

Russia's Lavrov backs US view on primacy of sovereignty in international relations

21 September 2017 – Russian Foreign Minister Sergey V. Lavrov endorsed at the United Nations General Assembly today United States President Donald Trump's affirmation of the primacy of national sovereignty in international affairs.

"The world keeps changing," he told the 72nd annual general debate, citing last December's Assembly resolution on the 'promotion of a democratic and equitable international order,' which deemed unacceptable interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States, which the US under former President Barack Obama voted against.

"It is gratifying to note, as the US President Donald Trump unequivocally stated from this podium Tuesday, that it is important to comply with the principles of sovereignty in the international affairs; it is necessary to ensure leadership by example and not impose one's will on other nations," he said.

"I believe that anyone can sign under these words, especially, if the US foreign policy is conducted precisely on this basis. Sovereignty, refraining from interference into internal affairs, equality of people and mutual respect – Russia has always adhered to these principles and will continue to uphold them," Mr. Lavrov underscored.

He lamented that Russia's Western partners have not reciprocated Moscow's good-faith efforts to eliminate the legacy of the Cold War, and have instead chosen "the path of reckless eastward NATO expansion and provoking instability in the post-Soviet space and encouraging anti-Russian sentiments. This policy is precisely the root cause of the protracted conflict in South-Eastern Ukraine," he added.

Turning to the crisis over the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) nuclear programme, Mr. Lavrov said Russia resolutely condemns "the nuclear missile adventures of Pyongyang in violation of the UN Security Council resolutions. "However, the build-up of military hysteria is not only a dead-end but also deadly," he stated. "It goes without saying that all UN Security Council resolutions must be implemented. But all of them, along with sanctions, contain provisions on the need to resume talks."

[Full statement available here](#)

Sustained engagement vital to address immense humanitarian needs in Syria – UN official

21 September 2017 – Sustained international attention and engagement is vital as the Syrian conflict moves into its seventh year and the suffering of civilians shows no signs of waning, a top United Nations official said today.

“Life-saving humanitarian needs remain enormous and the delivery of assistance through the most direct routes remains critical,” Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Mark Lowcock [told](#) the High-level Meeting on Syria, held in the margins of the General Assembly.

Mr. Lowcock, who is also UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, reported that de-escalation has resulted in calm in some parts of the country. But an increase in operations in the east to combat the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh) has caused fresh suffering and displacement.

“From Raqqa, to Idleb, to Deir ez-Zor, civilians continue to face serious protection concerns as fighting and access constraints continue. This year alone, another one million people have been internally displaced,” he stated, adding that all parties to the fighting must be pressured to respect international humanitarian law.

In April in Brussels, some \$6 billion was pledged by over 40 governments for the humanitarian response this year, with a further \$3.7 billion pledged for 2018.

“There was also a clear agreement that the civilians whose lives have been destroyed by years of conflict must remain at the forefront of the international community’s agenda,” said Mr. Lowcock.

“That was expressed by voicing unconditional support to meet humanitarian needs inside Syria and the region; and by highlighting the importance of support for early recovery and resilience-building for displaced Syrians and their hosts.”

Mr. Lowcock stressed the need for all pledges to UN-coordinated appeals for Syria and the region turned into contributions, noting that the humanitarian response plan for inside Syria is only 36 per cent funded, while the regional refugee and resilience plan just 39 per cent funded.

“We can and we must do better for the Syrian people,” he stated. “Ultimately of course, the only sustainable way to address the humanitarian crisis is to end the conflict through a credible political agreement.”

Among the other participants at the meeting were the UN Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi.

Disarmament and non-proliferation 'mutually-reinforcing,' Security Council told

21 September 2017 – The United Nations disarmament chief today warned against emerging technologies that make the acquisition and use of weapons of mass destruction easier, and stressed the need for effective approaches combining diplomacy, international cooperation and implementation of Security Council decisions.

“The Council’s engagement on weapons of mass destruction has always been grounded on a common understanding that measures for disarmament and non-proliferation are two sides of the same coin and are mutually-reinforcing,” High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu said, as she briefed the 15-member body on the threat posed by the proliferation of such armaments.

She noted that the disarmament and non-proliferation efforts by the Council over the past 25 years have achieved important and historic outcomes, even as the international community continues to grapple with isolated cases of proliferation and the unresolved question of disarmament.

In responding to the 1991 invasion of Kuwait, the Council required Iraq to eliminate its weapons of mass destruction programme and mandated on-site inspections toward this end. It has since been confirmed that those obligations were carried out and the Council has effectively normalized Iraq’s international non-proliferation obligations, Ms. Nakamitsu said.

As for the Iranian nuclear issue, direct engagement and a shared commitment to dialogue and cooperation resulted in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, which the Council endorsed in resolution 2231. Two years later, international inspectors continue to verify the implementation of Iran’s nuclear-related commitments.

In Libya, timely action by the Council enabled international inspectors to help the Government secure and remove vulnerable stockpiles of chemical agents.

In Syria, successful engagement by Russia and the United States resulted in that country eliminating its declared chemical weapon programme under UN supervision and with unprecedented international cooperation.

“Regrettably, we continue to find evidence of the use of toxic chemicals as weapons” by the Government of Syria and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh), she added.

On the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), she said their "provocative and dangerous" nuclear and ballistic missile activities have undermined international norms against nuclear proliferation and nuclear testing. She urged the Council to remain united and facilitate the resumption of diplomacy for a peaceful settlement.

