

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

**INFORMATION AND PRESS DEPARTMENT**



32/34 Smolenskaya-Sennaya pl., 119200, Moscow G-200; tel.: (495) 244 4119, fax: 244 4112  
e-mail: dip@mid.ru, web-address: www.mid.ru

Unofficial translation from Russian

**Transcript of Remarks and Replies to Media Questions by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov at Joint Press Conference with Albanian Minister of Foreign Affairs Besnik Mustafaj, Moscow, April 12, 2006**

626-12-04-2006

**Foreign Minister Lavrov:** At the talks with Albanian Minister of Foreign Affairs Besnik Mustafaj we discussed the state of bilateral relations and regional and international problems. We noted the onward development of ties in the most diverse fields. We are very satisfied with our political dialogue, which is being developed in the spirit of continuity, and to the level of which we want to pull up our trade and economic ties. An opportunity for that will present itself in the framework of the preparations for a regular session of the Intergovernmental Commission on Commercial, Economic and Scientific-Technological Cooperation that is due this upcoming autumn and towards which we want to get ready a number of agreements on the promotion of direct ties between businessmen of the two countries. Also helpful in this regard will be contacts which are planned to be established between the chambers of commerce and industry. There are plans to organize a business forum and a number of specific projects, in particular in the energy sphere.

Mr. Mustafaj, in the course of his continuing visit to Moscow, will hold appropriate meetings with the Russian cochairman of the Intergovernmental Commission, in the leadership of the Russian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and in Gazprom.

We have a reciprocal interest in the culture of our countries. This takes expression in fairly intensive exchanges. Ties are evolving particularly actively in the area of education, primarily student exchanges. We appreciate the interest in the Russian language in Albania. It manifests itself not only in the annual training of Albanian students in Russian institutions of higher learning. One hundred and fifty persons are currently training in our country, and hundreds of Albanians have received education in Russia over the last ten years. It gives us great pleasure to know that Russian education helps them, when back in Albania, to compete on a par with those who have trained in other countries and to get good jobs, as Mr. Minister told us today about this. Interest in the Russian language is also manifest in Albania itself, where it ranks third in degree of being studied. We highly value the strong school of specialists in Russian philology which exists in Albania. We agreed to intensify cooperation in raising their qualification through appropriate training courses.

Relations between the two Foreign Ministries are very fruitful. We agreed more regularly to

hold consultations on themes of mutual interest. Their range is fairly extensive. In the first place, of course, the Balkans and Kosovo where not easy decisions will have to be made on the province's status. We agreed that to artificially set any timeframe for completion of this process is inadvisable, and that in discussing the substance of the issues related to status it is extremely important to pay attention to the standards implementation where the rights of the national minorities, the return of refugees and the ensuring of the security of the population and religious sites are concerned.

We discussed the situation in other parts of the Balkan region. We presume that the processes that are evolving there should be supported in every way. This concerns Bosnia and Herzegovina, reforms in Macedonia, and the necessity to ensure mutually respectful close ties between Serbia and Montenegro in accordance with the traditions that for centuries took shape between these two brother peoples.

In international affairs we actively cooperate with Albania in the UN, OSCE, Council of Europe and BSEC. We are keen, I understand on both sides, to continue this cooperation. On the whole we note a reciprocal striving for mutual understanding, the further development of cooperation and consider that the Russian-Albanian dialogue is one of the factors of stability in the Balkans.

I did not speak in as much detail of the concrete aspects that are connected with the process of status settlement in Kosovo. You could notice, of course, that our approaches do not everywhere coincide in nuances. The main principle which should lie at the core of a final status determination is a negotiated solution which will be reached by the parties themselves - Serbia and Pristina. We shall proceed from this assumption. Trying to impose something on either party is being viewed by us as unjustified and counterproductive.

**Question:** I am interested in the concrete stand of Russia concerning a future status of Kosovo. Albania is said to be favoring the province receiving independence. We regard the recent statement of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Serbia and Montenegro, Vuk Draskovic, as he is not being against such a decision either. What can you say in this connection?

**Foreign Minister Lavrov:** I will repeat what I have already said. The main principle which should lie at the base of finding a final decision on the status of Kosovo is the principle of negotiations. Only a decision which will be elaborated by the parties themselves can ensure a lasting settlement. The basis for that is there. It is the guiding principles approved by the Contact Group which envisage the multivariant character of likely final agreements. Those decisions of the Contact Group emphasize the necessity of an exclusively negotiated solution acceptable to all sides. Such negotiations are currently being conducted. They, naturally, are not easy, but we support this process in every way.

**Question:** Were there any specific agreements recorded during the talks today with regard to cooperation in the economic field?

**Foreign Minister Lavrov:** We agreed to pull up our economic ties to the level of our political dialogue. Preparations for the meeting of the Intergovernmental Commission to be held in the autumn of the current year will be dedicated to this. During the preparations a number of specific projects are to be developed, including those in energy and the promotion

of direct links between businessmen and of ties between the chambers of commerce and industry. We also agreed to update our juridical base, including the preparation of an agreement on customs cooperation, and to solve the problem of clearing indebtedness soon.

**Question:** Could you comment on yesterday's statement by Iran concerning uranium enrichment, as well as the visit of Mohamed ElBaradei to Teheran? Does this mean that the IAEA will undertake sanctions against that country or do you consider that this is simply an inspection visit? What is the stand of the Foreign Ministry on this issue?

**Foreign Minister Lavrov:** I would not be in a hurry to draw conclusions, because passions are too often being whipped around Iran's nuclear program. Our task, as I have already said more than once, is to prevent a violation of the regime for the nonproliferation of nuclear weapons. Here for us the main expert is the IAEA. As of now, the Agency has recorded no threats to the nonproliferation regime that would emanate from Iran, although it continues to clarify the questions still outstanding in this connection. That's what the visit of IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei to Teheran, which is starting today, will be dedicated to. His is a scheduled visit. It is not being made in great haste. We support continued and intensified engagement between Iran and the IAEA. We urge Iran to cooperate actively with the Agency. We expect that the results of Mr. ElBaradei's talks in Teheran will help to advance efforts for resolving the Iranian nuclear problem.

**Question:** How far does the probability of a military solution to the Iran problem increase following the declaration of Iran's intention to create a full nuclear cycle process on its soil. What is now the stand of Russia, which has offered a half-hearted offer - to do that together with Russia and on Russian soil? Now Iran has declared a different firm intention. This means a step towards creating conditions for the development of a nuclear weapon.

**Foreign Minister Lavrov:** I would also advise you not to whip up passions, because Iran has never said that it seeks to possess nuclear weapons. On the contrary, Iran has periodically and at the highest level given assurances that it has no such plans and that it is going to develop its nuclear industry for peaceful purposes only.

As for the growth of the probability of a military solution to the problem, I am convinced that a military solution to this problem does not exist. Practically all European countries agree with Russia on this point. The Foreign Secretary of Britain and the Foreign Ministers of other European Union countries have repeatedly spoken about this. Even if such plans exist, and we, naturally, read media reports on that score, they cannot solve this problem. They can only create an additional extremely explosive hotbed in the Middle East - a region where there are already enough such hotbeds. All the participants of the negotiation process, I mean the European trio, Russia, the US and China, have repeatedly, in their joint statements as well, emphasized the necessity of a politico-diplomatic settlement of this problem. This was a few days ago confirmed by US President George W. Bush. That's exactly the point from which we proceed and will in the format I mentioned, as well as within the IAEA and UN, continue to work for a settlement of the Iranian nuclear problem. Our position is well known to Iran. Hopefully it will make reciprocal steps.

April 12, 2006

