

Speech by President of Russia Dmitry Medvedev at the meeting with Russian ambassadors and permanent representatives in international organizations

12 July 2010, Moscow

PRESIDENT OF RUSSIA DMITRY MEDVEDEV:

Good afternoon, colleagues,

In the two years that have passed since our last meeting, the world has changed significantly, although we always use that phrase – it's a truism of sorts. Still, it is absolutely accurate when applied to the last two years.

These changes include the August 2008 events in the Caucasus, the global financial crisis shortly after that, and our decision to begin modernizing Russia's economy and changing its political system. All of this has a major influence on your activities.

Now, a few words to start this discussion, which I find important. Our nation's foreign policy, in all its complexity and multidimensionality, is aimed toward one key goal – a fairly simple goal: to generally improve financial and spiritual conditions for our people, to develop our country, to protect when so required health and dignity of the Russian citizens and to ensure they are able to safely and freely engage in any aspect of public life. Thus, our domestic policy priorities have a strong influence on our choice of strategies in international relations. This has always been true throughout the history of Russia.

In recent years, we have seen a comprehensive renewal of our domestic policy agenda. It is my hope that the overall national strategies have significantly evolved as we are now encouraging economic and political competition, greater feedback between the state and society, while improving political civility, adequate economic behaviour and social culture.

We believe in the viability of our democratic institutions and will insistently develop them to make Russia a thriving society, based on the principles of liberty and justice.

We believe in the rule of law; we believe that we will be able to eliminate corruption in vitally important social institutions and guarantee that everyone will enjoy living by fair and civilized rules.

Finally, we believe in the success of modernization, in the intellectual and creative potential of our people. We believe that with the support of our government and in

cooperation with foreign partners Russian entrepreneurs, scientists, engineers will turn our economy into one of the driving forces of global development.

With all the acute contradictions on the global arena today, we are seeing a clear general eagerness to harmonize relations, establish dialogue, and reduce conflicts.

Reeling from the global financial crisis, we are all jointly searching for new approaches to reform, not only for the global financial and economic institutions, but for the global order overall. This certainly means fairer principles of cooperation, building relations between free nations on a solid foundation, and the firm principles of universal international law. This paradigm shift in international relations opens for us a unique opportunity to put Russia's foreign policy instruments to the most effective use possible to assist the country's modernization. I suppose this is the most important point I would like to raise.

We must be more effective in our use of foreign policy instruments specifically for pursuing domestic objectives, for modernizing our country, its economy, its social life and, to some degree, its political system, in order to resolve various challenges facing our society. I will name the most significant of these challenges, and we may review others later.

The first challenge is modernizing our economy, primarily upgrading our industries and promoting innovative economy as the basic elements of modernization. Even though I am speaking at the Foreign Ministry, I nevertheless believe that not just staff of Economic Development Ministry and other economic agencies but Russian diplomats as well must know all the major areas of our modernization efforts like the back of their hands. We are striving to advance in biomedicine, space and information technologies, energy, and telecommunications, and here, we have determined our priorities. Now, we should identify the countries which may become our major cooperation partners, for such cooperation to bring greatest benefits in developing various technologies and markets in Russia, in helping Russian high-tech goods to enter global and regional markets. This is a very specific task, and the results of respective efforts will be immediately visible to everyone, including the leadership of the country.

The second challenge is strengthening democratic and civil society institutions in Russia. We must promote the humanization of social systems around the world and especially at home. At the same time, we must not trade off our national interests, and we must firmly protect them when necessary. But overall, it is in the interests of Russian democracy for as many nations as possible to follow democratic standards in their domestic policy.

Of course, there may be no interfering in the domestic affairs of any countries. The standards of democracy cannot be imposed unilaterally; we know this quite well from our own experience, as we have also been subject to others trying to impose them upon us. Such standards should be developed jointly, taking into account the

views of all interested states, including nations where democracy has been established only recently, which includes our state and other states where democracy has not yet gained footing – everyone knows which countries I am referring to. We can follow these jointly-developed standards without hypocrisy or coercion; in other words, this is what we are agreeing upon.

