



Statement by Permanent Representative Vassily Nebenzia at UNSC briefing on threats to international peace and security (sabotage of Nord Stream gas pipeline)

21 February 2023

Mme.President,

Today we have gathered here for a very remarkable meeting. It is somewhat assonant with the previous meeting regarding the act of sabotage against the Nord Stream pipe that we called on 30 September last year, yet this meeting is completely different by its tone. As many of you surely remember, back then it was already clear who may be standing behind that act of international terrorism (for this is how we qualify this incident), and Russian investigative bodies started criminal proceedings under a corresponding Article of Russia's Criminal Code. US leadership made some statements which boil down to one message – if Russia kept doing what the United States does not like, the Nord Stream would be destroyed. Then, rather inopportunately, former Foreign Minister of Poland Sikorski (who clearly knew something) got in the spotlight, having thanked the United States on social media in a paroxysm of Russophobia. Add to this a rather indiscreet text message by former head of the British Government L.Truss, who is also known for her fierce hatred to my country. Yet formally, the United States strongly denied its involvement, realizing prospective consequences of such sabotage of critical international pipeline infrastructure. They still do, by the way.

Since then, the malevolence of Washington's officials has increased, not in the least thanks to another famous Russophobe, "godmother" of the anti-constitutional coup in Ukraine V.Nuland. However, we would not be convening this meeting only because of this. The thing is that on 8 February, thanks to a prominent American investigative journalist and Pulitzer Prize winner S.Hersh, we not only learned the *whos*, but also the *hows*. We came to know how the US did this with help from Norway, its ally in NATO. Proceeding from facts and testimonies by eyewitnesses, he convincingly proves that during NATO's BALTOPS exercise in summer 2022, divers from US Navy planted explosives under the pipes, which were detonated by the Norwegians three months later, on 26 September 2022. So now we know with a high degree of certainty not only who blew up our gas pipe, and also how they did it. Basically, these facts allow us to say that this was a use of force carried out in a way that is incompatible with the goals of the UN Charter.

In this statement, I will not go further into details of S.Hersh's topline investigation, because our two briefers, J.Sachs and R.McGovern, have covered those extensively. I will only say that the depth of information that he has collected is truly striking. His previous professional expertise and uncompromising integrity leave us no doubt that this American journalist is telling the truth.

What is also striking is the level of cynicism and all-out sense of impunity with which this unprecedented crime was committed. We have got accustomed to the fact that our American colleagues position themselves above the law or rather pretend that they are the law, which they think gives them the right to interfere in internal affairs of states without retribution, carry out anti-constitutional coups, take aggressive action against independent states (I remind that by estimates of the US Congressional Research Service, since the end of the Cold War, the US has used its armed forces abroad on 251 occasions), kill and torture peaceful population in third countries while refusing to commit the perpetrators to international justice. With their allies singing along, they call it “rules-based order”, where the rules are set by themselves.

However before now, they never went as low as to blow up foreign pipelines that are owned by states with which the US was not at war. Well, this day has come. Maybe, it presages a new era, in which cross-border and trans-continental infrastructure will become a legitimate target for operations aimed at weakening of some or other states. As you can imagine, this would be an era of chaos and unspeakable harm to the entire humanity. Odds are huge that this era may truly come, unless those responsible for the sabotage of the Nord Stream are identified and held duly accountable. And unless those who masterminded this crime reimburse for the damage that occurred with the affected states – the way international law (and basic principles of justice) see it. Then and only then we will have a chance to avoid this chaos. All is in our hands, and the choice is being made i.a today, at this very meeting of the Security Council.

Mr.President,

Contrary to what our former Western partners are about to say, we do not spread disinformation in the Security Council, and do not try to make a guilty verdict based on allegations in the “highly likely” spirit. This is something British representatives did five years ago when they made an unconvincing attempt to accuse us of the poisoning of the Skripals which was based only on allegations and speculations neither of which had anything to do with facts or common sense. With the Nord Stream sabotage, neither the motive of the crime nor the perpetrators or the method raise any doubts. This is even more than the “smoking gun” that detectives always dream to find in Hollywood blockbuster movies. With such evidence, no lawyer would venture to defend our American colleagues in court, and predicting the jury verdict would be a no-brainer.

But we have not gathered here to have a trial. As you know, we put forward a draft UNSC resolution that tasks the Secretary-General to carry out an independent international investigation, and double-check the facts that S.Hersh and other independent journalists cite.

We have to do this, because we have strong reasons to doubt the effectiveness, transparency, and impartiality of investigations that are being carried out under some national jurisdictions. We do not see our partners being eager to cooperate. We have taken note of the letter by Permanent Representatives of Germany, Denmark, and Sweden saying that the authorities of these states had informed Russia on the progress of the investigation. Things are different in reality. Leaders of the states in question ignored the communications that Prime Minister of Russia, M.Mishustin, addressed to them in October 2022 regarding participation of relevant Russian agencies and PJSC Gazprom in the investigations. Relevant requests of the General Prosecutor’s Office of the Russian Federation were declined. Since we talk about a crime that was committed by means of an explosive device, which makes it subject to the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings of 15 December 1997, we expect that all states that have to do with the incident, namely the US, Norway, Denmark, and Sweden, will fulfil their obligations under this document. But leadership of these states do not show any political will or rather do not have any.

Unfortunately, there is no other way for us to attain the truth. Those so-called investigations by Scandinavian states and Germany not only lack transparency, but, and this has become obvious by now, are aimed at covering up the tracks and exculpating the big American brother. We are not allowed to partake, and all our requests are ignored with arrogance. By the way, it is rather weird that the states who conduct the investigations have not requested to act as briefers today. With other meetings, there is no end to those willing to take the floor. Of course, we do not and cannot have any trust in them. But we still do have trust in the Secretary-General and hope that you do too. That is why we suggest that he should be tasked with this investigation.

We circulated as official documents of the Security Council and General Assembly an address of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation that contains a corresponding request, and also verbal notes on that matter that our respective embassies addressed to Foreign Ministries of Germany, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and the US. Everyone who wants to can read those documents.

If our American colleagues indeed have nothing to fear and if they do not doubt that their fellow citizen was all wrong, then the US does not risk anything, of which we will soon be able to make sure. In such case, we will strive to identify and hold accountable whoever it was that encroached on international peace and security by their actions. So, we look forward to having our proposal supported. These days, experts are in the middle of discussing our draft. After the first round, however, we are inclined to think that Western experts are not interested in an objective international investigation, which but substantiates our suspicion.

Colleagues, your approach to our proposed draft resolution, your interest (or the lack of it) in searching for the perpetrators and holding them accountable will define our further steps in the context of the act of sabotage that took place. We very much want to believe that you will not disappoint us or your own people and will help to establish the truth as prescribed by the Charter of this Organization.

Thank you.