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**Briefing by Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova, Moscow,
September 19, 2023**

**Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's participation in the 78th UN General
Assembly**

I would like to remind you that Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's official visit to New York to attend the 78th UN General Assembly begins tomorrow.

During the High-Level Week on September 19-26, Sergey Lavrov will take part in a series of multilateral events, including meetings of the UN Security Council, BRICS, the CSTO, the SCO and the Group of Friends in Defence of the UN Charter. In addition to that, he plans to hold around 20 bilateral meetings with his colleagues from other countries and senior officials of international organisations. These are the meetings currently on his schedule. As you know, it is possible that the number of meetings may increase due to the nature of this political week. A conversation with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres is planned.

Sergey Lavrov's address during the general political discussion of the UN General Assembly on September 23 will be the key event of Minister Lavrov's visit. The Minister will offer an extensive account of Russia's principled approaches to the most vital global issues, including further development of the international relations system focused on forming a genuinely just multipolar world order founded on the goals and principles of the UN Charter without exception and other fundamental international law provisions.

Russia's detailed approach to the agenda of the 78th UN General Assembly is set forth in the respective publication on the Foreign Ministry website.

I would like to remind everybody about the Foreign Ministry's official social media accounts that are regularly updated with photos, videos and messages.

Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's participation in the opening of an exhibition marking the 80th anniversary of Russia-Egypt diplomatic relations

On September 25, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov will attend the opening ceremony of an exhibition, hosted by the Russian Foreign Ministry, that marks 80 years of diplomatic relations between Russia and Egypt, celebrated on August 26.

On display will be exhibits from the Russian Federation Foreign Policy Archives detailing different stages in the development of Russia-Egypt multidimensional cooperation.

Ukraine crisis update

The Kiev regime will not stop committing bloody crimes against the inhabitants of the Russian regions and destroying residential buildings, schools, hospitals, kindergartens and other civilian infrastructure. For this purpose, the maximum range of NATO weapons is being used: from heavy artillery to attack drones.

On September 12, due to the shelling of Donetsk by Ukrainian militants, a utility room on the grounds of the St. Ignatievsky Church caught fire, and on September 17, the Church of the Holy Equal-to-the-Apostles Prince Vladimir was damaged in the city.

In the early hours of September 13, Ukrainian neo-Nazis struck the Ordzhonikidze ship-repairing yard in Sevastopol with cruise missiles resulting in a fire. Nearby houses were damaged and debris was found in two schools. Twenty-four people were injured.

On September 14, one person was killed in the Kursk Region after Ukrainian shelling. The next day, September 15, Ukrainian militants cynically shelled a residential quarter in Novaya Kakhovka. A local resident was killed, 15 people were wounded and two multi-storey houses were almost completely destroyed. On September 16, Ukrainian neo-Nazis launched a barbaric attack on a market in Svetlodarsk, killing seven people. On the same day, two civilians were killed in Donetsk by Ukrainian armed forces shelling.

A few days ago, gruesome footage of Ukrainian fighters chasing two prisoners in Russian army uniforms towards a minefield circulated on the internet. After a while, one of the Kiev servicemen (after what he has done, he automatically becomes a criminal, not a serviceman) opens fire in their direction, followed by an explosion. All this is immediately accompanied by captions and wording that demining should take place like this, live, at the

behest of the Kiev regime and all those who have been saluting it for many years. Let me remind you that similar heinous crimes were committed by the Nazis during the Great Patriotic War. Today, their followers in Ukraine are diligently adopting these brutal practices of Hitlerism.

Russian law enforcement agencies are already studying the video and all the circumstances of what happened. If the information about the inhuman treatment of Russian prisoners of war is confirmed, the perpetrators will be brought to justice, as they have been in the past.

Russian courts continue to pass sentences on Ukrainian neo-Nazis who committed serious crimes against civilians and prisoners of war, based on evidence gathered by the Investigative Committee of Russia.

Last week, life imprisonment was handed down to the neo-Nazi from the Ukrainian Armed Forces Vladimir Kulyk, who, together with other militants, prevented civilians from leaving Mariupol in April 2022, including through the use of firearms. Following criminal orders from above, he shot eight civilians.

Neo-Nazis of the Armed Forces of Ukraine Oleg Bezvoley, Sergei Makeyev and Mikhail Chistoplyasov were sentenced from 22 to 29 years in prison for the murder of civilians in Mariupol in the spring of 2022.