Russian embassies, our offices, must engage the intellectual elite and non-governmental organizations in discussions on these issues at our discussion platforms more broadly, and generally be more active in cooperating with them.

The third challenge I would like to mention is the fight against organized crime. Clearly, this issue is to be dealt with by respective agencies, but nevertheless, the existing international system of organized crime is such that terrorism, drug trafficking, and illegal migration are, by definition, international problems. Unfortunately, corruption usually contributes to these problems or is associated with them. Regrettably, our country is no exception here. Thus, this problem should be addressed by all nations, and therefore by our Foreign Ministry and its representative offices abroad.

Colleagues,

The principles underlying our diplomacy and our foreign policy remain the same: we must be pragmatic in our work, looking in different directions in line with the multi-dimensional nature of modern life; we must work openly, renouncing confrontation and sometimes we must simply remove the blinders that may still exist in any state and that we probably still have too; at any rate, we must abandon stereotypes.

An excellent example of this is the beginning of our joint efforts with Poland to overcome our complex shared historical heritage.

What we need, and I have spoken about this before, are special modernization alliances with our main international partners. And who are they? First of all, it is countries such as Germany, France, Italy, the European Union in general, and the United States.

The EU-Russia summit in Rostov-on-Don adopted a partnership policy that stipulates implementation of major joint projects, including technological modernization of Russia's industry.

Incidentally, my recent visit to the United States showed that cooperation in the innovations sector can be substantive, rather than something to adorn a summit or just an idle idea. It can contribute to the positive agenda in our relations with the United States and expand the potential of our future cooperation, which should not be limited to cutting down on missiles or sparring over various regional conflicts.

It is imperative to continue our policy of strengthening multilateral contacts and promoting new investments. Excellent opportunities exist in this area within our BRIC group partnership and ties.

Another important task is to fully take advantage of the potential that exists for the Russian economy in the Asia-Pacific. This vast region has inexhaustible resources, including investment and technological resources, which are so important for converting our economy onto the innovations path and ensuring high living standards in the Russian Far East and East Siberia. At the same time, Russia's policy in the Asia-Pacific should continue to be aimed at ensuring the safety of our eastern borders and promoting peace and stability in the region. We intend to use a similar approach in strengthening our strategic partnership with China, including cooperation in the international arena, to further develop cooperation with India, to reinforce our ties with Japan and with other countries, including, of course, the ASEAN states.

In early July in the Far East, I held a big meeting [on the Far East's socioeconomic development and cooperation with the Asia-Pacific region countries] devoted to this subject. As a result, decisions were adopted to intensify the interaction of the Far Eastern Federal District with individual states and inter-regional associations.

Despite the significance of the West and the Asia-Pacific region as external sources of our modernization, collaboration with our partners in the CIS remains our overriding priority. We are faced with the challenge of building an extensive and complementary innovation space that should, incidentally, combine harmoniously with the European innovation space. We shouldn't contrast our work in the CIS with processes that are taking place on the European track, American track and in the Asia-Pacific.

Creating incentives for integration is based on shared modernization imperatives. From the standpoint of our current presidency of the Commonwealth, we naturally aspire to use the potential of bilateral relations and the current structure of the EurAsEC, as well as the recently established Customs Union, which in my opinion, is a major victory despite the problems we faced. I always think back to the way this process evolved in Europe: it also took a long time, and, to put it mildly, was not without controversy.

There are great opportunities for innovation in our multifaceted ties with partners who are focused on mutually beneficial cooperation. I emphasize: mutually beneficial cooperation. Excellent prospects exist in our ties with Kazakhstan, our major partner. Our relations with Ukraine are also gaining a new quality, which is particularly gratifying. The policy of constructive cooperation is a valuable recent achievement, bolstered by our shared historical traditions and the realization that we must tackle similar challenges: the modernization of production in our economies.

