worthy place in the world. Further strengthening of Russia's statehood, consolidation of civil society and the rapid transition to stable economic growth are of decisive importance in this respect.

In the past decade Russia has been able to utilize additional possibilities of international cooperation that are opening up as a result of radical transformations in the country; Russia has advanced significantly along the road of integrating in the system of world economic ties; it has joined a number of influential international organizations and institutions. Through its intensive efforts, Russia has managed to strengthen its positions in a number of principal areas in the world arena.

The Russian Federation is pursuing an independent and constructive foreign policy. It is based on consistency and predictability, on mutually advantageous pragmatism. This policy is maximally transparent; it takes into consideration the legitimate interests of other states and is aimed at seeking joint decisions.

Russia is a reliable partner in international relations. Its constructive role in resolving acute international problems has been generally acknowledged.

A distinguishing feature of Russia's foreign policy is that it is a balanced one. This has been predetermined by the geopolitical position of Russia as one of the largest Eurasian powers, requiring an optimal combination of efforts along all vectors. Such an approach predetermines Russia's responsibility for maintaining security in the world both on a global and regional level, and presupposes the development and mutual complementarity of foreign policy activity both bilaterally and multilaterally.

III. PRIORITIES OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION IN RESOLVING GLOBAL PROBLEMS

A successful foreign policy of the Russian Federation must be based on maintaining observance of a reasonable balance between its objectives and possibilities for attaining these objectives. Concentration of politico-diplomatic, military, economic, financial and other means on resolving foreign political tasks must be commensurate with their real significance for Russia's national interests, while the scope of participation in international affairs must be adequate to the actual contribution to strengthening the country's positions. The diversity and complexity of international problems, and the existence of crisis situations assume a timely evaluation of the priorities of each of them in the foreign political activity of the Russian Federation. There is a need for enhancing the efficiency of political, legal, foreign economic and other instruments for protecting the state sovereignty of Russia and its national economy in conditions of globalization.
Forming a new world order

Russia is interested in a stable system of international relations based on principles of justice, mutual respect and mutually advantageous cooperation. Such a system is called upon to ensure reliable security for each member of the world community in political, military, economic, humanitarian and other areas.

The United Nations must remain the main center for regulating international relations in the XXI century. The Russian Federation shall resolutely oppose attempts to belittle the role of the United Nations and its Security Council in world affairs.

Intensification of the consolidating role of the United Nations in the world presupposes:

- Strict observance of the fundamental principles in the U.N. Charter, including the preservation of the status of the permanent members of the U.N. Security Council;

- A rational reform of the United Nations Organization seeking to develop a mechanism of rapidly reacting to world developments, including the enhancement of its potential for averting and settling crises and conflicts.

Further enhancing the efficiency of the U.N. Security Council which bears the main responsibility for maintaining international peace and security and, giving that body broader representation by including new permanent members in its composition, first of all, authoritative developing countries. The reform of the United Nations must be based on the immutable right of veto by all permanent members of the U.N. Security Council.

Russia attaches great importance to its participation in the Group of 8 of the most industrially developed states. Regarding the mechanism of consultations and coordinating positions on the most important problems of the day as one of the important means of upholding and advancing its foreign political interests, the Russian Federation intends to build up its cooperation with partners in this forum.

2. Strengthening international security

Russia calls supports for further decrease of the role of the power factor in international relations, along with the simultaneous enhancement of strategic and regional stability. Toward this end, the Russian Federation shall: unswervingly fulfill the commitments it has taken upon itself in compliance with treaties and agreements in the spheres of limiting and reducing armaments, and its participation in negotiating working out and concluding new accords consistent both with its national interests and the security interests of other states;

Russia is prepared to consent for a further reduction of its nuclear potential on the basis of bilateral agreements with the United States of America, and in a multilateral format - with the participation of other nuclear powers on condition that strategic stability in the nuclear sphere will not be upset. Russia shall seek preservation and observance of the 1972 Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems - the
cornerstone of strategic stability. The implementation of the plans of the United States to create a national missile defense system will inevitably compel the Russian Federation to adopt adequate measures for maintaining its national security at a proper level;

Russia reaffirms its unswerving course toward participating jointly with other states in averting the proliferation of nuclear weapons, other weapons of mass destruction and means of their delivery, as well as relevant materials and technologies. The Russian Federation is an ardent supporter of strengthening and developing relevant international regimes, including the creation of a Global system of control over non-proliferation of missiles and missile technologies. The Russian Federation to firmly adheres to its commitments under the Treaty on a comprehensive ban on nuclear tests, and urges all countries of the world to join it;

Russia attaches special attention to such an aspect of consolidating strategic stability as ensuring information security;

Russia intends to further promote the strengthening of regional stability by participating in the processes of reducing and limiting conventional armed forces, as well as adopting confidence-building measures in the military sphere;

Russia regards international peacemaking as an effective instrument for resolving armed conflicts, and calls for the strengthening of its legal foundation in strict accordance with the principles in the U.N. Charter. Supporting the measures to build up and modernize the potential of the United Nations' anti-crisis rapid response, the Russian Federation intends to continue its active participation in peacekeeping operations conducted both under the auspices of the United Nations, as well as in specific cases of regional and sub-regional organizations. The need for and degree of such participation shall be measured against the national interests and international commitments of our country. Russia proceeds from the premise that only the U.N. Security Council has the authority to sanction use of force for the purpose of achieving peace;

Russia proceeds from the premise that the use of force in violation of the U.N. Charter is unlawful and poses a threat to the stabilization of the entire system of international relations. Attempts to introduce into the international parlance such concepts as "humanitarian intervention" and "limited sovereignty" in order to justify unilateral power actions bypassing the U.N. Security Council are not acceptable. Being prepared for a constructive dialogue on upgrading the legal aspects of employing force in international relations in conditions of globalization, the Russian Federation proceeds from the fact that the search for concrete forms of response on the part of the international community in different acute situations, including humanitarian crises, must be conducted collectively on the basis of strict observance of the norms of international law and the U.N. Charter;

Russia shall participate in activities conducted under the auspices of the United Nations and other international organizations to eliminate natural and man-made disasters, other emergency situations, as well as in rendering humanitarian aid to the suffering countries;
Russia regards as its most important foreign policy task to combat international terrorism which is capable of destabilizing the situation not only in individual states, but in entire regions.

The Russian Federation calls for the further measures to intensify cooperation among states in this area. It is the direct duty of every state to protect its citizens against terrorist encroachments, to prevent any activity on its territory aimed at organizing such acts against citizens and interests of other countries, and not to provide asylum to terrorists;

Russia shall purposefully combat illegal drug trafficking and the growth of organized crime; it shall collaborate with other states in a multilateral format, first of all, within the framework of specialized international agencies, and on a bilateral level.

3. International economic relations

The main priority in the foreign policy of the Russian Federation in international economic relations is to promote the development of the national economy, which, in conditions of globalization, is unthinkable without broad integration of Russia in the system of world economic ties. In order to achieve these objectives, it is necessary:

To ensure favorable external conditions for forming a market-oriented economy in our country, and the establishing a renewed foreign economic specialization of the Russian Federation, one that would guarantee maximum economic returns on its participation in the international division of labor;

Russia shall seek to reduce to a minimum the risks relating to Russia's further integration in the world economy, bearing in mind the need to ensure the country's economic security;

Russia shall promote the formation of a fair international trade system with a full-fledged participation of the Russian Federation in international economic organizations that ensure protection of the national interests of our country in those organizations.

Russia shall assist the expansion of domestic export and rationalization of import into the country, as well as Russian entrepreneurship abroad, uphold its interests in foreign markets and oppose discrimination of domestic manufacturers and exporters, strict compliance by Russian subjects of the foreign economic activity with Russian legislation in performing such operations;

Russia shall actively work to attract foreign investments, first of all, into the real sector and priority spheres of Russia's economy;

Russia shall seek to ensure the preservation and optimal utilization of Russian property abroad;

Russia shall service its foreign debt in accordance with the country's real possibilities, and shall strive to achieve maximum recovery of funds from the credits provided to foreign states;
Russia shall form a comprehensive system of Russian legislation and international legal and treaty basis in the economic sphere;

Russia must be prepared to utilize all its available economic levers and resources for upholding its national interests.

Taking into account the growing threat of global disasters of a natural and man-made nature, the Russian Federation calls for an expansion of international cooperation to ensure environmental security, including with the use of state-of-the-art technologies, in the interests of the entire international community.

4. Human rights and international relations

Committed to the values of a democratic society, including respect for human rights and freedoms, Russia sees its goals as being the following:

- to seek respect for human rights and freedoms the world over on the basis of respecting the norms of international law;
- to protect the rights and interests of Russian citizens and compatriots abroad on the basis of international law and operative bilateral agreements. The Russian Federation will seek to obtain adequate guarantees for the rights and freedoms of compatriots in states where they permanently reside and to maintain and develop comprehensive ties with them and their organizations;
- to develop international cooperation in the humanitarian exchange area;
- to expand participation in international conventions and agreements in the human rights area;
- to continue bringing legislation of the Russian Federation in conformity with Russia's international obligations.

5. Information support for foreign policy activities

An important area in the foreign policy activities of the Russian Federation is communicating to the broad sectors of the world public objective and accurate information about its positions on the main international problems, foreign policy initiatives and actions by the Russian Federation, as well as on the accomplishments of Russian culture, science, and intellectual work. Coming to the fore is the goal of forming a positive perception of Russia abroad and a friendly attitude to it. An integral element of this work should be purposeful efforts aimed at explaining to the public at large outside of

this country the essence of the internal policy of Russia and of the processes going on inside the country. Emerging as a pressing task a rapid development in the Russian Federation of its own effective means of informational influence on the public opinion abroad.

IV. REGIONAL PRIORITIES
A priority area in Russia's foreign policy is ensuring conformity of multilateral and bilateral cooperation with the member states of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) to national security tasks of the country.

The emphasis will be made on the development of goodneighborly relations and strategic partnership with all CIS member states. Practical relations with each of them should be structured with due regard for reciprocal openness to cooperation and readiness to take into account in a due manner the interests of the Russian Federation, including in terms of guarantees of rights of Russian compatriots.

Proceeding from the concept of different-speed and different-level integration within the CIS framework, Russia will determine the parameters and character of its interaction with CIS member states both in the CIS as a whole and in narrower associations, primarily the Customs Union and the Collective Security Treaty. A priority task is to strengthen the Union of Belarus and Russia as the highest, at this stage, form of integration of two sovereign states.

We attach a priority importance to joint efforts toward settling conflicts in CIS member states, and to the development of cooperation in the military-political area and in the sphere of security, particularly in combating international terrorism and extremism.

Serious emphasis will be made on the development of economic cooperation, including the creation of a free trade zone and implementation of programs of joint rational use of natural resources. Specifically, Russia will work for the elaboration of such a status of the Caspian Sea as would enable the littoral states to launch mutually advantageous cooperation in using the region's resources on a fair basis and taking into account the legitimate interests of each other.

The Russian Federation will make efforts to ensure fulfillment of mutual obligations on the preservation and augmentation of the joint cultural heritage in the CIS member states.

Relations with European states is Russia's traditional foreign policy priority. The main aim of Russian foreign policy in Europe is the creation of a stable and democratic system of European security and cooperation. Russia is interested in the further balanced development of the multi-functional character of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and will make efforts in this direction.

It is important to fully use the rule-making potential which continues to be fully valid, that this organization has accumulated after the adoption in 1975 of the Helsinki Final Act. Russia will strongly oppose the narrowing down of the OSCE functions, specifically the attempts to redirect its specialized activities to the post-Soviet space and the Balkans.

Russia will work for making the adapted Treaty on the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe into an effective means of European security and for imparting a comprehensive nature to confidence-building measures, including, specifically, coalition activities and naval activities.
Proceeding from its own requirements to the building of a civic society, Russia intends to continue its participation in the activities of the Council of Europe.

