

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 by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov at the
General Meeting of the Russian Federation Commission for UNESCO Held in
Moscow on April 25, 2006**

713-25-04-2006

Foreign Minister Lavrov: Esteemed colleagues and friends,

First of all I would like to welcome the members of the Russian Federation Commission for UNESCO present here and the heads of its branches and committees and wish you all fruitful work.

Since our first meeting in this format, where we made our acquaintance in the new composition of the Commission and discussed the tasks before us, a year has passed which, it seems to me, was not useless. The thirty-third session of the General Conference of UNESCO took place. With Russia's active participation, it adopted the conventions against doping in sport and on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions. These are two important documents, which are very important for the Russian Federation on a practical plane. There was also adopted the Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights.

Last May St. Petersburg hosted the UNESCO between two Phases of the World Summit on the Information Society international forum. That was our very substantial contribution to the preparation of the Tunis phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, which also adopted important decisions, including the decision that opens the way for democratizing Internet governance. This was no small achievement, either. Also here we have the successful realization of the first stage of our joint project with UNESCO, Support for Rehabilitation and Improvement of the Education System in the Chechen Republic. Overall, the start of the work in this concrete matter gives grounds quite optimistically to assess the prospects for continuing our engagement in this sector.

One more remarkable event: the resumption of the publication of the Vestnik (Newsletter) of the Commission, which via Foreign Ministry channels is now being distributed all over

the world.

We today, of course, will thoroughly discuss what has been done and what tasks we have ahead. Now I would like to tell you briefly just about this. In its 60 years UNESCO, currently incorporating 191 states, has become the largest intergovernmental forum of humanitarian cooperation. The international networks formed by it consist of thousands of libraries, centers for science and culture, universities, schools and museums.

Ever since we joined UNESCO on April 21, 1954, engagement with this authoritative international organization has been a priority in our foreign policy. We are actively participating in many of its projects. Many of them we initiate ourselves. We intend to act thus in the future as well. This not only gives us unlimited access to new partner ties and sources of scientific information, but also enables us to make extensive use of UNESCO's ideas and suggestions in the sphere of education as we are preparing the G8 St. Petersburg summit, where this will be one of the three priority themes. Good opportunities are opening up to also use the useful experience of the Organization in the interest of a qualitative renewal of humanitarian cooperation in the CIS area in accordance with the decisions of the Kazan Summit in August last year, where the Heads of State signed the Agreement on Humanitarian Cooperation. A Humanitarian Cooperation Council is currently being set up along with an Interstate Fund which will help to finance projects in the framework of this important initiative. We have already established contacts with UNESCO, which has endorsed these initiatives in the CIS space and expressed readiness to actively help with their realization.

Today, when there really grows the threat of a split of civilizations, which is being provoked by terrorists, extremists and those who try to tackle international problems through unilateral methods, through rigid ideologized approaches, the role of UNESCO increases in efforts to preserve the invaluable cultural and historic legacy of our common civilization and in ensuring that all the peoples inhabiting the earth in the conditions of globalization retain their distinctiveness and that we by common efforts prevent the erosion and depersonalization of the cultural and civilizational diversity of the contemporary world.

Russia with its centuries-old traditions of the coexistence of many peoples and cultures, as President Vladimir Putin has stressed, is ready to activate its unique experience and enormous intellectual potential for the solution of the global problems of today. Here we have, perhaps, the chief sphere of application of efforts.

How effective they will be depends largely on our regional branches. For it is in the regions that the main efforts are now getting under way to implement priority national projects, including those in the fields of education and culture, that is the fields which directly concern our work. I want to note with satisfaction that the Commission itself has long since ceased being a private preserve of the capital. I think that it is important to welcome the consolidation of the tendency for an increase of the role of the regions in our

work. I would like to suggest introducing a post of Deputy Commission Chairman for work with the regions and propose for it the candidacy of a member of the Federation Council, Alexander Sergeyevich Dzasokhov.

I expect that at the end of our meeting we, in the absence of objections, will be able to officially formalize a decision to this effect.

April 25, 2006