In general, our diplomatic missions in countries with which we share an entire historical era and are connected to by thousands of various threads, should facilitate an effective exchange of innovative experience and information. We must consider and respect each other's interests.

It is vital to take advantage of the United Nations resources, whose specialized agencies can be of great use: its regional economic commissions develop solutions that directly affect the technological progress of our country.

At the same time, the priority today is for Russia to take on a new role. I am confident that on a par with other leading nations we will be able to make a contribution to tackling global challenges, primarily associated with economic growth and climate change. Clearly, we will work along all these directions. That is why we should intensify our efforts to establish a mechanism for implementing the recently approved Strategy of International Development Assistance. I would like to emphasize that this work should be carried out with stringent control over the expenditure of funds and with constant reference to ensuring a proper political impact for our interests.

We must improve the quality of support and increase targeted assistance to the CIS and EurAsEC, which are our most important associations. We are not indifferent to the way the funding we allocate for these programmes is spent. It is still, perhaps, not as much money as the United States or some European countries spend, but it is a significant amount nevertheless. It is millions, hundreds of millions; in fact, it is already billions of dollars, if we talk about the crisis management efforts we have made together through the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, for example.

Now we must confront the challenges common to us all, challenges that have no boundaries. This includes proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and related technologies, international terrorism and drug trafficking, habitat degradation and climate change. We cannot expect that everyone will agree with us just as we will not agree with everything, but it is vital to understand the kind of world we live in and the direction in which it is evolving: that is a precondition for further development in practical politics and in approaches to international problems.

This paradigm shift is currently taking place in our relations with many states, including such important international partners as the United States. I hope the remnants of the Cold War are a thing of the past. But we must not interrupt the progress in establishing rapport on the way to reaching common objectives between two such strong powers as the United States and Russia. It is a very important, long overdue step. We are united by the realization that the basis of national security is sustainable and progressive development. The general approach of the US is also fully in line with our integrated approach to security, emanating

from an understanding that military power is limited. The final confirmation of this was the conclusion of the START Treaty.

We oppose a unilateral approach to missile defence and the deployment of weapons in outer space; at the same time, we are in favour of maintaining the required level of defence potential. The results of the focused cooperation with the United States show that the situation can be turned around even in a short time. This experience, incidentally, deserves careful analysis by both the Foreign Ministry and other departments. This approach can be applied successfully in relations with a number of other partners.

Our initiative to conclude a European Security Treaty also focuses on the transition to a new Euro-Atlantic policy agenda. But the collective political will is required to make a breakthrough into the future and to draw a line under the uncertainty and lack of stability of the past 20 years.

I am pleased to note that although this initiative received quite a chilly, not to say hostile, response at the outset, it has now become subject of lively discussions, and not only with our traditional partners such as Germany, France and Italy but with the majority of participants of the Euro-Atlantic security system. Therefore, we must take this issue further.

Another point I would like to make is related to NATO. We are waiting to get a clearer picture of what will happen to NATO. We would like to see the Alliance complete its transformation and become a modern security organization, an organization that is oriented towards the 21st rather than the 20th century. We would be willing to participate in an equal partnership with other players, including those on the European continent. But if we speak about NATO, it is essential for it to continue contacts with Russia, and in general to ensure an alignment of contacts with the CSTO in absolute compliance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

The effectiveness of UN reforms largely depends on the position of strong regional organizations, which will assume growing responsibility for the situation in their regions. Then the United Nations will be able to become fully engaged in truly global issues in the interest of the entire international community.

I would like to single out another difficult subject: Iran's nuclear programme. It is essential to abandon simplistic approaches to this issue. It is obvious that Iran is getting close to acquiring nuclear capability that can be used, in theory, to create nuclear weapons.

In itself, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons does not prohibit possession of such a capability, and that is one of the problems. But the problem is systemic, and it has to do with the imperfections of modern international

regulations on non-proliferation. Therefore, the approach to individual countries and to the solution of this problem should not be a selective but a general one.