Of key importance are relations with the European Union (EU). The ongoing processes within the EU are having a growing impact on the dynamic of the situation in Europe. These are the EU expansion, transition to a common currency, the institutional reform, and emergence of a joint foreign policy and a policy in the area of security, as well as a defense identity. Regarding these processes as an objective component of European development, Russia will seek due respect for its interests, including in the sphere of bilateral relations with individual EU member countries.

The Russian Federation views the EU as one of its main political and economic partners and will strive to develop with it an intensive, stable and long-term cooperation devoid of expediency fluctuations.

The character of relations with the EU is determined by the framework of the June 24, 1994 Agreement on Partnership and Cooperation, establishing partnership between the Russian Federation, on the one hand, and the European communities and their member states on the other, which is yet to achieve its full effectiveness. Concrete problems, primarily the problem of an adequate respect for the interests of the Russian side in the process of the EU expansion and reform, will be dealt with on the basis of the Strategy for the Development of Relations between the Russian Federation and the European Union, approved in 1999. The EU's emerging military-political dimension should become an object of particular attention.

Realistically assessing the role of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Russia proceeds from the importance of cooperation with it in the interests of maintaining security and stability in the continent and is open to constructive interaction. The necessary basis for that was laid in the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between the Russian Federation and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization of May 27, 1997. The intensity of cooperation with NATO will depend on its compliance with key clauses of this document, primarily those concerning non-use or threat of force, and non-deployment of conventional armed forces groupings, nuclear weapons and their delivery vehicles in the territories of the new members.

At the same time, on a number of parameters, NATO's present-day political and military guidelines do not coincide with security interests of the Russian Federation and occasionally directly contradict them. This primarily concerns the provisions of NATO's new strategic concept, which do not exclude the conduct of use-of-force operations outside of the zone of application of the Washington Treaty without the sanction of the UN Security Council. Russia retains its negative attitude towards the expansion of NATO.

Substantive and constructive cooperation between Russia and NATO is only possible if it is based on the foundation of a due respect for the interests of the sides and an unconditional fulfillment of mutual obligations assumed.
Interaction with states of Western Europe, primarily with such influential ones as Britain, Germany, Italy and France, represents an important resource for Russia's defense of its national interests in European and world affairs, and for the stabilization and growth of the Russian economy.

A topical task in relations with the states of Central and Eastern Europe is, as before, the preservation of the existing human, economic, and cultural ties, the overcoming of the crisis phenomena, and providing an additional impetus to cooperation in accordance with the new conditions and the Russian interests.

There are good prospects for the development of the Russian Federation's relations with Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. Russia stands for putting these relations onto the track of goodneighborliness and mutual cooperation. An indispensable condition here is respect by those states of the Russian interests, including in the key question of respect for the rights of the Russian-speaking population.

Russia will give an all-out assistance to the attainment of a just settlement of the situation in the Balkans, one based on the coordinated decisions of the world community. It is of fundamental importance to preserve the territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and to oppose the partition of this State, something that is fraught with the threat of emergence of a pan-Balkan conflict with unpredictable consequences.

The Russian Federation is prepared to overcome considerable latter-day difficulties in relations with the U.S., and to preserve the infrastructure of Russian - American cooperation, which has been created over almost 10 years. Despite the presence of serious, and in a number of cases, fundamental differences, Russian - American interaction is the necessary condition for the amelioration of the international situation and achievement of global strategic stability.

Above all, this concerns problems of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, as well as prevention and settlement of the more dangerous regional conflicts. It is only through an active dialogue with the U.S. that the issues of limitation and reduction of strategic nuclear weapons may be resolved. It is in our mutual interests to maintain regular bilateral contacts at all levels, not allowing pauses in relations and setback in the negotiating processes on the main political, military and economic matters.

Asia enjoys a steadily growing importance in the context of the entire foreign policy of the Russian Federation, something which is due to Russia's direct affinity with this dynamically developing region and the need for an economic upturn in Siberia and the Far East. The emphasis will be on the invigoration of Russia's participation in the main integration structures of the Asia-Pacific Region - the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, the regional forum on security of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the Shanghai Five (Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kirghizia, Tajikistan), in whose creation Russia played an active role.

One of the crucial directions in the Russian foreign policy in Asia is developing friendly relations with the leading Asian states, primarily with China and India. The concurrence of the fundamental approaches of Russia and the PRC to the key issues of
world politics is one of the basic mainstays of regional and global stability. Russia seeks to develop mutually advantageous cooperation with China in all areas. The main task is, as before, bringing the scale of economic interaction in conformity with the level of political relations.

Russia intends to strengthen its traditional partnership with India, including in the international affairs, and to aid overcome problems persisting in South Asia and strengthen stability in the region.

Russia views the signing by India and Pakistan of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and their accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as an important factor of stability in the Asia-Pacific Region. It will support the line for the creation of nuclear weapons-free zones in Asia.

The Russian Federation comes out for a stable development of relations with Japan and for the attainment of a true goodneighborliness corresponding to the interests of both countries. Within the framework of the existing negotiating mechanisms, Russia will continue a search for a mutually acceptable solution of the formalization of an internationally recognized border between the two states.

Russian foreign policy is aimed at building up the positive dynamism of relations with the states of South East Asia.

It is important to develop further relations with Iran.

Improving the overall situation in Asia, which is faced with growing geopolitical ambitions of a number of states, a mounting arms race, and preservation of sources of tensions and conflicts, is of fundamental importance for Russia. Of greatest concern is the situation in the Korean Peninsula. Efforts will be focused on assuring Russia equitable participation in the solution of the Korean problem, and on maintaining balanced relations with both Korean States.

The protracted conflict in Afghanistan creates a real threat to security of the southern CIS borders and directly affects Russian interests. Russia, in cooperation with other states concerned, will make consistent efforts with a view to achieving a lasting and fair political settlement of the Afghan problem and interdicting the exportation of terrorism and extremism from that country.

Russia will work to stabilize the situation in the Middle East, including the Persian Gulf zone and Northern Africa, taking into account the impact which the situation in the region has on the situation the world over. Based on its status as a co-sponsor of the peace process, Russia intends to pursue an active participation in the normalization of the post-crisis situation in the region. Russia's priority in this context will be restoring and strengthening its positions, particularly the economic ones, in this region of the world, so rich and important for our interests.

Viewing the Greater Mediterranean as a hub of such regions as the Middle East, the Black Sea region, the Caucasus, and the Caspian Sea basin, Russia intends to steer a purposeful course toward for turning it into a zone of peace, stability and goodneigh-
borliness, something that will help advance Russian economic interests, including in the matter of the choice of routes for important energy flows.

Russia will expand interaction with African states and assist an earliest possible settlement of regional military conflicts in Africa. It is also necessary to develop a political dialogue with the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and with sub-regional organizations and to use their capabilities for enabling Russia to join multilateral economic projects in the continent.

Russia seeks a higher level of political dialogue and economic cooperation with countries of Central and South America, relying on a serious progress achieved in its relations with this region in the 1990's. It will strive, specifically, to expand interaction with the states of Central and South America in international organizations, to encourage Russian science-intensive industrial exports to Latin American countries, and to develop with them military-technical cooperation.

While defining regional priorities of its foreign policy, the Russian Federation will take into account the intensity of and trends in the formation of the main world centers and the degree of preparedness on the part of their members for the expansion of bilateral interaction with Russia.

V. THE SHAPING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF FOREIGN POLICY OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

The President of the Russian Federation, in conformity with his constitutional powers, shall provide guidance of the country's foreign policy and as the Head of State shall represent the Russian Federation in international relations.

The Federation Council and the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, within the framework of their constitutional powers, shall pursue legislative work to support the foreign policy course of the Russian Federation and fulfillment of its international obligations.

The Security Council of the Russian Federation shall execute preparation of decisions of the President of the Russian Federation in the area of international security and control over their implementation.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation shall provide direct implementation of the foreign policy course approved by the President of the Russian Federation. The Foreign Ministry of Russia shall be in charge of coordination of foreign policy activities pursued by federal bodies of executive power and of control over them in conformity with Decree by the President of the Russian Federation of March 12, 1996, #375 On the Coordinating Role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation during the Conduct of Unified Foreign Policy Line of the Russian Federation.

The Russian Federation's constituent entities shall promote their international ties in accordance with the Constitution of the Russian Federation, the Federal Law On Coordination of International and External Economic Ties of the Subjects of the
Russian Federation and other legislative acts. The Foreign Ministry of Russia and other federal bodies of executive power shall give aid to subjects of the Russian Federation in the course or their realization of international cooperation, in strict respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Russian Federation.

During the preparation of decisions on the conduct of the State's foreign policy course, the federal bodies of executive power shall cooperate, if necessary, with Russia's non-governmental organizations. A broader involvement of non-governmental organizations in the sphere of the country's foreign policy activities is consistent with the task of ensuring maximum support by the civic society for the state foreign policy and is capable of contributing to its effective implementation.

Consistent execution of foreign policy creates favorable conditions for the fulfillment of the historic choice of the peoples of the Russian Federation in favor of the rule-of-law State, democratic society, and a socially oriented market economy economy.

July 12, 2008

THE FOREIGN POLICY CONCEPT OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION
I. General provisions

The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation (hereinafter referred to as "the Concept") is a system of views on the content, principles and main areas of the foreign policy activities of Russia.

This Concept shall supplement and develop the provisions of the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, approved by the President of the Russian Federation on 28 June 2000.

This Concept shall be based on the Constitution of the Russian Federation, Federal Laws, generally recognized principles and norms of international law, international treaties of the Russian Federation, instruments of the Russian Federation governing the activities of the state authorities of the Russian Federation in the area of foreign policy, as well as the Concept of National Security of the Russian Federation, Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation and other relevant documents.

International developments in the field of international relations in the beginning of the 21st century and strengthening of Russia have required reassessment of the overall situation around Russia, rethinking of the priorities of the Russian foreign policy with due account for the increased role of the country in international affairs, its greater responsibility for global developments and related possibilities to participate in the implementation of the international agenda, as well as in its development. As regards the international situation, along with a positive trend, i.e. the strengthening of the
positions of the Russian Federation in international affairs, negative trends emerged that are to be considered in conducting foreign policy of Russia in specific areas.

In accordance with the uppermost priority of the national security policy, i.e. protection of interests of the individual, society and the state, main foreign policy efforts should focus on achieving the following chief objectives:

to ensure national security, to preserve and strengthen its sovereignty and territorial integrity, to achieve strong positions of authority in the world community that best meet the interests of the Russian Federation as one of influential centers in the modern world, and which are necessary for the growth of its political, economic, intellectual and spiritual potential;

to create favorable external conditions for the modernization of Russia, transformation of its economy along innovation lines, enhancement of the living standards, consolidation of society, strengthening of the foundations of the constitutional system, rule of law and democratic institutions, realization of human rights and freedoms and, as a consequence, ensuring competitiveness of the country in a globalizing world;

to influence global processes to ensure formation of a just and democratic world order, based on collectiveness in finding solutions to international problems and supremacy of international law, first of all provisions of the UN Charter, as well as relations of equal partnership among States with a central and coordinating role of the UN as the key organization governing international relations and possessing a unique legitimacy;

to promote good neighborly relations with bordering States, to assist in eliminating the existing hotbeds of tension and conflicts in the regions adjacent to the Russian Federation and other areas of the world and to prevent emergence of the new ones;

to search for agreement and coinciding interests with other States and international associations in the process of finding solutions to the tasks according to Russia's national priorities, to establish, on that basis, a system of bilateral and multilateral partnerships aimed to ensure stability of the international position of the country in the face of international foreign policy volatility;

to provide comprehensive protection of rights and legitimate interests of Russian citizens and compatriots abroad;

to promote an objective image of the Russian Federation globally as a democratic state committed to a socially oriented market economy and an independent foreign policy;

to promote and propagate, in foreign States, the Russian language and Russian peoples' culture constituting a unique contribution to cultural and civilizational diversity of the contemporary world and to the development of an intercivilizational partnership.

