

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



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**Transcript of Remarks and Replies to Media Questions by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov at Joint Press Conference with Jordanian Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdelelah Al-Khatib**

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**Foreign Minister Lavrov:** The talks with the Jordanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Abdelelah Al-Khatib, have borne out the high degree of confidentiality in our relations. We examined a broad spectrum of questions of mutual concern. In the first place, we compared our positions on key international and regional problems, with special attention, of course, to the Middle East.

Since the elections in Palestine and Israel a not simple situation has evolved in Palestinian-Israeli settlement. Russia and Jordan consider it extremely important that both parties abide by all previous agreements and not take any steps which would put in jeopardy the resumption of the peace process, of which the result must be agreements meeting the Palestinians' aspirations, including the creation of an independent state which could coexist side by side with Israel in peace and security.

Russia and Jordan are interested in seeing a government of national consensus formed in Iraq as soon as possible reflecting the interests of all ethnic, confessional and political groups. We support the initiative of Jordan to soon convene in Amman a meeting of religious leaders and the representatives of the ethnic groups of Iraq for the purpose of achieving a national consensus and creating conditions for the implementation of the initiative of the League of Arab States for holding a national consensus conference in Baghdad.

The exchange of views has borne out our conviction of the necessity of a political settlement of Iran's nuclear problem. We consider it extremely important that Iran cooperate in full measure with the IAEA to clarify all the questions still outstanding in accordance with the decision of the IAEA Board of Governors.

Russia and Jordan also hold that in respect of Syria and Lebanon it is necessary to implement the relevant resolutions of the UN Security Council, especially as significant progress has already been made in carrying them out.

Our countries are closely cooperating in the framework of intercivilizational dialogue

promotion. We feel that this is an extremely important task in the context of the formation of a united front to combat the new threats and challenges, primarily international terrorism.

We are interested in promoting the dialogue of cultures and in educating young people in the spirit of tolerance and mutual respect towards other religions and cultures. We will be building up this work, in the mainstream of, among others, the well-known initiatives of His Majesty King Abdullah II. The same principles lie at the base of the development of the partnership between the Group of Eight and the Middle East and North Africa region. As part of this partnership the Third Forum for the Future will take place this year. It will be held in Jordan. Russia as President of the Group of Eight in the current year will together with our Jordanian friends chair this forum.

We briefly exchanged views on the development of bilateral cooperation, including support of concrete plans to strengthen its juridical base in line with the accords between Vladimir Putin and His Majesty King Abdullah II, as well as the implementation of a number of projects involving Russian companies, the upgrading of personnel and cooperation in the counterterrorist sphere.

I am very grateful to my colleague for the fruitful talks.

**Question:** The visit of Mohamed ElBaradei to Iran will take place today. Do you think it bears a formal or more specific character?

**Foreign Minister Lavrov:** Mr. ElBaradei heads the International Atomic Energy Agency, a professional mechanism which is called upon to ensure implementation of the nonproliferation regime and help countries with the realization of their right to peaceful nuclear activities. IAEA is a professional agency, so I am convinced that this visit will also be professional. Hopefully it will help to advance in closing the questions that still linger, and thus improve the atmosphere around the Iranian nuclear file. The visit will also probably enhance control over how the IAEA's monitoring now proceeds of the state of nuclear activities in Iran.

We support Mr. ElBaradei's visit. We hope for its results to help Iran's fulfillment of the decisions which were adopted by the IAEA Board of Governors. We wish him success in the talks, and call on the Iranian side to be cooperative in every way.

**Question:** An Iraq Council of Muslims delegation visited Moscow recently under informal auspices. A conference of the parties in conflict - the representatives of the various communities of Iraq - will soon take place in Jordan. Is Russia working with the internal sides of the conflict in Iraq to achieve the unity everybody awaits? Regarding the Palestine question. We all know that the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian territories are still in economic isolation. What is required - political concessions or bread and a petrol canister?

**Foreign Minister Lavrov:** On the first question. Russia, also through our embassy in Baghdad, maintains contacts with all the leading patriotic Iraqi forces that stand for preserving the unity of the country through strengthening national consensus. The Muslim Ulema Committee, whose delegation was recently in Moscow on an unofficial, private visit, is one of such organizations. In our contacts we, of course, affirm our interest in seeing national consensus in Iraq triumph as soon as possible. Let me recall that such was our

position even back in May 2003. We were convinced that it was necessary through national consensus to start a political process in Iraq after the end of the active phase of military operations. This point of view turned out to fall on deaf ears among coalition members then. Now the grave and tragic experience of more than two years' attempts to differently conduct affairs in Iraq has convinced everyone of the futility of those attempts and of the necessity to return to what we initially called for - national consensus. We are satisfied that in these conditions there have turned out to be relevant the very useful initiatives of Jordan and the League of Arab States that Mr. Minister and I have told you about and which are directed at including all Iraqi political, religious and ethnic forces in the political process. The initial experience of Iraqi settlement has shown that a striving to exclude some forces from the process of political settlement usually ends in failure. I wanted to apply the same logic for answering your second question about what is now to be done in Palestinian-Israeli settlement.

We are convinced that denying aid to the Palestinians only because they in democratic elections elected a government which consists entirely of Hamas members is an erroneous thing to do. Of course, Hamas must fulfill the well-known conditions of the international mediators: recognize Israel, reaffirm existing agreements, and return to the negotiating table. But for this to happen it is necessary to work with Hamas, not declare boycott to them. It is necessary to search for ways which would enable rendering assistance to the Palestinians in a transparent and verifiable way for the purpose of ensuring the functioning of the Palestinian territories, of maintaining the infrastructure in a normal condition and of averting a humanitarian catastrophe. I am convinced that it is possible to find such ways and continue providing aid without the risk of complicating efforts to resume the negotiation process between Israel and the Palestinians. Russia is planning to give such help in such forms.

**Question:** There is now little noise around the Russian initiative for uranium enrichment on Russian soil. May it so happen that the Americans will be holding direct talks, in your opinion?

**Foreign Minister Lavrov:** Regarding our initiative in connection with the Iranian nuclear program. You said the noise has already somewhat subsided. We did not put forward our initiative to be clamorous. It was meant to be a part of the package which can politically unblock the Iranian nuclear problem. The initiative remains on the negotiating table. And everyone thinks that's the way it should be and it is still an important component of the search for a solution.

As to the announcements of US-Iranian contacts. If solutions are found in the framework of those talks, I will only salute it. There is no rivalry between us here, since our sole objective in this matter is to ensure resolving the situation without any detriment to the nonproliferation regime. We set no other aims and are convinced that attempts to load the nonproliferation task with demands not pertaining to it will be counterproductive and could only create a real crisis.

**Question:** You have said Russia and Jordan are planning to sign a number of agreements in the trade and economic field. When will this happen?

**Foreign Minister Lavrov:** We have said that we agreed to accelerate the work on the agreements which Mr. Khatib has enumerated, and that in accordance with instructions from

President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin and King Abdullah II of Jordan this work will be accelerated.

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