The militants of the Azov terrorist organisation Alexander Slobodenyuk, Ivan Bochkaryov, Dmitry Kanuper, and Ruslan Kolodyazhny received from 26 to 29 years in a maximum-security prison for the murder of civilians in Mariupol in March-April 2022.

Three other militants of Azov, Vadim Gusev, David Kasatkin and Denis Zhuchkov, were sentenced in absentia to between 14.5 and 16 years of imprisonment for violence against Russian prisoners of war in April 2022 in Mariupol.

Azov militant Anton Shtukin, who fired at a humanitarian aid distribution point in the Mariupol Region in March 2022, was sentenced in absentia to 24 years in prison.

The neo-Nazis Sakhil Alakhverdiyev and Alexei Borisenko received 16 and 17 years in maximum-security colony respectively, for firing grenade launchers and mortars at residential buildings in the villages of Severodonetsk and Toshkovka (LPR) in May 2022.

The Kiev regime will not be able to escape responsibility for its monstrous atrocities. Ukrainian neo-Nazis who commit crimes against people living in Russian regions and the military personnel will definitely be held accountable before the law.

In this context, we can see some Western countries' attempts to whitewash and canonise Ukrainian neo-Nazis. For example, the city authorities allowed the holding of a photo exhibition dedicated to the Nazi Azov battalion in Milan, on one of the city streets and in the Risorgimento Museum. Militants of this terrorist organisation are presented as "defenders" of Mariupol there. At the same time, back in June 2015, US congressmen called the Azov battalion a disgusting Nazi group and prohibited the Pentagon from providing it with military-technical assistance and training its cutthroats.

A biased article in *Le Figaro*, France, about the Azov and Right Sector neo-Nazi organisations, whose members are depicted almost as patriots, is another outrageous example.

All these facts provoke outrage, and I would like to ask the Italians and French a question: when your journalists and politicians are trying to whitewash Ukrainian neo-Nazis and present them in such a heroic light, do you remember what your countries went through during World War II? You were almost on the verge of, no, not survival like us. We were immediately, in absentia, sentenced to enslavement as second-class people, or to destruction if we were not fit to serve or be slaves in all the plans of Hitler's Germany. The immediate destruction of the Slavs was ordered.

It was different with France. It was not to be destroyed; it was only occupied. A large part of French society considered it absolutely normal. Moreover, it did not consider it necessary to fight back, preferring to service the troops that were deployed in the country. A clear French minority later mounted resistance against the invaders, and the world knows them as "the French resistance." They became heroes, and it was thanks to that minority that France, including the majority who applauded the Nazis living in their homes, was hailed as a hero. It happened thanks to the minority and those who risked their lives knowing that many of them would die.

Unlike France, Italy fully and officially supported the barbarous logic of fascism. In fact, fascism originated in Italy. But Italy was eventually reborn thanks to the genuine heroism of an absolute minority, who managed to convince Italian society, even though it cost them their lives. This did not happen thanks to money or political support but thanks to the Italian citizens who, like people in France, put up resistance because they had a conscience, knew their history and understood the significance of civilisation, humanity and true values. This is why France and Italy lived in dignity during the second half of the 20th century. But are they stepping on the same rake now? I would like to remind Paris and Rome about the history of modern Ukrainian nationalism, this

time in considerable detail. They should know what irresponsible connivance can lead to.

In the next few days, Vladimir Zelensky will go on another road tour of the United States. The media have reported about his planned meeting with President Biden and the Congress. It is clear that the sponger from Kiev will again beg his American masters for money and weapons. According to public information, German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius said that in that situation they might reconsider their decision on sending long-range Taurus missiles to Kiev.

In other words, the West is using its Kiev puppets to whip up the conflict and remains indifferent to the suffering civilians. All this is taking place against the backdrop of Zelensky's "peace" plans and initiatives, and the activity of working groups established following various "forums" to support his plans. It's time to decide. As far as we remember, for the past 18 months the West called for settling the problem on the battlefield, prohibiting Zelensky from holding talks and not allowing itself to even think about peace, settlement plans and contacts. What will they perform now? A dumb show called "Zelensky's peace plan, or Talks without talks"? In fact, they will send more weapons to the region. Stop lying to those whom you bring together under the banner of "peace plans." When your working groups meet again next time, tell them that you intend to pump more weapons into the region, or, more precisely, into the Kiev regime.