II. The modern world and the foreign policy of the Russian Federation

The modern world is going through fundamental and dynamic changes that profoundly affect the interests of the Russian Federation and its citizens. Anew Russia, basing on a
solid foundation of its national interests, has now acquired a full-fledged role in global affairs.

Differences between domestic and external means of ensuring national interests and security are gradually disappearing.

In this context, our foreign policy becomes one of major instruments of the steady national development and of ensuring its competitiveness in a globalizing world.

Russia, being a permanent member of the UN Security Council, participant in the G8 and other authoritative international and regional organizations, intergovernmental dialogue and cooperation mechanisms, and as a country possessing a major potential and significant resources in all spheres of human activities, vigorously developing relations with leading States and associations throughout the world and integrating consistently into the world economy and politics, exerts a substantial influence upon the development of a new architecture of international relations.

Drastic transformation of international relations, the end of ideological confrontation and steady overcoming of the Cold War legacy and its prejudices and stereotypes, the strengthening of Russia and its international position have all contributed to significant enhancement of global cooperation. The threat of a fullscale war, including a nuclear one, has been diminished.

Today, traditional cumbersome military and political alliances can no longer provide for counteracting the whole range of modern challenges and threats which are transnational in their nature. Bloc approaches to international problems are being replaced by a network diplomacy based on flexible forms of participation in international structures for the search of joint solutions to common tasks.

Together with the military power of States, economic, scientific and technological, environmental, demographic and informational factors are coming to the fore as major factors of influence of a state on international affairs. Of increasing influence are: the level of protection of interests of the individual, as well as those of society and the state; spiritual and intellectual development of citizens; improved wellbeing of people; balance of educational, scientific and production resources; general level of investments in human capital; efficient use of mechanisms governing global markets of goods and services, diversified economic relations; comparative advantages of States in integration processes. Economic interdependence of States is becoming one of key factors of international stability. Prerequisites are being created for building a more stable and crisisresistant world order.

At the same time, new challenges and threats (first of all, international terrorism, narcotraffic, organized crime, spread of weapons of mass destruction and means of their delivery, regional conflicts, demographic problems, global poverty, including energy poverty, as well as illegal migration and climate change) are global problems that require adequate response of the entire international community and solidarity efforts to overcome them. The ecological factor is playing an increasingly important role, the problem of prevention of and counteracting infectious diseases is becoming evermore urgent. The complex nature of challenges facing the international community requires
development of a balanced strategy of their solution, based on the interrelationship of issues of security, social and economic development and human rights protection.

The contradictory trends determining the current state of international relations are a result of the transitional period in their development. Those trends are reflecting differences in understanding of a genuine meaning and consequences of the end of the Cold War. It is for the first time in the contemporary history that global competition is acquiring a civilizational dimension which suggests competition between different value systems and development models within the framework of universal democratic and market economy principles.

As the constraints of the bipolar confrontation are being overcome, the cultural and civilizational diversity of the modern world is increasingly in evidence. A religious factor in shaping the system of contemporary international relations is growing, inter alia, as regards its moral foundation. This problem cannot be resolved without a common denominator that has always existed in major world religions.

The reaction to the prospect of loss by the historic West of its monopoly in global processes finds its expression, in particular, in the continued political and psychological policy of "containing" Russia, including the use of a selective approach to history, for those purposes, first of all as regards the World War Two and the postwar period.

The need for the international community to develop a common vision of our era is becoming evermore urgent, which could only be achieved through open and honest substantive discussions of the problems confronting the mankind. What is needed is to provide favorable conditions for scientists to carry out their professional work with a view to establishing the historical truth and preventing historical issues from becoming an instrument of practical policy.

The unilateral action strategy leads to destabilization of international situation, provokes tensions and arms race, exacerbates interstate differences, stirs up ethnic and religious strife, endangers security of other States and fuels tensions in intercivilizational relations. Coercive measures with the use of military force in circumvention of the UN Charter and Security Council cannot overcome deep social, economic, ethnic and other differences underlying conflicts, undermines the basic principles of international law and leads to enlargement of conflict space, including in the geopolitical area around Russia.

The UN is to play a fundamental role in developing full-fledged intercivilizational dialogue aimed at reaching agreement between representatives of various religions, confessions and cultures.

Russia will continue to seek the strengthening of principles of multilateralism in international affairs, development of an architecture of international relations that would be based on the recognition by the international community of the principles of security indivisibility in the modern world and would reflect its diversity.

The interests of Russia are directly connected to other global tendencies, inter alia:
globalization of the world economy. This trend along with complementary opportunities for social and economic progress and development of human contacts, is fraught with new dangers, especially for weak economies. The threat of largescale financial and economic crises is growing, as well as development imbalances in various regions of the world which are a result of unequal starting positions and domestic potentials to respond to the modernization challenges. The globalization process confronts the increasing desire of individual States to protect their economic sovereignty, and such kind of protectionism often acquires the forms of economic nationalism when pragmatic interests are substituted with political considerations. The cultural identity of the overwhelming majority of countries and peoples suffers the increasing onslaught of globalization;

growing role, due to objective factors, of multilateral diplomacy, international institutions and mechanisms in global policy and economy, as a result of growing interdependence of States and the need to make global development more manageable;

enhanced economic potential of the emerging global growth centers, inter alia, as a result of a more equal distribution of development resources due to liberalization of global markets. The economic growth in those countries and regions converts into their political influence, the trend to a polycentric world order growing further;

development of regional and subregional integration in the area of the Community of Independent States (CIS), in the Euro-Atlantic and Asia-Pacific regions, in Africa and Latin America. Integration associations are acquiring an evergrowing importance in the global economy and emerge as a major factor of regional and subregional security, including peacemaking activities;

military and political rivalry of regional powers; growing separatism, ethno national and religious extremism. Integration processes, including in the Euro-Atlantic region, are often of selective and restrictive nature. Attempts to lower the role of a sovereign state as a fundamental element of international relations and to divide States into categories with different rights and responsibilities, are fraught with undermining the international rule of law and arbitrary interference in internal affairs of sovereign States;

ignoring by individual States and their groups of major principles of international law. Russia advocates full universality of the generally recognized norms of international law both in their understanding and application.

Strengthening of international position of Russia and solution of the tasks related to the establishment of equal mutually beneficial partnerships with all countries, successful promotion of our foreign economic interests and provision of political, economic, information and cultural influence abroad require the use of all available financial and economic tools of the state and provision of adequate resources for the Russian Federation's foreign policy.

The Russian Federation possesses real capacity to play a welldeserved role globally. In this respect, of fundamental importance are the following factors: strengthened Russian statehood, stable economic growth, further political and economic reforms, resolution of social problems, overcoming of the resource-based economy and its transition to innovations, as well as improved demographic situation. Other important factors include
the strengthened civil society institutes and governmental support to national nongovernmental organizations interested in promoting Russia's foreign policy interests.

Russia pursues an open, predictable and pragmatic foreign policy determined by its national interests. Russia develops international cooperation on the basis of equality, mutual respect for interests and mutual benefit.

Balanced and multivector character of Russia's foreign policy is its distinguishing feature. This is due to a geopolitical position of Russia as the largest EuroAsian power, its status as one of the leading States of the world and a permanent member of the UN Security Council. Our national interests today make it imperative to actively promote positive agenda covering the whole spectrum of international problems.

Russia fully recognizes its responsibility for maintenance of security both globally and regionally and is prepared to take joint actions with all other States concerned aimed at finding solutions to common problems. Should our partners be unprepared for joint efforts, Russia, in order to protect its national interests, will have to act unilaterally but always on the basis of international law.

Russia is not going to get involved in a costly confrontation, including renewed arms race, destructive for its economy and disastrous for its internal development.

III. Priorities of the Russian Federation for addressing global problems

Diversity and complexity of international problems and crisis situations call for a timely assessment of each of them when implementing the Russian Federation's foreign policy. The use of political and diplomatic, legal, military, economic, financial and other instruments in handling foreign policy tasks should be commensurate with their real value in terms of safeguarding Russia's foreign policy interests; moreover, these instruments should be applied on the basis of adequate coordination among all branches of power as well as appropriate agencies.

1. The emergence of a new world order

Russia looks forward to emergence of a stable system of international relations based on the principles of equality, mutual respect and mutually beneficial cooperation as well as the norms of international law. Such a system aims at ensuring reliable and equal security for every member of the international community in the political, military, economic, information, humanitarian and other areas and employs multilateral diplomacy as its main tool.

The United Nations, an organization for which there is no real alternative and which has a unique legitimacy, should continue to serve as a clearing-house for the coordination of international relations and world politics in the 21st century. Russia supports the efforts aimed at strengthening its central and coordinating role. This implies:

strict observance of the ends and principles enshrined in the UN Charter;

rational reform of the UN so that it could gradually adapt itself to changing global political and economic realities;
further improving the effectiveness of the work of the UN Security Council, which has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, and making this body more representative in the course of the reform while keeping its work as expeditious as possible. Any decisions on the enlargement of the Security Council should enjoy the widest agreement of the States Members of the United Nations. The five permanent members of the Security Council shall retain their status.

Russia attaches great importance to improving the manageability of the world development and establishing a self-regulating international system, an effort that requires collective leadership by the leading States, which should be representative in geographical and civilizational terms and fully respect the central and coordinating role of the UN. For these ends, Russia will make itself more fully engaged in such formats as the Group of Eight and its dialogue with its traditional partners, the Troika (Russia, India and China) and the BRIC Four (Brazil, Russia, India and China), as well as by more actively using other informal structures and venues for dialogue.

2. The primacy of law in international relations

Russia consistently supports the strengthening of the legal basis of international relations and complies with its international legal obligations in good faith. The maintenance and strengthening of international rule of law is among its priorities in the international arena. The rule of law is intended to ensure a peaceful and fruitful cooperation among States while maintaining the balance of their often conflicting interests as well as safeguarding the interests of the world community as a whole. Adherence to international law is important for safeguarding the interests of our country, its nationals and legal entities. Russia intends to:

- ensure compliance by the international stakeholders with their international obligations both to Russia and to the world community as a whole; combat violations of international law by States, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and individuals. The globalization of challenges and threats to security and sustainable development increases the importance of the UN Security Council as a universal instrument for safeguarding international rule of law;
- counter the attempts by individual countries or groups of countries to revise the universally accepted norms of international law enshrined in universal documents such as the UN Charter, the 1970 Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the UN Charter, as well as in the CSCE Final Act of 1975. Arbitrary and politically motivated interpretation by certain countries of fundamental international legal norms and principles such as non-use of force or threat of force, peaceful settlement of international disputes, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, right of peoples to self-determination, as well as the attempts to portray violations of international law as its "creative" application, are especially detrimental to international peace, law and order. Such actions erode the basis of international law and inflict a lasting damage to its authority;
- promote the codification and progressive development of international law, especially under the UN aegis, universal acceptance of the UN treaties and their uniform
interpretation and application and, in general, a careful treatment of these unique legal instruments and the regimes established by them;

strive to strengthen the international legal basis of cooperation within the CIS and in other regional and subregional forums, put our strategic relations with the European Union on a solid and modern legal basis and establish a legal space under the auspices of the Council of Europe that would span across the entire Europe;

make efforts to complete the process of legal regulation of the State border of the Russian Federation as well as of boundaries of maritime areas over which it exercises its sovereign rights and jurisdiction.

