



**THE EMBASSY OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION
IN THE UNITED MEXICAN STATES**

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PRESS RELEASE

**Interview of Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov, Granted to
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Question: Sergey Viktorovich, your assessment of the outgoing year, what was the chief event in international life? What were Russia's successes and failures in the foreign policy field? What expectations do you associate with the incoming year?

Foreign Minister Lavrov: That was a year packed with major international events which essentially speeded up the crystallization of the international situation in a number of very important areas. In fact, this allows me to speak of a new quality in the geopolitical situation.

I will first cite Georgia's attack on South Ossetia among such events, to which a predictably resolute response came from us. We acted fully in line with international law, including the right to self-defense under Article 51 of the UN Charter, and with our obligations as regards settling the Georgia-South Ossetia conflict. The regime in Tbilisi, having grossly violated its own obligations towards settlement, itself wrote off the territorial integrity of Georgia within pre-conflict borders.

The Caucasus crisis entailed a chain of other events, including a strengthening of practical interaction between Russia and the European Union in European affairs and an exacerbation of relations with NATO – a moment of truth linked to the fact that the alliance unambiguously took the aggressor's side, ignoring the facts and the real sequence of events, along with turning down our proposal to urgently convene the Russia-NATO Council at the height of the war unleashed by Tbilisi regime. Overall, a reconfiguration of Euro-Atlantic politics occurred: with a stronger role for the EU, and a weakened NATO-centrism. It became apparent that NATO could not claim a solid role in Europe outside of a productive contact with Russia. It seems that the

people in the North Atlantic Alliance are beginning to grasp it. The decisions of the foreign ministers' December meeting in Brussels point to this.

Here we're going to engage in an extremely complicated task of normalizing things, through, inter alia, a return to the talk about the Caucasus crisis which our partners avoided in August. Obviously it will take reexamining before we can unfreeze the work of the Russia-NATO Council the principled foundations of our interaction as laid down in RNC founding documents, above all – our mutual obligations as to the inadmissibility of bolstering one's own security at others' expense. Not all NATO members took this as a guide to action.

The Caucasus crisis made the initiative of President Dmitry Medvedev for a European Security Treaty even more relevant, starting the appropriate negotiation process at the pan-European summit. It would be difficult to demonstrate more visibly than the Saakashvili regime did the inadequacy of the existing European security architecture with its pretension to NATO-centrism, along with the urgency of setting up a truly open system of collective security in the Euro-Atlantic area, predicated on the principle of its indivisibility. The Russian President concretized his initiative at Evian and during the Russia-EU summit in Nice, where French President Nicolas Sarkozy expressed support for it. The respective discussions were also launched as part of our bilateral contacts and within the CSTO format. And at the meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council in Helsinki on December 4-5 came the first full-fledged discussion of our idea at foreign ministers level in a pan-European format. It revealed considerable interest from the overwhelming majority of partners.

Next year we will continue the exchange of views with the organizations dealing with Euro-Atlantic security. We are convinced that in the absence of the positive pan-European process that we suggest, the already imbalanced European architecture is threatened by further degradation.

One of the major events was Barack Obama's victory in the US presidential elections with a formidable mandate for change. The entire world is extremely interested in this, and we also wish the new US administration success on the path to change, including change for the better in our relations. The basis for this exists: both the Sochi Russia-US Strategic Framework Declaration, adopted by Presidents Putin and Bush in April and the positive program set forth by President Medvedev in his appearance in the Council on Foreign Relations in Washington on November 15, 2008.

I would also single out the fresh exacerbation of the global financial crisis, having American roots. Along with the Caucasus crisis this is, as President Medvedev said, another example of how local problems acquire universal significance in a globalizing world. The financial crisis, whose depth and breadth it's too early to fathom, at the same time shapes a positive agenda for the whole international community. Such refocusing toward the vital, real tasks of improving the global financial system and world economy that most directly affect the interests of all states and their citizens may have very favorable consequences for global politics as a whole. Farfetched

problems, based on inertia and previous political prejudices, will go away. And most important, we will be able through cooperation in the work of reforming the monetary and financial system to accumulate a critical mass of trust, which I hope will help some of our western partners in a new fashion, within a real, not virtual coordinate system, to look at the differences that divide us on a number of acute international and regional issues.

The process of collective discussion on world economy and finance problems, launched by the G20 Washington summit with Russian participation on November 15, instills that hope. It is a vivid example of there being no alternative to multilateral diplomacy in dealing with problems common to all. We made a constructive contribution to the summit's success, which our partners acknowledged. And we will continue to act in this spirit.

On the positive side in efforts, we saw CIS integration processes advance further, including the approval of the Commonwealth Economic Development Strategy to 2020, and the signed international treaties in EurAsEC that form the legal base for the Customs Union made up of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan. Multilateral security cooperation under CSTO auspices was strengthened. The Federal Agency for CIS, Overseas Compatriots and International Humanitarian Cooperation, set up at the Russian Foreign Ministry, will serve to enhance the effectiveness of interaction with the partners.

Russian generally continued actively to promote the formation of mechanisms for collective leadership by major states, called upon to ensure the governability of world development at this stage. This was the focus of our participation in the work of the G8 including the July summit in Japan, the further development of interaction in the Russia-India-China troika and the creation of a dialogue mechanism within the BRIC format. The first stand-alone meeting of the foreign ministers of the BRIC countries in Yekaterinburg and the first meeting of their finance ministers in Sao Paulo on the sidelines of the G20 preparatory meeting for the Washington summit took place. The visits of President Medvedev to China, Brazil and India imparted an important impulse to bilateral relations with the new centers of economic growth and political influence.

It is no exaggeration to say that President Medvedev's November visits to Peru, Brazil, Venezuela and Cuba signified a return of Russia to the Latin America and Caribbean Basin region. Cooperation with the countries of Middle East and North Africa developed in an ongoing manner. Of historic significance in this regard was the exchange of visits at the highest level with Libya. We continued our principled line on developing mutually privileged relations with all interested countries in whatever part of the world.

On July 12, 2008, President Medvedev approved the Russian Foreign Policy Concept which in a spirit of continuity reaffirms our commitment to the objectives of strengthening collective and legal elements in international relations and working towards a polycentric world order and to such principles as pragmatism, firm but non-

confrontational promotion of national interests, the multivector approach, protection of Russian citizens in conformity with international law, and support for Russian business in the competitive struggle in world markets. A serious discussion on these themes took place at the July meeting of Russian ambassadors and permanent representatives, in which the President took part.

A coherent strategy for realizing the Foreign Policy Concept in the new international circumstances was articulated at Dmitry Medvedev's meeting with members of the Russian media on August 31 and especially in his first Annual Address to the Federal Assembly on November 5.

I am convinced that on the level of theory and analysis, confirmed by the development of events, as well as on the level of practical politics we are well prepared for the implementation of the tasks which the country's leadership sets for Russian diplomacy. As President Medvedev has pointed out, we are ready for any development of events, but, of course, will continue consistently to advance a positive, unifying agenda in international affairs, and contribute to a radical change for the better in transforming the system of global governance, including its material foundations, in line with the exigencies of the times.