

**STATEMENT BY H.E. MR. SERGEY LAVROV,  
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AT THE PLENARY SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT  
(Geneva, March 20, 2019)**

Distinguished Mr. President,  
Distinguished Mr. Secretary-General  
Colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

A year has passed since I last addressed this audience. By historical standards, this is a miniscule amount of time. Yet the events that have taken place over the year have brought us to the edge of a new era in arms control.

A year ago, you and us still hoped that, by means of constructive dialogue, we altogether could overcome differences, find compromise solutions and give new impetus to the joint effort aimed at strengthening peace and maintaining global stability.

But today we face aggressive foreign-policy egocentrism fueled by claims for an exclusive right to determine the “rules” of world order and the destinies of nations, countries and entire regions. We are witnessing more and more attempts to destroy fundamental agreements and reshape the whole multilateral arms control architecture according to own narrow opportunistic interests. In pursuit of dominance the instruments that for decades have been preserving the stability and predictability of international relations are being carelessly taken down.

Most recent example is a deliberate destruction of the INF Treaty by the US coupled with their categorical rejection of our persistent proposals to jointly and professionally analyze real problems accumulated in the context of this Treaty. Washington never made secret of the reason for its withdrawal from the INF Treaty: the US prefer to have their hands free in order to build up unrestricted missile capabilities in the regions where the US intend to push through their own interests.

This pushes us 30 years back in nuclear and missile disarmament but that is not the most pressing issue.

The US withdrawal from the ABM Treaty first, and then from the INF Treaty paves a way to a large-scale arms race with unpredictable consequences. Unlike the 1950s-1970s of the past century, when strategic arsenals of the two superpowers were involved, the new arms race would be provoked by perceptions of many other States that are left with no other choice but to have nuclear and missile capability as the only effective means to guarantee their national security. Dozens of countries have science, technology and industry advanced enough to do so.

We have been particularly concerned about the pattern of behavior by almost all Western States under the current circumstances and the extent of the indifference and irresponsibility they demonstrated to the Treaty's future including collective vote at the UN against Russian-sponsored resolution in support of the INF Treaty. NATO members openly supported its dismantling, thus giving “green light” to the US nuclear missile ambitions. Groundless far-fetched claims by the US on alleged violation of the INF Treaty prohibitions by Russia's 9M729 missile were readily accepted. However, after we had demonstrated the system, independent experts began to point out to obvious inconsistencies in the US position. Notably, the US representatives in Moscow did not only ignore our invitation to attend the 9M729 missile presentation themselves but forced most of their allies to follow suit. Thus, Washington showed its unwillingness to pursue a constructive dialogue. This once again proved the lack of any argument in support of the US allegations.

The fact that we have already announced a moratorium on deployment of land-based intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles in those regions where no similar American systems will be placed is being deliberately ignored. As President Vladimir Putin stated, we will be forced to respond with “mirror

actions” and only as reaction to the US steps. We will act in a way that would exclude our engagement in a costly arms race.

We are disappointed with the position of the European countries which in the INF context have de-facto given up their independent role in ensuring their own and European security.

We do not want the New START Treaty with its ten-year term set to expire on February 5, 2021, to repeat the fate of the INF Treaty. Russia stands for the Treaty's extension for five years. This would allow us to prevent further degradation of strategic stability and buy us some extra time to consider possible approaches towards new weapons emerging now throughout the world and possible ways to subjugate them to arms control measures, since not all such armaments fall under the START Treaty. Contrary to what has been recently articulated in this Chamber Russia is ready for such a dialogue.

But first we have to solve the problem related to US unilateral removal from accountability under the New START Treaty of their strategic offensive arms that have allegedly been converted though we cannot certify it as provided for by the Treaty. This complicated issue can be resolved if appropriate Treaty provisions are applied. We have discussed possible solutions with the US. It is a question of political will in Washington.

Russia has been a responsible party to the existing agreements. As we fully comply with our obligations, we share the responsibility for preserving peace and strengthening global security with other States. Yet our efforts go beyond. Russia has put forward and promoted a number of new important initiatives. Regrettably, our Western counterparts do not come up with any meaningful initiatives of their own, they either remain deaf to our proposals or deliberately seek to discredit them.

We are not trying to impose anything on anyone. However, we believe that our proposals could serve as a basis for negotiations. We have repeatedly urged

all the States concerned about the future of humankind to work together to build common ground, address problems at hand and seek compromises.

As President Vladimir Putin pointed out all our proposals are well-known to counterparts, all our proposals remain on the table, and when the West is ready we are open for responsible and professional interaction. Meanwhile, instead of constructive response we hear speculations about resumption of nuclear testing, placement of strike combat systems in outer space, and even about feasibility of a limited nuclear conflict. Such developments would be unacceptable for Russia, and, I hope, for most States represented here. But it may become a reality if we fail to find together a reasonable alternative to the trend leading to further destabilization of international environment, exacerbation of contradictions between States, undermining of the established system of international arms control agreements.

Responsible consistent collective efforts are essential in order to ensure international security and stability. The crisis around the INF Treaty clearly shows that progress in the nuclear arms reductions can no longer be sustained in the bilateral Russia-US format. It is time that we seriously reflect on how to launch a multilateral process on nuclear arms control based on the principle of common and indivisible security. There is no point in approaching nuclear disarmament in isolation from a combination of factors that negatively impact strategic stability.