3. Strengthening international security

Russia consistently calls for diminished role of the force factor in international relations with simultaneous enhancement of strategic and regional stability. Towards these ends, the Russian Federation:

unswervingly fulfils its international obligations under international treaties in the sphere of nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction, arms control and disarmament, as well as takes confidence-building measures in military sphere; participates in negotiations to work out and conclude new accords in these fields consistent with its national interests and on the basis of the principles of equality and indivisibility of security;

reaffirms its unfailing policy of developing multilateral foundations of nonproliferation of nuclear weapons, other weapons of mass destruction and means of their delivery; stands for compliance with the NonProliferation Treaty, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, as well as the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction; is actively engaged in international endeavors to control traffic of dualuse materials and technologies; promotes the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty; supports a global missile nonproliferation regime on the basis of a legally binding agreement;

is prepared to negotiate with all nuclear powers a reduction of strategic offensive weapons (intercontinental ballistic missiles, submarine-launched ballistic missiles as well as heavy bombers and warheads they carry) up to a minimum level sufficient to maintain strategic stability;

promotes the prevention of deployment of weapons in outer space and the establishment of a system of collective response to potential missile threats on an equal basis, and opposes unilateral actions in the field of strategic antimissile defense that are destabilizing international situation;

considers that the present fundamental development trends, including the emerging multipolarity, and diversification of risks and threats lead to the conclusion that the strategic stability issue cannot anymore be addressed exclusively within the framework of Russia- US relations. Objectively, the time is coming to involve major States in these
endeavors, first of all nuclear ones, interested in joint actions to ensure common security. This is the essence of the strategic openness underlying Russian initiatives, in particular those related to collective counteraction to potential missile threats for Europe and to lending of globalized character to the regime of the Treaty Between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United States of America on the Elimination of Their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles of 1987;

consistently speaks for the prevention of the arms race, opposes attempts to develop and deploy destabilizing, including new types, weapons, such as lowyield nuclear warheads, nonnuclear intercontinental ballistic missiles, and strategic antimissile systems;

attaches special attention to such an important aspect of consolidating strategic stability as ensuring international information security;

supports international efforts against illegal traffic of light and small arms;

intends to further promote enhanced regional stability in Europe through participation in the processes of conventional armed forces limitation and reduction as well as through confidence-building measures in military sphere on the basis of the principle of equal security for all parties;

regards international peacemaking as an effective instrument for settling armed conflicts and resolving post-crisis nation building tasks and intends to increase its participation in international peacemaking activities under the auspices of the United Nations and within the framework of collaboration with regional and international organizations; and will actively contribute to improving the United Nations preventive anti-crisis potential;

firmly proceeds from the premise that only the UN Security Council has the authority to sanction the use of force for the purpose of coercion to peace;

regards Article51 of the UN Charter as an adequate and not subject to revision legal basis for the use of force in self-defense, including in the face of existing threats to peace and security such as international terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction;

views fighting international terrorism as its most important domestic and foreign policy task taking into account the necessity of systemic and comprehensive use of politico-legal, advocacy, socio-economic and special measures focusing on the preventive aspect of such counteraction; calls for elaboration of further measures aimed at consolidation of the global anti-terrorism coalition under the UN aegis with the participation of regional organizations without resorting to double standards and on the basis of universal anti-terrorism conventions and decisions of the UN Security Council; will promote the right of every individual regardless of his/her nationality, race, sex or religion for the protection against terrorism and terrorist acts. Russia, in accordance with international law and its legislation, will take all necessary measures to repel and prevent terrorist attacks against itself and its citizens, to protect them against terrorist acts, prohibit activities within its territory aimed at organizing such acts against citizens or interests of other countries, and not give refuge or floor to terrorists and instigators of terrorism;
will seek political and diplomatic settlement of regional conflicts on the basis of collective actions of the international community proceeding from the premise that modern conflicts cannot be solved by the use of force, their settlement should be sought through engagement in dialogue and negotiations of all parties rather than through isolation of one of them;

targeted efforts to counter drug trafficking and organized crime in cooperation with other States both multilaterally, especially within the framework of specialized international bodies, and bilaterally;

supports establishment of effective institutions under the auspices of the United Nations and other international and regional organizations to ensure cooperation in the response to calamities and large-scale man-made disasters, as well as to other emergencies, including mitigation capacity building and enhancement of early warning and forecast systems;

participates in international cooperation aimed at regulating migration processes and ensuring rights of migrant workers;

as a multinational and multiconfessional state facilitates dialogue and partnership between cultures, religions and civilizations, consistently pursues this policy in the United Nations, UNESCO, OSCE and the Council of Europe, as well as other international and regional organizations, including in the context of cooperation with the Organization of the Islamic Conference; supports relevant initiatives of the civil society and actively interacts with the Russian Orthodox Church and other main confessions of the country.

4. International economic and environmental cooperation

Russia has been making a considerable contribution to the stability of the global economy and finance by its steadily high economic growth, which to a great extent is based on the increasing domestic demand, and by its natural and accumulated financial resources. Consequently, Russia proposes to contribute, including through joining the World Trade Organization and the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development, to shaping a just and democratic architecture of global trade, economic, monetary and financial relations with a view to becoming a fullfledged and efficient member of it.

The main priority of the Russian Federation's policy in the area of international economic relations is to contribute to the development of its national economy in the environment of globalization by ensuring equal positions of the country and Russian business in the system of world economic links. To achieve this goal, the Russian Federation:

seeks maximum benefit and minimizes risks in the process of further integration of Russia in the world economy taking into account the need to ensure economic, energy and food security of the country;
creates favorable political conditions for diversifying Russia's presence in the world markets through expanding the export range and geography of foreign economic and investment links of Russia;

takes trade policy measures to protect interests of the Russian Federation in accordance with international rules and counteracts trade and political measures of foreign States encroaching upon the rights of the Russian Federation and Russian enterprises;

provides state support to Russian enterprises and companies in getting access to new markets and in developing traditional markets, counteracts discrimination of national investors and exporters, especially in the markets of high-tech products and goods of high level of procession;

assists in drawing foreign investments in science-intensive and other priority areas of the Russian economy;

continues to build up and modernize the capacity of the fuel and energy industry to support its reputation of a responsible partner in the energy markets, while ensuring sustainable development of its economy and contributing to the maintenance of balanced world energy markets;

strengthens strategic partnership with the leading producers of energy resources, develops active dialogue with consuming countries and transit countries on the basis of the principles of energy security enshrined in the final documents of the Saint Petersburg G8 Summit in 2006, assuming that measures being taken to guarantee reliability of energy supplies should be consistently supported by forthcoming activities aimed at ensuring stability of demand and secure transit;

actively employs possibilities of regional economic and financial organizations to protect interests of the Russian Federation in the corresponding regions, paying special attention to the activities of organizations and institutions that contribute to strengthening of integration processes in the CIS space;

in accordance with the norms of international law, uses all available economic leverage, resources and competitive advantages to protect its national interests.

The Russian Federation stands for expanding international cooperation in order to ensure environmental security and to counter climate changes on the planet, including through the use of brandnew energy-saving and resource-saving technologies, in the interest of the entire world community. Among priorities in this sphere are further development of science-based approaches to the preservation of the healthy natural environment and increased interaction with all the States of the world in the area of environmental protection with a view to ensuring sustainable development of the present and future generations. The Russian Federation:

regards sustainable socio-economic development of all countries as an indispensable component of the modern collective security system and believes that international development assistance should be aimed at searching for effective ways to support efforts to eliminate the disbalances in the development of various regions. For these
ends, Russia, using its donor capacity, pursues an active and targeted policy in the area of international development assistance both multilaterally and bilaterally;

supports international cooperation in healthcare with the leading role of the World Health Organization as one of the priorities in the global agenda and as an integral component of ensuring sustainable development.

Given the growing importance of sea areas, both from the economic point of view and in terms of strengthening security, their effective use has become a pressing task. For these purposes, the Russian Federation will try to ensure safe navigation regimes that would meet its national interests, as well as responsible fishing and research activities in the World Ocean combined with the measures to protect sea environment, fight terrorism and counter spread weapons of mass destruction. In accordance with the international law, Russia intends to establish the boundaries of its continental shelf, thus expanding opportunities for exploration and exploitation of its mineral resources.

5. International humanitarian cooperation and human rights

Russia, being committed to universal democratic values, including protection of human rights and freedoms, sees its goals in the following:

to seek respect for human rights and freedoms in the entire world through a constructive international dialogue on the basis of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, taking advantage of other opportunities, including at the regional level, in the area of human rights, and preventing double standards, respecting national and historic peculiarities of each State in the process of democratic transformations without imposing borrowed value systems on anyone;

to protect rights and legitimate interests of the Russian citizens and compatriots living abroad on the basis of international law and effective bilateral agreements, regarding the multimillion Russian diaspora- the Russian world- as a partner, including for expanding and strengthening the space of the Russian language and culture;

to contribute to the consolidation of the organizations of compatriots so as to ensure a more efficient protection by them of their rights in their countries of residence and to preserve the ethnic and cultural identity of the Russian diaspora and its links with its historic motherland, to consistently create conditions to assist in the voluntary resettlement to the Russian Federation of those compatriots who would make such choice;

to contribute to learning and spread of the Russian language as an integral part of the world culture and an instrument of inter-ethnic communication;

to firmly counter manifestations of neofascism, any forms of racial discrimination, aggressive nationalism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia, attempts to rewrite the history, use it for instigating confrontation and revanchism in the world politics, and revise the outcome of the World War Two;

to develop, including through the use of the resources, potential and initiatives of the institutions of civil society in public diplomacy, international cultural and humanitarian
cooperation as a means of building intercivilizational dialogue, achieving concord and ensuring mutual understanding between peoples, paying special attention to the interreligious dialogue;

to build up interaction with international and non-governmental human rights organizations to strengthen universal norms in the area of human rights without double standards, to link them with the responsibility of persons for their actions, first of all in terms of preventing contempt for the feelings of believers and promoting tolerance, and to strengthen moral foundations in the human rights dialogue;

on the basis of the above-mentioned to expand participation in international human rights conventions and agreements, and to amend the legislation of the Russian Federation accordingly.

6. Information support for foreign policy activities

An important part of the foreign policy activities of the Russian Federation is communicating to the broad world public full and accurate information about its stand on the main international problems, foreign policy initiatives and actions by the Russian Federation, its domestic social and economic development processes and plans, as well as on the accomplishments of Russian culture and science.

In public diplomacy, Russia will seek its objective perception in the world, develop its own effective means of information influence on public opinion abroad, strengthen the role of the Russian mass media in the international information environment providing them with essential state support, as well as actively participate in international information cooperation, and take necessary measures to repel information threats to its sovereignty and security.

IV. Regional priorities

Development of bilateral and multilateral cooperation with the CIS Member States constitutes a priority area of Russia's foreign policy.

Russia forges friendly relations with all the CIS Member States on the basis of equality, mutual benefit, respect and regard for the interests of each other. Strategic partnerships and alliances are developed with States that demonstrate their readiness to engage in them.

Russia approaches trade and economic relations with the CIS Member States taking into consideration the level of cooperation achieved and consistently follow market principles which is an important condition for promoting truly equal relationship and strengthening objective prerequisites for advancing modern forms of integration.

Russia actively develops interaction between the CIS Member States in the humanitarian sphere by preserving and increasing common cultural and civilizational heritage that provides an important resource for the whole of the CIS and for each of its Member States in the era of globalization. Particular attention is paid to supporting compatriots who live in the CIS Member States, as well as to negotiating mutual
agreements intended to protect their educational, linguistic, social, labor, humanitarian and other rights and freedoms.

Russia will increase cooperation with the CIS Member States in ensuring mutual security, including joint efforts to combat common challenges and threats, primarily international terrorism, extremism, drug trafficking, transnational crime, and illegal migration. The priorities here include elimination of terrorist and drug trafficking threats emanating from the territory of Afghanistan and prevention of risks of destabilization of the situations in Central Asia and Transcaucasia.

To achieve these goals Russia will:

take steps to ensure further realization of the potential of the CIS as a regional organization, a forum for multilateral political dialogue and mechanism of multidimensional cooperation with priorities set in the areas of economy, humanitarian interaction and combating existing and emerging challenges and threats;

continue agreed efforts to create favorable conditions for effective establishment of the Union State by gradually transforming relations between Russia and Belarus on the basis of market principles within the framework of developing a common economic space;

actively interact with Belarus and Kazakhstan within the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) in order to establish a customs union and common economic space and encourage other EurAsEC Member States to participate in this work;

further strengthen EurAsEC as a core element of economic integration, a mechanism to support implementation of major water-energy, infrastructure, industry and other joint projects;

promote in every possible way the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) as a key instrument to maintain stability and ensure security in the CIS area focusing on adapting the CSTO as a multifunctional integration body to the changing environment, as well as on ensuring capability of the CSTO Member States to take prompt and effective joint actions, and on transforming the CSTO into a central institution ensuring security in its area of responsibility.

