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PRESS RELEASE**Russian Chairmanship of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva**

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The first official plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament (CD) under Russia's chairmanship took place in Geneva on June 1. Our country last held this responsible post in 1997.

Sergey Lavrov, Russia's Foreign Minister, in his address to the CD participants, stressed that "the Conference on Disarmament is a unique and indispensable international forum with an unparalleled intellectual and professional potential. It has made a weighty contribution to strengthening peace, security and disarmament by elaborating the most significant international legal instruments that had laid the foundation for the present-day global system of security and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction."

The Russian Chairmanship is planning to organize the work of the Conference in the upcoming four weeks in a most businesslike, constructive vein. Its chief emphasis is on finding a compromise suiting all the CD participants on the forum's Work Program for the soonest launching of negotiation activities. In-depth thematic discussions are scheduled regarding averting an arms race in outer space and concerning the issue of new types and systems of weapons of mass destruction. An exchange of views will be held on ways to enhance the effectiveness of the work methods of the Conference.

Among Russia's absolute priorities are the issues of disarmament and of preventing placement of weapons in outer space. The urgency of these questions was reaffirmed by President Vladimir Putin in his recent Address to the Federal Assembly.

The Russian side intends to assist progress in CD activities in every way with the aim of preserving and enhancing the strategic balance of forces in the world and of safeguarding international peace and security.

June 1, 2006