We consider it of utmost importance to take all necessary measures to both maintain the viability and ensure the effectiveness of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Regrettably, here as well, we face mounting difficulties. Disagreements between nuclear and non-nuclear weapon States are growing. Another destabilizing factor is the US decision not to ratify the CTBT and to start preparing its national test site for resuming nuclear tests. The situation with the implementation of the 1995 resolution on establishing a WMD-free zone (WMDFFZ) in the Middle East remains uncertain. Being one of the three co-

sponsors of the resolution and fully aware of its responsibility for the NPT future, Russia supported the UNGA decision to convene a conference on the WMDFZ this November. We intend to contribute to its success taking into account the interests of all the States in the region.

A few remarks with regard to the UN disarmament machinery and its three components. Clearly, it is impossible to make the work of the Conference on Disarmament, the UNGA First Committee and the UNDC completely immune from politicization. However, certain States have persisted in using these fora to raise issues that help them settle scores with States they dislike. Over-politicization is becoming one of the major factors that obstruct the activities of the UN disarmament triad. Reasonable and meaningful proposals aimed at ensuring equal and indivisible security for all by launching substantive, constructive and professional dialogue are rejected.

As a result, the work of the Conference on Disarmament is being blocked, the decisions of the UNGA First Committee are being devalued, and the UN Disarmament Commission is losing its credibility. The ongoing difficulties, however, do not mean that the mechanism set up by our predecessors back in 1978 is intrinsically flawed and, therefore, should be dismantled as proposed by a number of radically minded delegations. Russia stands against it.

The state of the UN disarmament machinery is indicative of the overall deterioration of international environment, refusal by the collective West to engage in a dialogue on improving the current and elaborating new arms control instruments acceptable to all. The examples are plentiful. Let us take the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention negotiated here at the CD. Instead of a legally binding efficient verification mechanism of this Convention that is blocked by Washington, Western countries now propose so-called "peer review missions". By doing so, they intend to allegedly "prove" that activities and research carried out at the biological facilities are in compliance with the provisions of the Convention.

Another example is refusal to negotiate the prevention of placement of weapons in outer space. There is a relevant Russian-Chinese draft treaty with no other document on the table in this regard. However, the CD Member States are still unable to reach consensus to at least launch negotiations. For the second decade already, we have been hearing just excuses that the elaboration of an agreement would be a "time-consuming exercise", and that it is premature to begin talks before a real threat of space weaponization emerges. So it allegedly makes no sense at all to introduce a comprehensive ban in this respect.

In the meantime, the US has allocated funds for developing a missile defense (MD) space segment and deployment of strike capabilities in the Earth orbit. This MD segment would be capable of striking among others space-based objects. Thus, an operational combat structure would be built which would be ready to "cleanse" outer space from orbital property of the countries Washington dislikes. It opens the "Pandora box" for many States intensively participate in outer space activities and not so few of them are either already developing combat systems to be placed in outer space, or have the necessary capabilities to do that. So, the issue is becoming increasingly relevant. We expect that the UN GGE on PAROS established by the UNGA resolution which is at the moment in its final session could give additional impetus to the work of the CD.

Once again, I would like to draw your attention to the Russian initiative to elaborate an international convention for the suppression of acts of chemical and biological terrorism (ICCBT) that I had the honour to present here in March 2016. One of the key provisions of this draft convention is the criminalization of the use of chemical substances and biological agents for terrorist purposes. This issue is extremely topical. After all, according to various estimates, in Syria alone, there has been between 300 and 400 terrorist attacks in which chemical agents were used.

We believe that the restraint towards our ICCBT initiative and the willingness to ignore multiple cases of chemical terrorism in Syria go hand in

hand. Despite their stated concerns about the increasing threat of WMD terrorism, our opponents make the case against strengthening international legal framework to counter this evil.

Instead of working collectively, the Western countries have exerted all their efforts to establish and use an attribution mechanism within the OPCW, also by manipulating the Organization's Technical Secretariat as a tool for political pressure on the States they dislike. Such a brazen intrusion into the UNSC competence has already deeply divided the OPCW and will undoubtedly affect the CWC future.

Dear colleagues, I have to disagree with those who highlighting the continued stalemate at the Geneva Conference on Disarmament call for its eventual dissolution. Given that certain countries and groups of countries refuse to substantially discuss the matters that are critical, including to their own security, and make propagandistic noise around them, it is extremely important to preserve the Conference as a single forum for negotiations on a wide range of the most pressing issues of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. There is no other format that indeed offers prospects for launching real multilateral negotiations. And it would be impossible to set up a truly inclusive one under the current circumstances.

We consider the discussions held in 2018 within the subsidiary bodies of the CD quite useful. We were ready to join the consensus on the UK's draft decision on their re-establishment based on all the agenda items. We regret that the draft did not enjoy necessary support. We are particularly frustrated with the unwillingness of the US delegation discuss this proposal in a substantive manner.

I am confident that we all have enough wisdom and strength to overcome this crisis, to preserve and consolidate the existing system of international instruments of arms control and non-proliferation, and to complement it with new arrangements. Regrettably, the statement made by the US representative yesterday so far proved the opposite. I do believe that our Western colleagues

will be in a position to adequately assess the situation, set their priorities in a responsible way and rejoin our collective efforts to maintain peace and security including arms control architecture.

Thank you for your attention. I wish you to succeed.