Russia will continue to actively support peaceful resolution of conflicts in the CIS area based on international law, respect for earlier agreements and search for agreement between the parties involved, by fulfilling responsibly its mission of a mediator in the negotiations and peacekeeping.

Russia's attitude towards subregional entities and other bodies to which Russia is not party in the CIS area is determined by their assessed real contribution into ensuring good neighborly relations and stability, their eagerness to take into account Russia's legitimate interests in practice and to duly respect existing cooperation mechanisms, such as the CIS, CSTO, EurAsEC, and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

In the same way Russia will define its approaches to developing comprehensive practical interaction in the Black Sea and Caspian Sea regions by preserving the identity
of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and strengthening the mechanism of cooperation between the Caspian States.

The main objective of the Russian foreign policy on the European track is to create a truly open, democratic system of regional collective security and cooperation ensuring the unity of the Euro-Atlantic region, from Vancouver to Vladivostok, in such a way as not to allow its new fragmentation and reproduction of bloc-based approaches which still persist in the European architecture that took shape during the Cold War period. This is precisely the essence of the initiative aimed at concluding a European security treaty, the elaboration of which could be launched at a pan-European summit.

Russia calls for building a truly unified Europe without divisive lines through equal interaction between Russia, the European Union and the United States. This would strengthen the positions of the Euro-Atlantic States in global competition. Being the biggest European State with multinational and multi-confessional society and centuries-old history, Russia stands ready to play a constructive role in ensuring a civilizational compatibility of Europe, and harmonious integration of religious minorities, including in view of various existing migration trends.

Russia advocates a strengthened role of the Council of Europe as an independent and universal European organization that determines the level of legal standards in all its Member States without applying discriminatory practices against or extending privileges to anyone, as an important instrument of eliminating dividing lines on the continent.

It is in Russia's interests that the OSCE fulfill in good faith its function of being a forum for an equitable dialogue between the OSCE participating States and for collective consensus decision-making on the basis of a comprehensive approach to military and political, economic and humanitarian aspects of security based on the balance of interests. In order to fully implement this function the whole process of OSCE functioning should be underpinned by a solid regulatory framework ensuring the supremacy of collective intergovernmental bodies' prerogatives.

In the military and political sphere Russia will seek to fix the imbalances present in the sphere of conventional arms and armed forces reduction and to adopt new confidence-building measures.

The Russian Federation will develop its relations with the European Union, which is a major trade, economic and foreign-policy partner, will promote strengthening in every possible way the interaction mechanisms, including through establishment of common spaces in economy, external and internal security, education, science and culture. From the long-term perspective, it is in the interests of Russia to agree with the European Union on a strategic partnership treaty setting special, most advanced forms of equitable and mutually beneficial cooperation with the European Union in all spheres with a view to establishing a visa-free regime.

The Russian Federation is interested in the strengthening of the European Union, development of its capacity to present agreed positions in trade, economic, humanitarian, foreign policy and security areas.
The development of mutually advantageous bilateral relationships with Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Finland, Greece, the Netherlands, Norway and some other West-European States is an important resource for promoting Russia's national interests in the European and world affairs, as well as contributing to putting the Russian economy on an innovative track of development. Russia would like the potential for interaction with Great Britain to be used along the same lines.

Russia has been developing onward practical interaction with Nordic countries including the implementation within the framework of multi-lateral mechanisms of joint cooperation projects in the Barents/Euro-Arctic region and the Arctic as a whole with account of the interests of indigenous peoples.

Russia is open for further expansion of pragmatic and mutually respecting cooperation with the States of Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe taking into account genuine readiness to do so on the part of each of them.

The Russian Federation is willing to interact with Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia in the spirit of good-neighborliness and on the basis of reciprocal consideration of interests. Of fundamental importance for Russia are the matters relating to the rights of the Russian-language population in accordance with the principles and norms of European and international law, as well as questions of ensuring sustenance of the Kaliningrad Region.

Proceeding from a realistic assessment of the role of NATO, Russia deems it important to ensure progressive development of interaction within the format of the Russia-NATO Council in the interests of ensuring predictability and stability in the Euro-Atlantic Region, the utmost utilization of the existing potential for apolitical dialogue and practical cooperation in resolving issues relating to responses to common threats, such as terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, regional crises, drug trafficking, natural and man-made disasters.

Russia will build its relationship with NATO taking into consideration the degree of the alliance's readiness for equal partnership, unswerving compliance with the principles and standards of international law, the implementation by all its members of the obligations, assumed within the framework of the Russia-NATO Council, not to ensure one's security at the expense of security of the Russian Federation, as well as the obligation to display military restraint. Russia maintains its negative attitude towards the expansion of NATO, notably to the plans of admitting Ukraine and Georgia to the membership in the alliance, as well as to bringing the NATO military infrastructure closer to the Russian borders on the whole, which violates the principle of equal security, leads to new dividing lines in Europe and runs counter to the tasks of increasing the effectiveness of joint work in search for responses to real challenges of our time.

Russia builds its relations with the USA taking into account not only the vast potential of that country for mutually advantageous bilateral trade, economic, scientific, technological and other cooperation, but also its key influence on the state of global strategic stability and international situation as a whole. Russia is interested in making effective use of the existing broad infrastructure for interaction, including a continued
dialogue on foreign policy, security and strategic stability issues, which permits to find mutually acceptable solutions on the basis of coinciding interests.

To this end, it is necessary to transform the Russian-US relations into strategic partnership, overcome the barriers of strategic principles of the past and focus on real threats, while working for the resolution of differences between Russia and the USA in the spirit of mutual respects in the areas where they persist.

Russia has been consistently favoring new agreements with the United States on disarmament and arms control in the interests of preserving continuity of this process, strengthening confidence building and transparency measures in space activity and anti-missile defense, as well as on issues of non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, secure development of peaceful nuclear energy, broadening cooperation in countering terrorism and other challenges and threats as well as settlement of regional conflicts.

Russia is interested in US actions in the world stage be based on the principles and norms of international law, first of all the UN Charter.

The long-term priorities of the American track in the Russian policy consist in putting the relationship with the USA on a solid economic foundation, ensuring joint development of aculture for resolving differences on the basis of pragmatism and respect for the balance of interests, which will permit to ensure greater stability and predictability in the Russian-US relations.

The relations with Canada, which are traditionally stable and almost immune to the effects of political environment, are an important element of the North American dimension of Russia's balanced policy. Russia is interested in boosting further the dynamics of bilateral trade, economic links and investment cooperation as well as interaction in the Arctic.

In the context of the Russian Federation's multi-vector foreign policy, the Asia-Pacific Region has important and ever-increasing significance, which is due to Russia's belonging to this dynamically developing region of the world, its interest in tapping its potential for the realization of programs aimed at economic development of Siberia and the Far East, the need for strengthening regional cooperation in the field of countering terrorism, ensuring security and maintaining adialogue between civilizations. Russia will continue to actively participate in major integration mechanisms of the Asia-Pacific Region, notably the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum, the mechanisms of partnership with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), including the ASEAN Regional Forum.

Further strengthening of the SCO, promoting its initiative for setting up a network of partner ties among all the integration associations in the Asia-Pacific Region occupy a special place.

The development of friendly relations with China and India forms an important track of Russia's foreign policy in Asia. Russia will build up the Russian–Chinese strategic partnership in all fields on the basis of common fundamental approaches to key issues of world politics as a basic constituent part of regional and global stability. Bringing the
scope and quality of economic interaction in line with the high-level of political relations constitutes a major task in the field of bilateral ties.

While deepening strategic partnership with India, Russia keeps by its line of principle aimed at strengthening interaction on topical international issues and comprehensive strengthening of the mutually advantageous bilateral ties on all fronts, particularly in ensuring a substantial growth in the trade and economic sphere.

Russia shares the interest displayed by China and India in building effective foreign policy and economic interaction in a trilateral format—Russia-India-China.

The Russian Federation is in favor of good-neighborly relations and creative partnership with Japan in the interest of the peoples of both countries. The problems inherited from the past should not pose an obstacle in this way. The work for finding a mutually acceptable solution to those issues will be continued.

Russia intends to further develop its relations with Turkey, Egypt, Algeria, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Libya, Pakistan and other leading regional States in bilateral and multilateral formats.

Russian's foreign policy is aimed at increasing positive momentum in its relations with South-East Asian States, primarily to develop strategic partnership with Vietnam as well as to promote multifaceted cooperation with Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines, Singapore and other countries of the region.

It is of fundamental importance to Russia to bring about a peaceful and sustainable climate for Asia where there are still sources of tension and conflicts and a growing risk of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Our efforts will be focused on ensuring Russia's active participation in the search for a political solution to the nuclear problem of the Korean Peninsula, maintaining constructive relations with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the Republic of Korea, promoting dialogue between Seoul and Pyongyang and strengthening security in the North-East Asia.

Russia will fully contribute to finding political and diplomatic ways of solving the situation regarding the nuclear programme of the Islamic Republic of Iran based on the recognition of the right of all States Parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) to the peaceful use of nuclear energy as well as upon strict compliance with the requirements of nuclear non-proliferation regime.

The deepening crisis in Afghanistan poses a threat to the security of the southern CIS boundaries. Russia, in collaboration with other countries concerned, the United Nations, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and other multilateral institutions, will make consistent efforts to prevent the export of terrorism and drugs from Afghanistan, find a just and lasting political solution to the problems of this country while respecting the rights and interests of all country's ethnic groups and achieve post-conflict rehabilitation of Afghanistan as a sovereign and peace-loving State.

Russia will be making a substantial contribution to the stabilization of the situation in the Middle East by using its status as a permanent member of the United Nations
Security Council and a member of the Quartet of international mediators. The main goal is to channel collective efforts into achieving, on an internationally acceptable basis, a comprehensive and long-term settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict in all its aspects, including the establishment of an independent Palestinian State living in security and peace side by side with Israel. Such a settlement should be reached with the participation of all States and nations that are key actors in bringing stability to the region and taking into consideration their legitimate interests. The Russian Federation is in favor of increasing collective efforts, on the basis of mutual respect, to contribute to ending violence and to reach political settlement in Iraq through national reconciliation and full restoration of country's statehood and economy.

To enhance its interaction with the States of the Islamic world, Russia will take advantage of its participation as an observer in the work of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the League of Arab States, and play an active role in implementing the G8 Partnership with the Broader Middle East and North Africa Region. Priority attention will be paid to developing mutually beneficial economic cooperation, in particular in the energy sector, with countries of this region, which is of strategic importance to Russia's national interests.

Russia will enhance its multi–pronged interaction with African States at the multilateral and bilateral levels, including through the dialogue and cooperation within the G8, and contribute to a prompt resolution of regional conflicts and crisis situations in Africa. We will develop political dialogue with the African Union and subregional organizations taking advantage of their capabilities to involve Russia in economic projects implemented on the continent.

Russia will seek to establish a strategic partnership with Brazil, broaden its political and economic cooperation with Argentine, Mexico, Cuba, Venezuela and other Latin American and Caribbean countries and their associations relying on the progress achieved in relations with the States of this region in recent years, enhance its interaction with these States within the international organizations, promote export of Russia's high-technology products to Latin American countries and implement joint energy, infrastructure and high-tech projects, inter alia, in accordance with the plans elaborated by the regional integration associations.

V. Shaping and implementing the foreign policy of the Russian Federation

The President of the Russian Federation, in conformity with his constitutional powers, directs its national foreign policy and, in his capacity of the Head of State, acts on behalf of the Russian Federation on the international stage.