Kiev still suffers from phantom limb pains about Crimea. Mustafa Dzhemilev, former head of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People (an organisation prohibited in Russia), told Deutsche Welle, which is not above publishing the interviews of extremists, that the Crimean Bridge must be destroyed. We remember them doing the same in the 1990s, when they talked with those who seized maternity hospitals, theatres and schools with children, those who killed civilians. The Western media, including DW, called them "rebels," "free people" and "fighters for democracy." But later they changed the tune and called them extremists and terrorists. The same is happening now. Do the Western media have no qualms about publishing such statements? The bridge is used by the peaceful residents of Crimea, including children and women.

Secretary of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine Alexey Danilov has said recently that if the Russians do not leave Crimea of their own, Ukraine will have to "smoke them out." We would like to remind the Kiev fantasists that the issue of Crimea is closed. Its citizens made their choice back in 2014. They knew what lay in store for them and that they would be "smoked

out,” as Danilov said, economically, socially and at the humanitarian level based on the nationalist logic. Any attempts to use military force against the peninsula will come against an immediate harsh response.

The other day, a memorial plaque of the great Russian poet Alexander Pushkin was dismantled from the house in Kiev where he lived in 1821, even though it was in the Ukrainian language. It is obvious that the Banderites don't want people to remember the outstanding personalities who lived there long before the establishment of Ukraine. At the same time, they install new plaques with great energy at the sites which their Western masters have visited, like a McDonald's restaurant that US Secretary of State Antony Blinken visited last week. It is no joke. I don't need to remind you about the memorial plaques of Stepan Bandera or Roman Shukhevich. Now, the honour has been bestowed on Antony Blinken. Indeed, there is a great difference between Pushkin and Blinken, who is much more important for today's Ukraine. Pushkin called for noble passions with his lyre, while Blinken is sending weapons. The difference is glaring.

The Western pandering to the crimes of the Kiev regime and the continuing supply of weapons to it in order to escalate the conflict and create threats for Russia are clear reasons for attaining all the goals and tasks of the special military operation, including those we have been trying for a long time to explain to the West, which refused to believe us. Today, everyone can see who is doing what.

Publication of materials highlighting OUN-UPA crimes during the Great Patriotic War and those of their current successors

Today, the Historical Materials section of the Foreign Ministry's website is posting a collection of historical facts highlighting the crimes of Ukrainian nationalists from the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA). Many repeat these acronyms, without realising what they really stand for. One should not invent anything about the OUN-UPA being peaceful and lacking nationalist ideas. No, they are the very same nationalists who have been on the warpath for decades. The acronym erased and downplayed everything to some extent, but we will remind everyone about their deeds. The materials show how, on ethnic grounds, the nationalist OUN-UPA carried out crimes against civilians during the Great Patriotic War and discuss their ideological successors in the form of the Kiev regime. These facts demonstrate the sad but obvious continuity of several generations of

Ukrainian Nazis who have been killing representatives of various nations, including Russians, Ukrainians, Poles, Rusyns, Czechs, Jews and Roma over the past century.

We would like to recall that the nationalist ideology of the OUN, established in 1929, was similar to fascism, which was quickly spreading in Europe at that time. According to some historians and researchers, including A. Guerin from France, German special services were directly involved in establishing the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists and grooming its leaders. This closely resembles developments of the past ten years on Ukrainian territory. These nationalist ideas reincarnated, together with the symbols of the collaborators, raised in western Ukraine and neighbouring countries, including Poland and the Baltics. Poland itself, later victimised by these Ukrainian nationalists during World War II, had raised them. Unfortunately, the Poles decided nothing, and others decided everything for them. Poles who know all about Ukrainian nationalism gained this knowledge from their family stories, rather than just from books. However, Brussels, home to NATO headquarters, invented a new ideology for them. They were told that it was necessary to forget the bitter past for the sake of a sweet future, and that this would guarantee success. However, they did not tell the people of Poland that this had been repeatedly offered to various nations in the past 1,000 years; each time, this led to tragedy.

Historical documents prove cooperation between Ukrainian nationalists and representatives of German special services, as well as the permanent subordination of the former to the latter. Declassified archive transcripts of interrogations by German intelligence operatives confirm the fact that the Germans had recruited Stepan Bandera.

It is important to note that cooperation between the Ukrainian nationalists and Nazi Germany was of an ideological, rather than just time-serving and pragmatic, nature. The 1938 OUN military doctrine already contained the harbingers of future atrocities. One tell-tale passage reads as follows: “A future Ukrainian state must have a pure ethnic composition ... We should not shy away from specific methods ... Poles, Russians and Jews must be exterminated.” This ideology later manifested itself in such a horrifying historical episode as the Volyn Massacre. We discussed this episode at one of our recent briefings. At a later stage, when the war engulfed Poland, Ukrainian nationalists played an active role in organising espionage and acts of sabotage, and they carried out reprisals against Polish civilians. You can find all these facts in our files.

The Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic never supported Ukrainian nationalism. This caused the wrath of OUN members who called its residents “substandard Ukrainians.” Does this ring any bells in connection with current developments? The saying “Those who do not hop are Moskals/Muscovites” fits into the same category. Those who have failed to execute a sharp Nazi-style salute and to swear complete allegiance to Ukrainian nationalism are immediately listed among the “sub-humans.” To quote Vladimir Zelensky, they are “specimens.”

After the war, the Ukrainian Nazis unleashed a terror campaign against the civilians in the Republic and started working with Western intelligence agencies. I can even posit that they never broke off these ties, and simply shifted into a new mode by once again offering to serve them. Before that, they worked with the Nazi apparatus, but after the war, the Western and European agencies stepped in, dominated by the United States and Canada. They provided financial support to the Ukrainian Nazis. This is exactly what is happening with the Kiev regime today. Discussing this used to be embarrassing but today no one is even trying to hide it.

Germany’s Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said that she was proud of her grandfather who stood his ground against the enemy in Kaliningrad. What kind of an enemy was it? Well, the Red Army, of course, the one that fought the Nazis, including Annalena Baerbock’s pride – her grandfather. By the same token, Canada’s Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland was proud of her grandfather, Michael Chomiak, who edited a Nazi magazine in Eastern Europe before settling in the West. His granddaughter took up the torch from her grandfather, albeit at a new technological level.

The Ukrainian nationalists perpetrated over 14,000 violent crimes, killing over 30,000 Soviet people, including children and the elderly, before the OUN/UPA criminal groups were wiped out in the 1950s. We have been witnessing the resurgence of these practices over the past few years with the targeting of people in Donbass and along the Sea of Azov.

The sheer historical facts in this publication send shivers down the spine: “**April 11, 1944.** Village of Nova-Brikul, Strusovsky District, Ternopol Region. Donned in Red Army uniforms, the Banderites took 150 people from the village under the pretext of a work assignment and executed 115 of them by firing squad.” Doesn’t this remind you anything? This is the kind of staged incidents we have been seeing in Bucha. A lot of water may have flown under the bridge, but the narrative and practices have not changed.

“April 25, 1944. Mogilnitsy, Budanovsky District, Ternopol Region. Regular Red Army units discovered several ditches near the village with “up to 100 corpses of men, women and children from Mogilnitsy and its vicinity, as well as Red Army prisoners, who had been tortured to death.” **“June 7, 1944.** Kosuv, Belobozhentsevsky District, Ternopol Region. The commission tasked with investigating atrocities discovered two ditches near the village with about 100 corpses, including women, the elderly, and children. They did not have any gunshot wounds and died from blows with heavy objects.” Similar burial sites have been discovered in Donbass. The Russian law enforcement agencies and the Investigative Committee have been reporting incidents of this kind. We translated these reports and circulated them at international venues and in international organisations among the would-be civilised members who are so proactive when it comes to advocating human rights. However, these people simply turned a blind eye to these materials and ignored them. Same patterns, same methods, same crimes. Why? Because the ideology has not changed either. It is the same Nazi ideology.

The period that followed the Soviet Union’s dissolution witnessed the revival of Ukrainian nationalism. It was then that the Kiev authorities set out on the dangerous path of making overtures to the Ukrainian nationalist ideology. And this effort benefited from solid funding, with Americans and Canadians paying for the glorification of OUN/UPA leaders by releasing tranches of financial aid, delivering humanitarian aid, granting all kinds of loans, making promises, even if many of them have never been fulfilled, and paying bribes too.

The fact that in today’s Ukraine, OUN/UPA descendants and ideological successors have been propelled onto the country’s political stage is a separate topic. This signalled a new and important step towards shattering the Ukrainian statehood for the simple reason that most people in Ukraine refused to accept this. This is what caused the country to split apart after a protracted period when this schism was ripening and gathering momentum. And then everything came to pieces in Ukraine. This policy resulted in the February 2014 armed government coup sponsored by the West, preceded by multiple incursions in the country’s domestic affairs and the effort by Western countries to promote regime change. The nationalist battalions pretended to represent the Ukrainian public, even if they never enjoyed any major following in the country, and in this capacity, they served as a driving force of this policy. It revolved around Nazi principles and benefited from generous Western funding. And they were cast as representing the civil society. In fact, these were political mercenaries, and many of them were armed. They got their training in the Baltic states and in Poland

where there were training camps for this purpose. We have been talking about this continuously since 2014.

