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Unofficial translation from Russian

**Commentary by Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Sergey Lavrov
to Russian Electronic Media Regarding US Vice President Richard Cheney's
Remarks in Vilnius, Moscow, May 5, 2006**

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Foreign Minister Lavrov: I think that a person who holds such a high government post should have the full amount of objective information, but everything indicates he was let down by his assistants or advisers. Thus, for example, we read that opponents of reform in Russia "are seeking to reverse the gains of the last decade." I think there is no need to explain to the Russian people in detail what kind of gains those were, when the country had actually found itself on the brink of disintegration. What the Russian leadership is doing now is to ensure that Russia is preserved as a unified, integral, strong state in the interests of its citizens.

Or take the statement that no legitimate interest is served when oil and gas become tools of intimidation or blackmail. We have heard such remarks from the lips of politicians lower in rank, but the US Vice President surely has to have the information that over the last forty years our country, either the USSR or the Russian Federation, has never breached any contract for the supply of oil and gas abroad. It is obvious that this information somehow failed to be conveyed to the Vice President likewise.

As to the charges that Russia's government has taken actions that "undermine the territorial integrity of a neighbor," what is there to say? In the early 90s it was at the cost of Russian peacekeepers' lives that the bloodshed was halted both in Georgia and in Moldova, thus saving the territorial integrity of these states. Not to remember that is, I would say, sacrilegious.

Where I can agree with Mr. Cheney is that he would like to see the world as a community of sovereign democracies. Russia wants to be and is becoming a sovereign, strong and stable democracy and expects that as such it will be perceived in the world arena as an equal

partner without whose involvement not one global problem can be solved today. I think that such remarks will not undermine the efforts which we together with the US, together with Europe and together with other leading countries have been making in order to build a just world without conflicts where all countries will be able to develop in the conditions of stability and democracy; for democracy is needed not only within a state, but also on the international scene. Let us not forget about this.

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

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