The Federation Council and the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, within the framework of their constitutional powers, provide legislative support for the country's foreign policy, take measures to fulfill its international obligations as well as enhance the efficiency of parliamentary diplomacy.

The Government of the Russian Federation acts to implement the country's foreign policy.
The Security Council of the Russian Federation assesses the challenges and threats to the national interests and security of Russia in the international sphere, submits proposals to the President of the Russian Federation for his decision as the Head of State on issues of foreign policy of the Russian Federation in the field of national security, as well as on coordination of activities of federal executive bodies and executive bodies of the Subjects of the Russian Federation in the process of the implementation of the decisions taken in the area of ensuring national security, and evaluates the efficiency of those decisions.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation develops a general foreign policy strategy for the Russian Federation, submits relevant proposals to the President of the Russian Federation and implements the foreign policy of the Russian Federation in accordance with this Concept, as well as coordinates foreign policy activities of the federal executive bodies.

The Subjects of the Russian Federation develop their international relations in accordance with the Constitution of the Russian Federation, the Federal Law No.4FZ of January 4, 1999 "On Coordination of International and Foreign Economic Relations of the Subjects of the Russian Federation" and other legislative acts. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation and other federal executive bodies provide assistance to the Subjects of the Russian Federation in implementing international and foreign economic cooperation in strict compliance with sovereignty and territorial integrity of Russia and making use of the capacities of the Council of the Heads of the Russian Federation's Subjects and the Advisory Council for international and foreign economic relations of the Subjects of the Russian Federation, which operate under the Foreign Ministry of the Russian Federation. The development of cooperation in regions and border areas is an important reserve for bilateral relations with relevant countries and regions in the trade, economic, humanitarian and other fields.

In working out foreign policy decisions, the federal executive bodies cooperate, on a permanent basis, with the Chambers of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, political parties, non-governmental organizations, the academic community and business associations of Russia encouraging their participation in international cooperation. A broader involvement of civil society in the foreign policy process is consistent with the trends of Russia's domestic development, meets the goal of maintaining agreement in the country on foreign policy issues and contributes to its efficient execution.

In financing foreign policy activities, the resources of the Federal Budget should be used more extensively, with non-budget funds being attracted through the mechanism of the State-private partnership on a voluntary basis.

The consistent execution of Russia's foreign policy is called upon to create favorable conditions for the realization of the historic choice of the peoples of the Russian Federation in favor of rule of law, a democratic society and socially-oriented market economy.

Vladimir Putin on foreign affairs
In my previous articles I have discussed some of the key foreign challenges that Russia now faces. This subject deserves more detailed discussion and not only because foreign policy is an integral part of any government strategy. External challenges and the changing world around us are forcing us to make decisions that have implications for our economy, our culture, and our budgetary and investment planning.

Russia is part of the greater world whether we are talking about the economy, the spread of information or the development of culture. We do not wish to and cannot isolate ourselves. We hope that our openness will lead to economic and cultural development in Russia while increasing levels of mutual trust, a resource that is in increasingly short supply today.

However, we intend to be consistent in proceeding from our own interests and goals rather than decisions dictated by someone else. Russia is only respected and has its interests considered when the country is strong and stands firmly on its own feet. Russia has generally enjoyed the privilege of conducting an independent foreign policy and this is what it will continue to do. In addition, I am convinced that global security can only be achieved through cooperation with Russia rather than by attempts to push it into the background, weaken its geopolitical position or compromise its defenses.

Our foreign policy objectives are strategic in nature and are not based on opportunistic considerations. They reflect Russia's unique role on the world political map as well as its role in history and in the development of civilization.

I do not doubt that we will continue on our constructive course to enhance global security, renounce confrontation, and counter challenges like the proliferation of nuclear weapons, regional conflict and crises, terrorism and drug trafficking. We will do everything we can to see that Russia enjoys the latest achievements in scientific and technical progress and to assist our entrepreneurs in occupying their rightful place in the world market.

We will strive to ensure a new world order, one that meets current geopolitical realities, and one that develops smoothly and without unnecessary upheaval.

Who undermines confidence

As before, I believe that the major principles necessary for any feasible civilization include inalienable right to security for all states, the inadmissability of the excessive
use of force, and the unconditional observance of the basic principles of international law. To neglect any of these principles can only lead to the destabilization of international relations.

It is through this prism that we perceive some aspects of U.S. and NATO conduct that contradict the logic of modern development, relying instead on the stereotypes of a bloc-based mentality. Everyone understands what I am referring to - an expansion of NATO that includes the deployment of new military infrastructure with U.S.-drafted plans to establish a missile defense system in Europe. I would not touch on this issue if these plans were not conducted in close proximity to Russian borders, if they did not undermine our security and global stability in general.

Our arguments are well known, and I will not spell them out again. Regrettably, our Western partners are unresponsive and have simply brushed our concerns aside.

We are worried that although the outline of our "new" relations with NATO are not yet final, the alliance is already providing us with "facts on the ground" that are counterproductive to building mutual trust. At the same time, this approach will backfire with respect to global objectives, making it more difficult to cooperate on a positive agenda and will impede any constructive realignment in international relations.

The recent series of armed conflicts started under the pretext of humanitarian aims is undermining the time-honored principle of state sovereignty, creating a moral and legal void in the practice of international relations.

It is often said that human rights override state sovereignty. This is undoubtedly true - crimes against humanity must be punished by the International Court. However, when state sovereignty is too easily violated in the name of this provision, when human rights are protected from abroad and on a selective basis, and when the same rights of a population are trampled underfoot in the process of such "protection," including the most basic and sacred right - the right to one's life - these actions cannot be considered a noble mission but rather outright demagogy.

It is important for the United Nations and its Security Council to effectively counter the dictates of some countries and their arbitrary actions in the world arena. Nobody has the right to usurp the prerogatives and powers of the UN, particularly the use of force with regard to sovereign nations. This concerns NATO, an organization that has been assuming an attitude that is inconsistent with a "defensive alliance." These points are very serious. We recall how states that have fallen victim to "humanitarian" operations and the export of "missile-and-bomb democracy" appealed for respect for legal standards and common human decency. But their cries were in vain - their appeals went unheard.

It seems that NATO members, especially the United States, have developed a peculiar interpretation of security that is different from ours. The Americans have become obsessed with the idea of becoming absolutely invulnerable. This utopian concept is unfeasible both technologically and geopolitically, but it is the root of the problem.

By definition, absolute invulnerability for one country would in theory require absolute vulnerability for all others. This is something that cannot be accepted. Many countries
prefer not to be straight about this for various reasons, but that's another matter. Russia will always call things as it sees them and do so openly. I'd like to emphasize again that violating the principle of unity and the inalienable right to security - despite numerous declarations committing to it - poses a serious threat. Eventually these threats become reality for those states that initiate such violations, for many reasons.

The Arab Spring: lessons and conclusions

A year ago the world witnessed a new phenomenon - nearly simultaneous demonstrations against authoritarian regimes in many Arab countries. The Arab Spring was initially received with hope for positive change. People in Russia sympathized with those who were seeking democratic reform.

However, it soon became clear that events in many countries were not following a civilized scenario. Instead of asserting democracy and protecting the rights of the minority, attempts were being made to depose an enemy and to stage a coup, which only resulted in the replacement of one dominant force with another even more aggressive dominant force.

Foreign interference in support of one side of a domestic conflict and the use of power in this interference gave developments a negative aura. A number of countries did away with the Libyan regime by using air power in the name of humanitarian support. The revolting slaughter of Muammar Gaddafi - not just medieval but primeval - was the manifestation of these actions.

No one should be allowed to employ the Libyan scenario in Syria. The international community must work to achieve an internal Syrian reconciliation. It is important to achieve an early end to the violence no matter what the source, and to initiate a national dialogue - without preconditions or foreign interference and with due respect for the country's sovereignty. This would create the conditions necessary to introduce the measures for democratization announced by the Syrian leadership. The key objective is to prevent an all-out civil war. Russian diplomacy has worked and will continue to work toward this end.

Sadder but wiser, we oppose the adoption of UN Security Council resolutions that may be interpreted as a signal to armed interference in Syria's domestic development. Guided by this consistent approach in early February, Russia and China prevented the adoption of an ambiguous resolution that would have encouraged one side of this domestic conflict to resort to violence.

In this context and considering the extremely negative, almost hysterical reaction to the Russian-Chinese veto, I would like to warn our Western colleagues against the temptation to resort to this simple, previously used tactic: if the UN Security Council approves of a given action, fine; if not, we will establish a coalition of the states concerned and strike anyway.
The logic of such conduct is counterproductive and very dangerous. No good can come of it. In any case, it will not help reach a settlement in a country that is going through a domestic conflict. Even worse, it further undermines the entire system of international security as well as the authority and key role of the UN. Let me recall that the right to veto is not some whim but an inalienable part of the world's agreement that is registered in the UN Charter - incidentally, on U.S. insistence. The implication of this right is that decisions that raise the objection of even one permanent member of the UN Security Council cannot be well-grounded or effective.

I hope very much that the United States and other countries will consider this sad experience and will not pursue the use of power in Syria without UN Security Council sanctions. In general, I cannot understand what causes this itch for military intervention. Why isn't there the patience to develop a well-considered, balanced and cooperative approach, all the more so since this approach was already taking shape in the form of the aforementioned Syrian resolution? It only lacked the demand that the armed opposition do the same as the government; in particular, withdraw military units and detachments from cities. The refusal to do so is cynical. If we want to protect civilians - and this is the main goal for Russia - we must make all the participants in the armed confrontation see reason.

And one more point. It appears that with the Arab Spring countries, as with Iraq, Russian companies are losing their decades-long positions in local commercial markets and are being deprived of large commercial contracts. The niches thus vacated are being filled by the economic operatives of the states that had a hand in the change of the ruling regime.

One could reasonably conclude that tragic events have been encouraged to a certain extent by someone's interest in a re-division of the commercial market rather than a concern for human rights. Be that as it may, we cannot sit back watch all this with Olympian serenity. We intend to work with the new governments of the Arab countries in order to promptly restore our economic positions.

Generally, the current developments in the Arab world are, in many ways, instructive. They show that a striving to introduce democracy by use of power can produce - and often does produce - contradictory results. They can produce forces that rise from the bottom, including religious extremists, who will strive to change the very direction of a country's development and the secular nature of a government.

Russia has always had good relations with the moderate representatives of Islam, whose world outlook was close to the traditions of Muslims in Russia. We are ready to develop these contacts further under the current conditions. We are interested in stepping up our political, trade and economic ties with all Arab countries, including those that, let me repeat, have gone through domestic upheaval. Moreover, I see real possibilities that will enable Russia to fully preserve its leading position in the Middle East, where we have always had many friends.

As for the Arab-Israeli conflict, to this day, the "magic recipe" that will produce a final settlement has not been invented. It would be unacceptable to give up on this issue. Considering our close ties with the Israeli and Palestinian leaders, Russian diplomacy will continue to work for the resumption of the peace process both on a bilateral basis
and within the format of the Quartet on the Middle East, while coordinating its steps with the Arab League.

The Arab Spring has graphically demonstrated that world public opinion is being shaped by the most active use of advanced information and communications technology. It is possible to say that the Internet, social networks, cell phones, etc. have turned into an effective tool for the promotion of domestic and international policy on par with television. This new variable has come into play and gives us food for thought - how to continue developing the unique freedoms of communication via the Internet and at the same time reduce the risk of its being used by terrorists and other criminal elements.

The notion of "soft power" is being used increasingly often. This implies a matrix of tools and methods to reach foreign policy goals without the use of arms but by exerting information and other levers of influence. Regrettably, these methods are being used all too frequently to develop and provoke extremist, separatist and nationalistic attitudes, to manipulate the public and to conduct direct interference in the domestic policy of sovereign countries.

There must be a clear division between freedom of speech and normal political activity, on the one hand, and illegal instruments of "soft power," on the other. The civilized work of non-governmental humanitarian and charity organizations deserves every support. This also applies to those who actively criticize the current authorities. However, the activities of "pseudo-NGOs" and other agencies that try to destabilize other countries with outside support are unacceptable.