Today, the collective West is actively supporting the criminal Kiev regime, having literally nurtured the OUN/UPA radical Ukrainian nationalists and their ideology. The West used them as a driving force for transforming Ukraine into a bulwark, an anti-Russia, a platform for destabilising the region, and the agent for “inflicting a strategic defeat on Russia” as they put it. The West pretends that this is designed to give them their historical revenge. But they failed back then, in mid-20th century. They now believe that their time has come. They are wrong. Our publication does not cover all the crimes they perpetrated.

We would like to once again emphasise that the Ukrainian criminals will not escape their punishment. The Russian law enforcement agencies have been extremely diligent in investigating the criminal cases that they initiate whenever they learn about crimes perpetrated by the Kiev regime. Just like their OUN/UPA predecessors, sooner or later those who organised and executed these crimes will be brought before a judge.

Ukraine’s responsibility for the deterioration of the environment in the region

I would like to draw your attention to the publication on the official website of the Russian Foreign Ministry concerning Ukraine’s responsibility for the deterioration of the environment in the region.

The Ukrainian armed forces, sponsored by Western regimes, have committed multiple environmental crimes since the start of the conflict, all well documented. The evidence we possess indicates that, in the course of its aggression against Crimea and Donbass since 2014, Kiev has used methods that cause serious long-term damage to the environment.

After the people of Crimea decided to reunify with Russia in 2014, the Ukrainian officials cut off the water supply to the peninsula and inundated substantial territories in the estuary of the Dnieper, inflicting critical damage to the Nizhnedneprovsky National Reserve and simultaneously causing extensive draught in vast areas of the Kherson Region and Crimea. The Kiev regime was proud of that act and did not find it necessary to hide or explain what it had done. It was a reason to boast, the same way as now when, for example, there are multiple publications, released by the Kiev regime and sources under its control, calling people to either support the infliction of damage or the total

destruction of civilian infrastructure, especially in Crimea, or to get directly involved in such acts of sabotage.

What the Kiev regime is particularly proud of is its skill in motivating people to support extremist and terrorist acts. Similarly, since 2014, Mustafa Dzhemilev and his terrorist organisation have been proud of the fact that they are capable of conveying the benefits of their extremist acts to international fora – for example, the benefits of planting mines at the power lines running to Crimea, to cut off water. They conducted entire presentations of their plots at the Council of Europe and other “hotbeds” of democracy.

Over the next eight years of Kiev’s war crimes against the separated Donetsk and Lugansk, colossal harm was caused to the ecosystems and biodiversity in several national parks, in particular, the Askania-Nova Biosphere Reserve. The destruction of civilian production facilities in the Donetsk and Lugansk people’s republics by the Ukrainian army resulted in the extensive contamination of water bodies, soil and air with hazardous chemicals. It should be stressed that since 2014, Kiev has committed these acts in the regions that, before being incorporated in Russia through the referendums in 2022, were formally part of Ukraine. There can be no other explanation but complete lack of care about the future of these regions and open hatred for the local population on national and ethnic ground. Kiev’s destruction of the Kakhovskaya Dam in June 2023, which resulted in the largest regional (or, in my opinion, global) environmental disaster, stands apart in the long series of Kiev’s environmental crimes.

The flood water spread across 280,000 hectares, an area larger than countries like Luxembourg. The rapid flooding killed flora and fauna en masse in several nature reserves, including Nizhnedneprovsky, Kamennaya Sech and Veliky Lug. Irrecoverable damage was caused to the plants and animals listed in the Red Book of Endangered Species of the Russian Federation, along with their habitat.

The drastic decline in the water level in the Kakhovka Reservoir killed 43 species of fish. In the medium term, there is the danger of further ecosystem degradation and desertification of a vast territory around the lower Dnieper due to the destruction of the central water reservoir that was a source for irrigation channels in the area.

Ukraine’s attack on the dam caused hazardous and poisonous agents and pollutants from the sewage systems and other infrastructure facilities to be discharged into the Black Sea, carried by water flows, with adverse effects on its ecosystem. Around 23,000 houses and residential buildings, 16 cemeteries and

15 solid waste facilities, including 3 large landfills and 12 dumps, were located on the flooded territory. Additionally, water was contaminated with almost 350 tonnes of industrial oil from the machines at the Kakhovskaya Hydroelectric Power Station.

