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**Transcript of Remarks and Replies to Media Questions by Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Russian Federation Sergey Lavrov Following His Visit to Kuwait, El Kuwait,
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Foreign Minister Lavrov: First of all, we are extremely grateful to the leadership of the State of Kuwait for the hospitality accorded and for the meetings I have had with Emir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmed, with Prime Minister Nasser al-Mohammed and with my counterpart, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed Sabah.

We view relations with Kuwait as a very important element of the Russian policy in this region. Kuwait is our long-standing, reliable partner. It is gratifying that our relations are developing along an ascending line.

President Putin's message, which I on his instruction conveyed to the Emir of the State of Kuwait, expresses determination to continue developing in just this vein our relations in the trade-and-economic, political and humanitarian fields and also engagement on international problems. The Emir fully shared the Russian President's focus on this approach towards our further cooperation, the focus on concrete undertakings. It is gratifying that in the course of the present visit we agreed on the date of the signing of an agreement which will settle the indebtedness of the former USSR and thus open up very promising prospects for specific projects in Kuwait involving Russian companies.

We agreed to intensify bilateral contacts on the problems of the fight against international terrorism. Of particular significance in this connection will be our cooperation to advance the intercivilizational dialogue. We support the initiative of the leader of Kuwait for promoting moderate Islam. In our turn we are satisfied that the Minister of Wakufs of Kuwait is a member of the strategic Russia-Islamic World group set up as part of Russia-OIC cooperation, which will continue its work. Its first meeting took place in Moscow not so long ago, and the next one is scheduled for August this year in Kazan.

We are interested that the formation of the new government in Iraq would open the way towards an inter-Iraqi dialogue and towards achieving a true national consensus. In Palestinian-Israeli relations we want the establishment of conditions which would permit

resuming the negotiation process on the basis of the Roadmap. In this regard, we actively support efforts to ensure the unity of all Palestinian political forces.

As to Iran, we also concur in the necessity to achieve a peaceful settlement of this problem. On all these aspects of the Middle East situation, we support the participation of Kuwait in the relevant initiatives which have been advanced by the LAS and the Gulf Cooperation Council.

Question: It is obvious that Iran is now one of the priority themes in international relations. A meeting of the Six is due to be held tomorrow. The US has today declared the need to place missiles in the Middle East in order to contain a threat to the country. Kuwait favors a politico-diplomatic settlement of the matter. What is the position of Russia? To what extent can it accept the US approaches?

Foreign Minister Lavrov: We share the position of Kuwait, the position of the overwhelming majority of states of the region and the rest of the world on the need solely for a politico-diplomatic resolution of the situation around the Iranian nuclear program. We, in principle, do not regard the use of force in international relations as a means capable of ensuring a long-term, enduring settlement of this or that problem. This applies in full to the Iranian situation.

I expect that tomorrow's meeting of the European trio, the United States, Russia and China will help preserve our common position in favor of a negotiated solution and work out a platform which would enable starting talks. Undoubtedly, their commencement depends not only on the six nations' accords, but also on the position of Teheran. We expect Teheran to respond to the negotiation offers constructively and cooperate in full with the IAEA. We welcome the initiatives which the Gulf Cooperation Council is undertaking toward this end.

Question: After the signing of the agreement settling the USSR debt, will there be any new possibilities for enhancing trade-and-economic growth? Are there any specific projects to involve Russian companies in economic projects in Kuwait?

Foreign Minister Lavrov: To both questions the answer is affirmative. With the signing of the agreement settling the Soviet debt the possibilities will immediately be opened up for a substantial increase of trade, economic and investment cooperation, including that in the spheres which are of interest to Russian companies.

Russian and Kuwaiti companies are also interested in cooperating with each other. There are many possibilities here. Russian companies want to participate in tenders for the development of deposits in the State of Kuwait, as soon as the relevant decision is taken. In our turn, we are keen on Kuwaiti investments flowing into the Russian Federation.

Question: Will you present a new initiative on Iran?

Foreign Minister Lavrov: Firstly, we are not presenting any new initiatives. The point is not to present new initiatives but to carry on the collective efforts which were first undertaken by the European trio and then backed up by Russia, China and later the US. We feel that only through the collective elaboration of a joint position can we achieve results. I wouldn't speak of a hypothetical scenario based on the supposition that it will all fail. If

somebody wants that this would happen, it's one thing. We believe that we now all, that is all the six nations participating in the negotiation process, need to concentrate on avoiding failure. We manage collectively to work firmly and constructively on the elaboration of a solution.

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