I'm referring to those cases where the activities of NGOs are not based on the interests (and resources) of local social groups but are funded and supported by outside forces. There are many agents of influence from big countries, international blocks or corporations. When they act in the open - this is simply a form of civilized lobbyism. Russia also uses such institutions - the Federal Agency for CIS Affairs, Compatriots Living Abroad, International Humanitarian Cooperation, the Russkiy Mir Foundation and our leading universities who recruit talented students from abroad.

However, Russia does not use or fund national NGOs based in other countries or any foreign political organizations in the pursuit of its own interests. China, India and Brazil do not do this either. We believe that any influence on domestic policy and public attitude in other countries must be exerted in the open; in this way, those who wish to be of influence will do so responsibly.

New challenges and threats

Today, Iran is the focus of international attention. Needless to say, Russia is worried about the growing threat of a military strike against Iran. If this happens, the consequences will be disastrous. It is impossible to imagine the true scope of this turn of events.
I am convinced that this issue must be settled exclusively by peaceful means. We propose recognizing Iran's right to develop a civilian nuclear program, including the right to enrich uranium. But this must be done in exchange for putting all Iranian nuclear activity under reliable and comprehensive IAEA safeguards. If this is done, the sanctions against Iran, including the unilateral ones, must be rescinded. The West has shown too much willingness to "punish" certain countries. At any minor development it reaches for sanctions if not armed force. Let me remind you that we are not in the 19th century or even the 20th century now.

Developments around the Korean nuclear issue are no less serious. Violating the non-proliferation regime, Pyongyang openly claims the right to develop "the military atom" and has already conducted two nuclear tests. We cannot accept North Korea's nuclear status. We have consistently advocated the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula - exclusively through political and diplomatic means -- and the early resumption of Six-Party Talks.

However, it is evident that not all of our partners share this approach. I am convinced that today it is essential to be particularly careful. It would be inadvisable to try and test the strength of the new North Korean leader and provoke a rash countermeasure.

Allow me to recall that North Korea and Russia share a common border and we cannot choose our neighbors. We will continue conducting an active dialogue with the leaders of North Korea and developing good-neighborly relations with it, while at the same time trying to encourage Pyongyang to settle the nuclear issue. Obviously, it would be easier to do this if mutual trust is built up and the inter-Korean dialogue resumes on the peninsula.

All this fervor around the nuclear programs of Iran and North Korea makes one wonder how the risks of nuclear weapons proliferation emerge and who is aggravating them. It seems that the more frequent cases of crude and even armed outside interference in the domestic affairs of countries may prompt authoritarian (and other) regimes to possess nuclear weapons. If I have the A-bomb in my pocket, nobody will touch me because it's more trouble than it is worth. And those who don't have the bomb might have to sit and wait for "humanitarian intervention."

Whether we like it or not, foreign interference suggests this train of thought. This is why the number of threshold countries that are one step away from "military atom" technology, is growing rather than decreasing. Under these conditions, zones free of weapons of mass destruction are being established in different parts of the world and are becoming increasingly important. Russia has initiated the discussion of the parameters for a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East.

It is essential to do everything we can to prevent any country from being tempted to get nuclear weapons. Non-proliferation campaigners must also change their conduct, especially those that are used to penalizing other countries by force, without letting the diplomats do their job. This was the case in Iraq - its problems have only become worse after an almost decade-long occupation.
If the incentives for becoming a nuclear power are finally eradicated, it will be possible to make the international non-proliferation regime universal and firmly based on existing treaties. This regime would allow all interested countries to fully enjoy the benefits of the "peaceful atom" under IAEA safeguards.

Russia would stand to gain much from this because we are actively operating in international markets, building new nuclear power plants based on safe, modern technology and taking part in the formation of multilateral nuclear enrichment centers and nuclear fuel banks.

The probable future of Afghanistan is alarming. We have supported the military operation on rendering international aid to that country. However, the NATO-led international military contingent has not met its objectives. The threats of terrorism and drug trafficking have not been reduced. Having announced its withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2014, the United States has been building, both there and in neighboring countries, military bases without a clear-cut mandate, objectives or duration of operation. Understandably, this does not suit us.

Russia has obvious interests in Afghanistan and these interests are understandable. Afghanistan is our close neighbor and we have a stake in its stable and peaceful development. Most important, we want it to stop being the main source of the drug threat. Illegal drug trafficking has become one of the most urgent threats. It undermines the genetic bank of entire nations, while creating fertile soil for corruption and crime and is leading to the destabilization of Afghanistan. Far from declining, the production of Afghan drugs increased by almost 40% last year. Russia is being subjected to vicious heroin-related aggression that is doing tremendous damage to the health of our people.

The dimensions of the Afghan drug threat make it clear that it can only be overcome by a global effort with reliance on the United Nations and regional organizations - the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the CIS. We are willing to consider much greater participation in the relief operation for the Afghan people but only on the condition that the international contingent in Afghanistan acts with greater zeal and in our interests, that it will pursue the physical destruction of drug crops and underground laboratories.

Invigorated anti-drug measures inside Afghanistan must be accompanied by the reliable blocking of the routes of opiate transportation to external markets, financial flows and the supply of chemical substances used in heroin production. The goal is to build a comprehensive system of anti-drug security in the region. Russia will contribute to the effective cooperation of the international community for turning the tide in the war against the global drug threat.

It is hard to predict further developments in Afghanistan. Historical experience shows that foreign military presence has not brought it serenity. Only the Afghans can resolve their own problems. I see Russia's role as follows - to help the Afghan people, with the active involvement of other neighboring countries, to develop a sustainable economy and enhance the ability of the national armed forces to counter the threats of terrorism and drug-related crime. We do not object to the process of national reconciliation being joined by participants of the armed opposition, including the Taliban, on condition they renounce violence, recognize the country's Constitution and sever ties with al-Qaeda.
and other terrorist groups. In principle, I believe it is possible to build a peaceful, stable, independent and neutral Afghan state.

The instability that has persisted for years and decades is creating a breeding ground for international terrorism that is universally recognized as one of the most dangerous challenges to the world community. I'd like to note that the crises zones that engender a terrorist threat are located near the Russian borders and are much close to us than to our European or American partners. The United Nations has adopted the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy but it seems that the struggle against this evil is conducted not under a common universal plan and not consistently but in a series of responses to the most urgent and barbarian manifestations of terror - when the public uproar over the impudent acts of terrorists grows out of proportion. The civilized world must not wait for tragedies like the terrorist attacks in New York in September 2001 or another Beslan disaster and only then act collectively and resolutely after the shock of such cases.

I'm far from denying the results achieved in the war on international terror. There has been progress. In the last few years security services and the law-enforcement agencies of many countries have markedly upgraded their cooperation. But there is still the obvious potential for further anti-terrorist cooperation. Thus, double standards still exist and terrorists are perceived differently in different countries - some are "bad guys" and others are "not so bad." Some forces are not averse to using the latter in political manipulation, for example, in shaking up objectionable ruling regimes.

All available public institutions - the media, religious associations, NGOs, the education system, science and business - must be used to prevent terrorism all over the world. We need a dialogue between religions and, on a broader plane, among civilizations. Russia has many religions, but we have never had religious wars. We could make a contribution to an international discussion on this issue.

The growing role of the Asia-Pacific Region

One of our country's neighbors is China, a major hub of the global economy. It has become fashionable to opine about that country's future role in the global economy and international affairs. Last year China moved into second place in the world in terms of GDP and it is poised to surpass the U.S. on that count, according to international - including American - experts. The overall might of the People's Republic of China is growing, and that includes the ability to project power in various regions.

How should we conduct ourselves in the face of the rapidly strengthening Chinese factor?

First of all, I am convinced that China's economic growth is by no means a threat, but a challenge that carries colossal potential for business cooperation - a chance to catch the Chinese wind in the sails of our economy. We should seek to more actively form new cooperative ties, combining the technological and productive capabilities of our two
countries and tapping China's potential - judiciously, of course - in order to develop the economy of Siberia and the Russian Far East.

Second, China's conduct on the world stage gives no grounds to talk about its aspirations to dominance. The Chinese voice in the world is indeed growing ever more confident, and we welcome that, because Beijing shares our vision of the emerging equitable world order. We will continue to support each other in the international arena, to work together to solve acute regional and global problems, and to promote cooperation within the UN Security Council, BRICS, the SCO, the G20 and other multilateral forums.

And third, we have settled all the major political issues in our relations with China, including the critical border issue. Our nations have created a solid mechanism of bilateral ties, reinforced by legally binding documents. There is an unprecedentedly high level of trust between the leaders of our two countries. This enables us and the Chinese to act in the spirit of genuine partnership, rooted in pragmatism and respect for each other's interests. The model of Russian-Chinese relations we have created has good prospects.

Of course, this is not to suggest that our relationship with China is problem-free. There are some sources of friction. Our commercial interests in third parties by no means always coincide, and we are not entirely satisfied with the emerging trade structure and the low level of mutual investments. We will also closely monitor immigration from the People's Republic of China.

But my main premise is that Russia needs a prosperous and stable China, and I am convinced that China needs a strong and successful Russia.

Another rapidly growing Asian giant is India. Russia has traditionally enjoyed friendly relations with India, which the leaders of our two countries have classified as a privileged strategic partnership. Not only our countries but the entire multipolar system that is emerging in the world stands to gain from this partnership.

We see before our eyes not only the rise of China and India, but the growing weight of the entire Asia-Pacific Region. This has opened up new horizons for fruitful work within the framework of the Russian chairmanship of APEC. In September of this year we will host a meeting of its leaders in Vladivostok. We are actively preparing for it, creating modern infrastructure that will promote the further development of Siberia and the Russian Far East and enable our country to become more involved in the dynamic integration processes in the "new Asia."

We will continue to prioritize our cooperation with our BRICS partners. That unique structure, created in 2006, is a striking symbol of the transition from a unipolar world to a more just world order. BRICS brings together five countries with a population of almost three billion people, the largest emerging economies, colossal labor and natural resources and huge domestic markets. With the addition of South Africa, BRICS acquired a truly global format, and it now accounts for more than 25% of world GDP.

We are still getting used to working together in this format. In particular, we have to coordinate better on foreign policy matters and work together more closely at the UN.
But when BRICS is really up and running, its impact on the world economy and politics will be considerable.

In recent years, cooperation with the countries of Asia, Latin America and Africa has become a growing focus of Russian diplomacy and of our business community. In these regions there is still sincere goodwill toward Russia. One of the key tasks for the coming period, in my view, is cultivating trade and economic cooperation as well as joint projects in the fields of energy, infrastructure, investment, science and technology, banking and tourism.

The growing role of Asia, Latin America and Africa in the emerging democratic system of managing the global economy and global finance is reflected in the work of the G20. I believe that this association will soon become a strategically important tool not only for responding to crises, but for the long-term reform of the world's financial and economic architecture. Russia will chair the G20 in 2013, and we must use this opportunity to better coordinate the work of the G20 and other multilateral structures, above all the G8 and, of course, the UN.

The Europe factor

Russia is an inalienable and organic part of Greater Europe and European civilization. Our citizens think of themselves as Europeans. We are by no means indifferent to developments in united Europe.

That is why Russia proposes moving toward the creation of a common economic and human space from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean - a community referred by Russian experts to as "the Union of Europe," which will strengthen Russia's potential and position in its economic pivot toward the "new Asia."

Against the background of the rise of China, India and other new economies, the financial and economic upheavals in Europe - formerly an oasis of stability and order - is particularly worrisome. The crisis that has struck the eurozone cannot but affect Russia's interests, especially if one considers that the EU is our major foreign economic and trade partner. Likewise, it is clear that the prospects of the entire global economic structure depend heavily on the state of affairs in Europe.

Russia is actively participating in the international effort to support the ailing European economies, and is consistently working with its partners to formulate collective decisions under the auspices of the IMF. Russia is not opposed in principle to direct financial assistance in some cases.

