

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 a Reply to a Media Question by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov Following Meeting with President of the Republic of Bulgaria Georgi Purvanov, Sofia, April 28, 2006

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Foreign Minister Lavrov: During the meeting with Bulgarian President Georgi Purvanov we discussed the state of our bilateral relations, which are evolving quite dynamically. There are no unsolved or unsolvable problems in them. There are questions that are linked to the realization of the accords reached at the highest level in 2003-2004.

We today looked at all the questions that need solving. In the first place, it is the further development of trade and economic ties. The trade turnover is growing, but we want to move further and develop investment cooperation. We are keen on Russian companies winning the tender for the construction of a nuclear power plant in Belena and on our companies' continued participation in the modernization of the NPP in Kozlodui. There are plans to cooperate in the fields of energy, oil refining, transport and in other industries. We expect that the session of the Intergovernmental Commission to be held next month will be able to record movement in the right direction on many of these issues.

We have a considerable amount of cultural cooperation. A Russian-Bulgarian Public Forum is being set up at the Russian and Bulgarian presidents' initiative. There are Bulgarian Cultural Days to be held in Moscow in June this year. Bulgarian President Purvanov treats with enthusiasm ties in this field.

We also exchanged views on security problems in Europe, including the Russia-Bulgaria cooperation within the Russia-NATO Council, and the questions of the transformation of the Alliance and the necessity to take full account of the existing international legal obligations of the sides. Of course, this includes consideration of the security interests of the Russian Federation. We concurred with the President that there must be in these questions absolute transparency and openness.

Our contacts with the Bulgarian side, which will still be continued here, will contribute to

the further deepening of mutual engagement on international problems with emphasis on the Balkans, where the positions of Moscow and Sofia are close or coincide.

Question: We assumed that at the meeting with Purvanov he would be asking you if Russian bombs are aimed at Bulgaria in connection with the deployment of US bases here.

Foreign Minister Lavrov: Bulgarian President Purvanov asked no such thing. I think that this is the very morbid imagination of the journalists who make such assumptions. I have already told you in what spirit the questions of the reconfiguration of the US military presence in Europe were discussed in the context of the Bulgarian-American agreements. Undoubtedly, as I have already said, it is for the Bulgarian side itself to decide on what terms to agree on the presence of foreign bases on its territory. But it is likewise undoubted that this entire process must consider in full measure the existing international legal obligations of the Alliance, which among other things presuppose the necessity of restraint in deploying substantial armed forces on the territory of new members. The President of Bulgaria has confirmed that there is such an understanding on the Bulgarian side. The Americans told us the same thing, assuring us that the obligations will be fully observed.

April 28, 2006