

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION



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Unofficial translation from Russian

Transcript of Remarks and a Reply to a Media Question by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov at Press Conference Following Talks with UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour, Moscow, February 23, 2006

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Foreign Minister Lavrov: Esteemed colleagues, the visit to the Russian Federation of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour is continuing. Today she had a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin and just now - talks down here, at the Foreign Ministry Mansion. Both meetings were held with the participation of Vladimir Lukin and Ella Pamfilova. A broad range of issues related to engagement between Russia and the Office of the High Commissioner was discussed. Our side affirmed support for the activity of the Office and expressed a desire to contribute to its greater effectiveness and productiveness.

We examined the process now occurring in the context of UN reform to restructure the Organization's bodies that are concerned with human rights protection. We agreed to continue close contacts on this issue. President Putin answered today the High Commissioner's questions concerning the new Russian legislation on NGOs, situation in the army and also regarding our common tasks in the fight against xenophobia and the manifestations of racism and religious intolerance, that is problems which arise ever more widely in Europe and in the world as a whole. We also discussed other human rights issues, in particular, the position of minorities. We in this connection recalled the situation with the Russian-speaking minority in Latvia and Estonia and spoke of the problems of refugees and displaced persons. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Arbour shared her assessments and impressions of her trip to the North Caucasus, where she visited North Ossetia, Ingushetia and the Chechen Republic. On the whole, this is our common conclusion, a frank and mutually useful dialogue is continuing. We are interested in seeing this cooperation develop. We expect that a representative of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights will soon be working in the United Nations Moscow Office and that more Russians will also be working at responsible posts at OHCHR Headquarters in Geneva.

Foreign Minister Lavrov (adds after Louise Arbour): I want to add that from this year Russia has taken a decision to make voluntary contributions for the activity of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. It is 2 million dollars a year. We hope that the

high assessment of this move of the Russian side that sounded from the lips of the High Commissioner will enable us to cooperate even more actively and impart to the activity of the international community in the human rights sphere a more stable, multilateral character and remove double standards from this activity. Both we and the High Commissioner are very much interested in this, as was borne out in the course of the talks in Moscow.

Question: Rosatom Head Sergey Kiriyenko is due to visit Iran. What results does Russia expect?

Foreign Minister Lavrov: Russia has active relations with Iran. Sergey Kiriyenko is the chairman of the Russian-Iranian Bilateral Trade Commission. In this capacity he will visit Teheran and discuss with his colleagues questions of development of our ties in the fields which lie within the competence of the Intergovernmental Trade and Economic Commission. It goes without saying that nuclear problems will also be discussed. Our delegation will continue the work which we are already conducting with the aim of finding a politico-diplomatic way out of the present situation around the nuclear program of Iran. Thus, in parallel with discussing our bilateral trade and economic ties they will use this opportunity to continue the conversation on the theme of the Iranian nuclear dossier in the IAEA.

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

February 23, 2006