At the same time I believe that external financial injections can only partially solve the problem. A true solution will require energetic, system-wide measures. European leaders face the task of effecting large-scale transformations that will fundamentally change many financial and economic mechanisms to ensure genuine budget discipline.
We have a stake in ensuring a strong EU, as envisioned by Germany and France. It is in our interests to realize the enormous potential of the Russia-EU partnership.

The current level of cooperation between Russia and the European Union does not correspond to current global challenges, above all making our shared continent more competitive. I propose again that we work toward creating a harmonious community of economies from Lisbon to Vladivostok, which will, in the future, evolve into a free trade zone and even more advanced forms of economic integration. The resulting common continental market would be worth trillions of euros. Does anyone doubt that this would be a wonderful development, and that it would meet the interests of both Russians and Europeans?

We must also consider more extensive cooperation in the energy sphere, up to and including the formation of a common European energy complex. The Nord Stream gas pipeline under the Baltic Sea and the South Stream pipeline under the Black Sea are important steps in that direction. These projects have the support of many governments and involve major European energy companies. Once the pipelines start operating at full capacity, Europe will have a reliable and flexible gas-supply system that does not depend on the political whims of any nation. This will strengthen the continent's energy security not only in form but in substance. This is particularly relevant in the light of the decision of some European states to reduce or renounce nuclear energy.

The Third Energy Package, backed by the European Commission and aimed at squeezing out integrated Russian companies, is frankly not conducive to stronger relations between Russia and the EU. Considering the growing instability of energy suppliers that could act as an alternative to Russia, the package aggravates the systemic risks to the European energy sector and scares away potential investors in new infrastructure projects. Many European politicians have been critical of the package in their talks with me. We should summon the courage to remove this obstacle to mutually beneficial cooperation.

I believe that genuine partnership between Russia and the European Union is impossible as long as there are barriers that impede human and economic contacts, first and foremost visa requirements. The abolition of visas would give powerful impetus to real integration between Russia and the EU, and would help expand cultural and business ties, especially between medium-sized and small businesses. The threat to Europeans from Russian economic migrants is largely imagined. Our people have opportunities to put their abilities and skills to use in their own country, and these opportunities are becoming ever more numerous.

In December 2011 we agreed with the EU on “joint steps” toward a visa-free regime. They can and should be taken without delay. We should continue to actively pursue this goal.

Russian-American affairs
In recent years a good deal has been done to develop Russian-American relations. Even so, we have not managed to fundamentally change the matrix of our relations, which continue to ebb and flow. The instability of the partnership with America is due in part to the tenacity of some well-known stereotypes and phobias, particularly the perception of Russia on Capitol Hill. But the main problem is that bilateral political dialogue and cooperation do not rest on a solid economic foundation. The current level of bilateral trade falls far short of the potential of our economies. The same is true of mutual investments. We have yet to create a safety net that would protect our relations against ups and downs. We should work on this.

Nor is mutual understanding strengthened by regular U.S. attempts to engage in "political engineering," including in regions that are traditionally important to us and during Russian elections.

As I've said before, U.S. plans to create a missile defense system in Europe give rise to legitimate fears in Russia. Why does that system worry us more than others? Because it affects the strategic nuclear deterrence forces that only Russia possesses in that theatre, and upsets the military-political balance established over decades.

The inseparable link between missile defense and strategic offensive weapons is reflected in the New START treaty signed in 2010. The treaty has come into effect and is working fairly well. It is a major foreign policy achievement. We are ready to consider various options for our joint agenda with the Americans in the field of arms control in the coming period. In this effort we must seek to balance our interests and renounce any attempts to gain one-sided advantages through negotiations.

In 2007, during a meeting with President Bush in Kennebunkport, I proposed a solution to the missile defense problem, which, if adopted, would have changed the customary character of Russian-American relations and opened up a positive path forward. Moreover, if we had managed to achieve a breakthrough on missile defense, this would have opened the floodgates for building a qualitatively new model of cooperation, similar to an alliance, in many other sensitive areas.

It was not to be. Perhaps it would be useful to look back at the transcripts of the talks in Kennebunkport. In recent years the Russian leadership has come forward with other proposals to resolve the dispute over missile defense. These proposals still stand.

I am loath to dismiss the possibility of reaching a compromise on missile defense. One would not like to see the deployment of the American system on a scale that would demand the implementation of our declared countermeasures.

I recently had a talk with Henry Kissinger. I meet with him regularly. I fully share this consummate professional's thesis that close and trusting interactions between Moscow and Washington are particularly important in periods of international turbulence.

In general, we are prepared to make great strides in our relations with the U.S., to achieve a qualitative breakthrough, but on the condition that the Americans are guided by the principles of equal and mutually respectful partnership.
In December of last year, Russia finally concluded its marathon accession to the WTO, which lasted for many years. I must mention that, in the finishing stretch, the Obama administration and the leaders of some major European states made a significant contribution to achieving the final accords.

To be honest, at times during this long and arduous journey we wanted to turn our backs on the talks and slam the door. But we did not succumb to emotion. As a result a compromise was reached that is quite acceptable for our country: we managed to defend the interests of Russian industrial and agricultural producers in the face of growing external competition. Our economic actors have gained substantial additional opportunities to enter world markets and uphold their rights there in a civilized manner. It is this, rather than the symbolism of Russia's accession to the World Trade "club", that I see as the main result of this process.

Russia will comply with WTO norms, as it meets all of its international obligations. Likewise, I hope that our partners will play according to the rules. Let me note in passing that we have already integrated WTO principles in the legal framework of the Common Economic Space of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan.

Russia is still learning how to systematically and consistently promote its economic interests in the world. We have yet to learn, as many Western partners have, how to lobby for decisions that favor Russian business in foreign international forums. The challenges facing us in this area, given our priority of innovation-driven development, are very serious: to achieve equal standing for Russia in the modern system of global economic ties, and to minimize the risks arising from integration in the world economy, including Russia's membership in the WTO and its forthcoming accession to the OECD.

We are badly in need of broader, non-discriminatory access to foreign markets. So far Russian economic actors have been getting a raw deal abroad. Restrictive trade and political measures are being taken against them, and technical barriers are being erected that put them at a disadvantage compared with their competitors.

The same holds for investments. We are trying to attract foreign capital to the Russian economy. We are opening up the most attractive areas of our economy to foreign investors, granting them access to the "juiciest morsels," in particular, our fuel and energy complex. But our investors are not welcome abroad and are often pointedly brushed aside.

Examples abound. Take the story of Germany's Opel, which Russian investors tried and failed to acquire despite the fact that the deal was approved by the German government and was positively received by German trade unions. Or take the outrageous examples of Russian businesses being denied their rights as investors after investing considerable resources in foreign assets. This is a frequent occurrence in Central and Eastern Europe.
All this leads to the conclusions that Russia must strengthen its political and diplomatic support for Russian entrepreneurs in foreign markets, and to provide more robust assistance to major, landmark business projects. Nor should we forget that Russia can employ identical response measures against those who resort to dishonest methods of competition.

The government and business associations should better coordinate their efforts in the foreign economic sphere, more aggressively promote the interests of Russian business and help it to open up new markets.

I would like to draw attention to another important factor that largely shapes the role and place of Russia in present-day and future political and economic alignments - the vast size of our country. Granted, we no longer occupy one-sixth of the Earth's surface, but the Russian Federation is still the world's largest nation with an unrivaled abundance of natural resources. I am referring not only to oil and gas, but also our forests, agricultural land and clean freshwater resources.

Russia's territory is a source of its potential strength. In the past, our vast land mainly served as a buffer against foreign aggression. Now, given a sound economic strategy, they can become a very important foundation for increasing our competitiveness.

I would like to mention, in particular, the growing shortage of fresh water in the world. One can foresee in the near future the start of geopolitical competition for water resources and for the ability to produce water-intensive goods. When this time comes, Russia will have its trump card ready. We understand that we must use our natural wealth prudently and strategically.

Support for compatriots and Russian culture in the international context

Respect for one's country is rooted, among other things, in its ability to protect the rights of its citizens abroad. We must never neglect the interests of the millions of Russian nationals who live and travel abroad on vacation or on business. I would like to stress that the Foreign Ministry and all diplomatic and consular agencies must be prepared to provide real support to our citizens around the clock. Diplomats must respond to conflicts between Russian nationals and local authorities, and to incidents and accidents in a prompt manner - before the media announces the news to the world.

We are determined to ensure that Latvian and Estonian authorities follow the numerous recommendations of reputable international organizations on observing generally accepted rights of ethnic minorities. We cannot tolerate the shameful status of "non-citizen." How can we accept that, due to their status as non-citizens, one in six Latvian residents and one in thirteen Estonian residents are denied their fundamental political, electoral and socioeconomic rights and the ability to freely use Russian?

The recent referendum in Latvia on the status of the Russian language again demonstrated to the international community how acute this problem is. Over 300,000
non-citizens were once again barred from taking part in a referendum. Even more outrageous is the fact that the Latvian Central Electoral Commission refused to allow a delegation from the Russian Public Chamber to monitor the vote. Meanwhile, international organizations responsible for compliance with generally accepted democratic norms remain silent.

On the whole, we are dissatisfied with how the issue of human rights is handled globally. First, the United States and other Western states dominate and politicize the human rights agenda, using it as a means to exert pressure. At the same time, they are very sensitive and even intolerant to criticism. Second, the objects of human rights monitoring are chosen regardless of objective criteria but at the discretion of the states that have "privatized" the human rights agenda.

Russia has been the target of biased and aggressive criticism that, at times, exceeds all limits. When we are given constructive criticism, we welcome it and are ready to learn from it. But when we are subjected, again and again, to blanket criticisms in a persistent effort to influence our citizens, their attitudes, and our domestic affairs, it becomes clear that these attacks are not rooted in moral and democratic values.

Nobody should possess complete control over the sphere of human rights. Russia is a young democracy. More often than not, we are too humble and too willing to spare the self-regard of our more experienced partners. Still, we often have something to say, and no country has a perfect record on human rights and basic freedoms. Even the older democracies commit serious violations, and we should not look the other way. Obviously, this work should not be about trading insults. All sides stand to gain from a constructive discussion of human rights issues.

In late 2011, the Russian Foreign Ministry published its first report on the observance of human rights in other countries. I believe we should become more active in this area. This will facilitate broader and more equitable cooperation in the effort to solve humanitarian problems and promote fundamental democratic principles and human rights.

Of course, this is just one aspect of our efforts to promote our international and diplomatic activity and to foster an accurate image of Russia abroad. Admittedly, we have not seen great success here. When it comes to media influence, we are often outperformed. This is a separate and complex challenge that we must confront.

Russia has a great cultural heritage, recognized both in the West and the East. But we have yet to make a serious investment in our culture and its promotion around the world. The surge in global interest in ideas and culture, sparked by the merger of societies and economies in the global information network, provides new opportunities for Russia, with its proven talent for creating cultural objects.

Russia has a chance not only to preserve its culture but to use it as a powerful force for progress in international markets. The Russian language is spoken in nearly all the former Soviet republics and in a significant part of Eastern Europe. This is not about empire, but rather cultural progress. Exporting education and culture will help promote Russian goods, services and ideas; guns and imposing political regimes will not.
We must work to expand Russia's educational and cultural presence in the world, especially in those countries where a substantial part of the population speaks or understands Russian.

We must discuss how we can derive the maximum benefit for Russia's image from hosting large international events, including the APEC Leaders’ Meeting in 2012, the G20 summit in 2013 and the G8 summit in 2014, the Universiade in Kazan in 2013, the Winter Olympic Games in 2014, the IIHF World Championships in 2016, and the FIFA World Cup in 2018.

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Russia intends to continue promoting its security and protecting its national interest by actively and constructively engaging in global politics and in efforts to solve global and regional problems. We are ready for mutually beneficial cooperation and open dialogue with all our foreign partners. We aim to understand and take into account the interests of our partners, and we ask that our own interests be respected.

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