

**MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION**



**INFORMATION AND PRESS DEPARTMENT**

32/34 Smolenskaya-Sennaya pl., 119200, Moscow G-200; tel.: (095) 244 4119, fax: 244 4112  
e-mail: dip@mid.ru, web-address: www.mid.ru

Unofficial translation from Russian

**Transcript of Replies to Russian Media Questions by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov, Vienna, February 15, 2006**

201-16-02-2006

**Question:** How can you comment upon today's decision of the Georgian parliament?

**Foreign Minister Lavrov:** In the first place, this is a decision of parliament. It is addressed to the executive authority of Georgia. We presume that executive authority will show a responsible approach. This decision of Parliament is about a review of the agreements of 1992, a review of the format of the peacekeeping operation and about drawing some unnamed international organizations into peacekeeping processes. But to review an agreement is only possible with the participation of all the parties to the agreement. Unilaterally it is only possible to withdraw from the agreement, withdraw from the mechanisms that were created by this agreement and which have now been ensuring calm in this region for more than 12 years and not allowing a resumption of bloodshed. So that the question is not one of a lack of mechanisms, because there is such a unique structure as the Joint Control Commission, in which observers from the OSCE also work. Next week its regular session in Vienna was planned. We have said more than once that if all the decisions that are reached were implemented, problems would probably be significantly fewer.

Recall, incidentally, that it was the Georgian side that rejected at the December session of this Commission in Moscow the proposal from the South Ossetian President to work out a joint plan for settlement of the conflict based on a three-stage approach, which, by the way, the President of Georgia suggested at a point in the past. It was the Georgian side that in December in Moscow turned down the OSCE's proposal to adopt a statement on the nonuse of force to resolve the South Ossetian conflict. So I think that only the parties themselves can tackle this issue anyway. Without a direct dialogue between the parties, without joint work, of course with support from the mediators, nothing will work out.

I hope that executive authority, as they consider this appeal of the Parliament of Georgia, will show a responsible approach and will be guided by the long-term, basic interests of the Georgian people.

**Question:** Will Russia insist that the Russian troops stay on?

**Foreign Minister Lavrov:** Russia is a party to the agreements of 1992. Any changes to these agreements are possible only with the mutual consent of all the parties. In them there is

no article on how they expire, so it is necessary to sit down and discuss what does not suit somebody. We are regularly furnishing evidences of the nonfulfillment by the Georgian side of its own commitments with regard to the voluntarily reached Joint Control Commission decisions. We are ready to discuss that. We thought that the Georgian side was ready for it likewise. I repeat that I hope for the executive authority of Georgia to approach this decision responsibly.

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A video recording of the interview is posted on the Russian MFA's Web site in the Video section (<http://www.mid.ru>).

February 16, 2006