I have repeatedly said in interviews with our partners, including the United States, Europe and our other partners, that sanctions generally do not lead to desired results, although they do have some merit. This merit lies in the fact that it is a signal from the international community which should encourage the negotiations process. At present we need patience and the earliest possible resumption of negotiations with Tehran. That, in our view, is the meaning and the main objective of the new UN Security Council resolution. If diplomacy misses this chance, it will be our collective failure.

At the same time, we should not forget that the Iranian party is not behaving the best possible way. We have consistently encouraged Tehran to be open and cooperative in its relations with the IAEA and to clarify all outstanding issues, which would truly be in the interest of Iran itself.

All the parties that are searching for a mutually acceptable outcome bear a very serious responsibility. Everything must be done with vigour and in solidarity, and not be limited to unilateral actions.

Colleagues, I would like to say a few words about the role of Russian diplomacy today and its objectives.

Current trends require that we take a flexible and broad-minded approach to decision-making. The task of the diplomatic service is to give these efforts a new quality. The role of the Russian missions abroad should not be limited to a trivial race after the number and volume of messages sent to the centre.

First, it is essential to take a deep analytical approach to forecasting development trends, both in bilateral and multilateral relations. What we need here is a fresh perspective. That is why I said that we sometimes need to find the strength to renounce stereotypes, even if they are learned at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations.

I think civil society, expert organizations and the business community can provide great support to your professionalism. For these purposes you can use the resources we promote in Russia, for example the Global Policy Forum in Yaroslavl or the Munich Conference on Security Policy, which is planned to take place in Moscow in October. Other new mechanisms that open up substantial opportunities include the Russian Council on Foreign Affairs and the Gorchakov Public Diplomacy Fund.

Second, it is important to react flexibly and be proactive, as they say. Today it is no longer enough to keep abreast of developments. Anyone who has access to modern communication technology can keep abreast of current affairs, and it's not

necessary to receive coded messages. In other words, one must live and act in an online mode, as they say, rather than trying to catch the train that has already left, looking around to find those who are responsible for the mistakes committed.

Third, you should insist on higher standards in your own work and, naturally, the activities of other ministries and agencies that cooperate with the Foreign Ministry on reaching foreign policy objectives. The coordinating role of the Foreign Ministry and its responsibility is greater today than ever before.

Another relevant issue is strengthening the instruments of Russia's foreign policy and their modernization. The time when our country's foreign policy interests were implemented primarily through a network of bilateral ties is in the past. Today we need to learn how to use the resources of multilateral organizations and operate such resources with skill, precision and assertiveness. This is not always easy, because here you have to negotiate with a whole set of players rather than tête-à-tête, but this makes the result much more valuable.

I realize that the issues you are faced with and which you are addressing currently are very tough, and your work requires the support of the state, including through legislation.

Mr. Lavrov and I have agreed that we will bring the special law on public service in the Foreign Ministry to its adoption, and I can say that I will sign the bill into law as soon as the Federation Council passes it. This will be a momentous event. The Consular Statute of the Russian Federation has entered into force. Thus, we have already made significant progress in ensuring a modern legislative framework for your operation. Incidentally, we talked about strengthening it at our previous meeting.

An Executive Order on your remuneration came into force in May. The wage fund has been increased by nearly 10%, and now the Foreign Ministry has the highest salaries among other government agencies, while in 2009 it was in 13th place. But that is natural because your job is very demanding and you do it away from home.

Obviously, this is not a radical change. We will continue to improve your working conditions, because my colleagues and I as President greatly value your mission. Speaking of which, a group of diplomats will receive state decorations today.

I would also like to inform you that I have signed an Executive Order on the establishment of a new heraldic symbol, the emblem of the Foreign Ministry. This is a trifle, perhaps, but it is a nice trifle. The emblem will be the official symbol of the Foreign Ministry.