Ms. Nakamitsu explained that resolution 1540, adopted in 2004, continues to stand as a pioneering achievement in cooperative action to prevent non-State actors from acquiring weapons of mass destruction and related material.

For that resolution to remain effective, it is imperative to keep pace with global trends and emerging technologies that continuously lower the threshold for the acquisition and use of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear material, she said.

Ms. Nakamitsu went on to stress that the most effective approaches to non-proliferation must involve a mixture of active, robust and wise diplomacy, strong international cooperation and a solid commitment to fully implementing the decisions of the Council.

[Reform vital for achieving sustainable development, Zimbabwe's Mugabe tells UN Assembly](#)

21 September 2017 – Without deeper international cooperation and reform in the international system, the gap between the rich and the poor will persist, President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe today warned in his address to the General Assembly debate.

Praising the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development as "ambitious, revolutionary, transformative, universal and encompassing every single facet of human life," he noted that its success demands a radical and unprecedented paradigm shift.

"For us in Africa, the current antiquated system perpetuates a historic injustice, one that can never ever be justified today," Mr. Mugabe said. "The 2030 Agenda represents new wine, and we call for a new wineskin lest we ruin the new wine."

Among the reforms the veteran leader noted called for was the reorganization of the Security Council, and greater emphasis discourse among nations.

"We are left to wonder, justifiably so, whether those who enjoy, and sometimes abuse the power and privileges of the current set up, are sincere interlocutors in these discussions," he said.

[Full statement available here](#)

[At UN Assembly, African leaders call for more support to fight terrorism in sub-Saharan Sahel](#)

21 September 2017 – Highlighting the dangers posed by terrorism in Africa's sub-Saharan Sahel region, African leaders mounted the podium of the United Nations General Assembly today to appeal for the resources needed to make the multinational force set up to counter the scourge fully operational.

"Owing to the gravity of the situation, we must take advantage of the Secretary-General's follow-up report to reinforce the joint multinational force's mandate by providing it with the resources it needs to succeed in its mission," Burkina Faso's President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré said.

In June the UN Security Council endorsed the formation the G5 Sahel joint force, comprising Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger, to combat terrorism and transnational organized crime in the restive region.

"One of the major challenges is the mobilization of resources," he said, noting that the northern regions of both his own country and neighbouring Mali have been affected by terrorism and extremism and need an urgent investment programme to lessen the vulnerability of the people living there, especially women and the young.

"The struggle against terrorism can only succeed if it is based not only on a sub-regional approach but also on the dynamic of economic development for the most vulnerable areas," he explained.

[Full statement available \(in French\) here](#)



Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of the Gabonese Republic, addresses the general debate of the 72nd Session of the General Assembly. UN Photo/Cia Pak

Gabon's President Ali Bongo Ondimba lauded the establishment of the G5 Sahel force. "It is a question of multi-dimensional long-term battle which demands inter-State cooperation and solidarity with the victims of the atrocities," he told the Assembly.

His own country is part of a subregional anti-terrorist initiative by central African States "to combat the terrorist hydra in all its forms and whatever its motivation."

He stressed that a military response had to be accompanied by other measures, including action to reduce the funds flowing to criminal organizations.

Mr. Ondimba also called for determined action against poaching that is decimating Africa's fauna and flora, and its natural resources.

[Full statement available \(in French\) here](#)



Azali Assoumani, President of the Union of the Comoros, addresses the general debate of the General Assembly's seventy-second session. UN Photo/Cia Pak

Comoros President Azali Assoumani called terrorism "his absolute negation of what is human [which] has become a scourge that we condemn and must fight together without mercy and on a planetary scale with all our forces."

Decrying the association of terrorism with Islam, he said there was no Islamic terrorism, just as there is no Christian or Jewish terrorism. "Terrorists are simply barbarians," he stressed.

"We condemn without reserve the atrocities perpetrated against minorities and communities, yesterday in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and today in Burma (Myanmar) against the Rohingya and other minorities wherever they are, whose inhuman and savage victimization is all the more shocking in that its extreme violence is directed towards the ethnic cleansing of those who have the least resources.

"I dare to hope that our Organization will know how to defend the most elementary rights of the oppressed, regardless of origin, race, sex, or belief," he added.

The leaders also addressed a host of world issues, from climate change to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) nuclear programme, and from the need for expansion of the 15-member UN Security Council with permanent African representation to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) that seek to haul hundreds of millions of people out of poverty, hunger and social ills by 2030.

[Full statement \(in French\) available here](#)



His Excellency Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea addresses the general debate of the General Assembly's seventy-second session. UN Photo/Cia Pak

President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo of Equatorial Guinea said his own country had suffered terrorism, piracy and attempted attacks from outside seeking to undermine its "peaceful and democratic system of Government, disrupt peace and stir up revolts for the benefit of fortune-seeking adventurers."

This had led to unjust and gratuitous accusations against the country's leaders.

He cited a whole litany of obstacles from international terrorism, extremism, xenophobia, and human trafficking to piracy, mercenary attacks, trans-border crimes and the economic crisis confronting the whole world.

"All these phenomena make it necessary to awaken a greater awareness among nations, and to promote a more direct inter-State cooperation, and undertake a dynamic and coordinated action by all nations in solidarity," he declared.

[*Full statement \(in Spanish\) available here*](#)

News Tracker: past stories on this issue

[UN General Assembly's annual debate to 'focus on people,' ensuring decent life for all](#)