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Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's remarks and answers to questions at the Primakov Readings International Forum, Moscow, December 7, 2022

Mr Dynkin,

Colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Organisers and guests,

I am delighted to be able to address the Primakov Readings again and to take part in discussions with the leading experts from Russia and other countries. I would like to say that, despite the difficulties all of you are aware of, the Readings have again brought together numerous participants, including from other countries, as I have been told and as I can see, because there are many of my colleagues in the audience.

There is great demand in Russia and across the world for an intelligent discussion of possible solutions. Since it has not been launched in the official political quarters, we hope that an intelligent discussion will be held in the expert community to the benefit of all of us.

Our annual meetings are intrinsically connected with Yevgeny Primakov. In the mid-1990s, when everybody viewed the future of the world as “the end of history,” he put forth the revolutionary concept of multipolarity. I would like to note that Yevgeny Primakov not only did that in his theoretical writings but also translated it into practice by proposing the idea of the group of three – Russia, India and China (RIC), which turned out to be the blueprint for BRICS. Few people know that RIC is still operating. Our three countries continue to hold meetings at the level of foreign ministers. That format led to the establishment of BRICS, which is an object of considerable attention. Many countries would like to become full members of the group. If we satisfy their requests, the group will have 15-17 members, as the June summit held by our Chinese friends via videoconference has shown. Anyway, the current global developments and the principal trend of the global shift towards multipolarity reflect the ideas which

Yevgeny Primakov put forth a long time ago. We are actively promoting them. Everything that is taking place now is proof that his ideas were correct.

As for the current situation in the world, I am sure that all of you have read the address delivered by President Vladimir Putin at the recent meeting of the Valdai Discussion Club. I would like to provide practical examples of the ideas that have recently been put forth by the Russian leadership.

It is obvious that the ongoing deregulation of the international system of relations is rooted in the unwillingness of the Western minority to abandon its hegemonistic aspirations and to accept the multipolar reality. It is clear that the line-up of forces on the global stage is not changing in its favour. That is why the US-led collective West is doing its best to keep its dominant positions. Of course, it is difficult to break off the habits they have grown used to over five centuries.

Multipolarity will not assert itself tomorrow or the day after. The establishment of the multipolar world as the generally recognised basis for the subsequent operation of the international community will take a historically long time. Everyone is aware of the reason for this. We are endeavouring to accelerate these processes. On the one hand, they are objective, historically substantiated and inevitable. On the other hand, efforts are being taken to slow these processes down as much as possible, so as to extend their privileged life and to continue receiving “the rent paid to the hegemon” as long as possible, as President Putin said.

The West is ready to go to any length to attain its goals. When it suits their purposes or is necessary to destabilise markets or seize a country’s natural wealth, they declare territories located tens of thousands of miles from the American coast as zones of their vital interests. This happened in Yugoslavia, Iraq, Libya, Syria and Afghanistan, where the irrational and incompetent 20-year-long troop deployment ended in a fiasco for NATO.

Nevertheless, despite the fact that in Afghanistan NATO has again failed to justify its existence, the bloc’s expansion remains the primary Western motive in relations both with Russia, the post-Soviet and post-Warsaw Pact countries, nearly all of which have been taken over by NATO, and in relations with the other parts of the world.

NATO, including its officials and representatives of the United States as the bloc’s leading country, has unceremoniously refused, without as much as a blush, to recognise the non-expansion to the East promise they gave to Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin. There is a lot of evidence of their lies. “Respected” Western – American, German and British – politicians of that period cite

themselves and their colleagues in their memoirs, confirming that they made that verbal but solemn and iron-clad promise. A British politician has written in his memoirs that they had made the promises, but nobody intended to implement them, because they only needed to defuse the situation. At least he was honest.

UK Prime Minister Tony Blair said several years after the invasion of Iraq that they had not found weapons of mass destruction there, that it was a mistake but then, nobody is perfect. There have been too many instances when they were not perfect.

To be continued...



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