As part of the cleanup operation, Russia's special services removed 18,000 cubic metres of rubbish and restored telephone communications and electricity supply. Large-scale repair and reconstruction work is underway, and sanitary and epidemiological monitoring of the environment and preventive anti-epizootic measures are being carried out.

The exact extent of the damage is to be determined by scientists and environmentalists. At the moment, the ongoing military operations are greatly impeding this work.

In the context of the disaster caused by the destruction of the Kakhovskaya Hydroelectric Power Station, it is important to keep in mind other environmental crimes committed by Kiev and the Western countries that provide it with weapons and political support.

The decisions by the Great Britain and the United States to supply Kiev with depleted uranium munitions have had dire long-term consequences for the region. As a result, water and soil in a vast territory have been contaminated with radiation. I have noticed that some international experts are trying to talk their way out of this situation, claiming that this is not really a nuclear security issue. Of course, there is no need to explain. We should consider this problem not only from the point of view of physics, but also of chemistry. There are no options there other than to call it a global-scale disaster.

Data from the use of similar munitions by NATO troops in Yugoslavia and Iraq indicates that numerous cancer cases and premature deaths should be expected in the affected areas, as well as long-term adverse effects of radiation on people, animals and plants.

Just the other day, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken again became concerned about food security and said that the world could not live without Ukrainian grain. A number of EU countries immediately said that they were no longer going to accept this grain, but the question is different. What will happen to the grain that will be grown in the soil contaminated with depleted uranium shells? For some reason the US State Department does not want to talk about this. Its representatives periodically declare that this is not as dangerous as it seems at first glance. There is no need for a first glance. There is scientific data. Science in the US has not been completely cancelled yet. There are attempts to do so, and sometimes money can do things that make you wonder. But this data

can't be cancelled. What will happen to the grain that will be harvested from this land contaminated by the United States and Britain? Where will it go? Will its consumers (not even the final recipients, but the middlemen) be able to separate it? Will they have the resources to conduct tests and separate good grain from not-so-good grain? Neither Blinken, nor the State Department, nor these American and EU monopolists in agro-industrial trade operations are thinking about this now. They are not concerned about it. They are ready to start filling their pockets again, as they have been doing all this time. They think that they will not be affected.

The use of indiscriminate weapons by the Ukrainian armed forces, such as the American cluster munitions, has resulted in a large-scale destruction of ecosystems.

The outdated sea mines that Ukraine is using on a large scale have polluted vast areas in the Black Sea with hazardous substances. Ukrainian drifting munitions have been spotted in different places along the Black Sea's entire western coast from Bulgaria to Türkiye.

These facts are documented by the Russian law enforcement agencies and other competent authorities. We proceed from the premise that Ukraine and its aiders and abettors from among the states supplying those weapons will be brought to account and pay for the damage caused to the environment and for restoring the environmental balance in former Ukrainian territories after the conflict is over.

I would like to remind the people in NATO countries, who think that they will remain unaffected. of their own history.

When they were staging experiments (on Syria, Libya, and earlier on Iraq), they thought this was somewhere far away. The taxpayers in NATO countries, public organisations, and human rights organisations also thought this had nothing to do with them. Not everything was running smoothly perhaps, or seemed "nice," but who knows, it could be quite normal after all. The important thing is that it was out there, far away, in God knows what Arab World, the Middle East, somewhere near the Gulf... But this was certainly not about Western European countries.

True, it was far away. No one has cancelled geography yet. But it is not these countries' geography but their migrants that came to Western Europe. People from those countries upped and came to the EU. Today, like during the past ten years, scientific conferences are held virtually every month here and there – in Italy, Poland, Greece, etc. – to discuss ways to stop migration from countries where NATO had experimented with "regime change,"

“democratisation,” or interference in their internal affairs, because the West felt like it.

It is the same with Ukraine. You may remember for how long they had teased Ukraine, promising that it would soon join the “Western community” – the time is not far off when it would be an EU member and it was just a few days before it would be accepted into NATO (and they almost let it join). What was the end of this all? What was the end of that campaign of malicious pressure, both psychological and political, directed at the Ukrainian people?

It ended in nothing. Ukraine has not been accepted, and people from Ukraine have come to Western Europe and become de-facto members of the European Union. Now scientific conferences, roundtables and symposia are held in order to understand what is to be done with the citizens of Ukraine, who have responded to the Western enticements and are not going to leave the Western countries. Moreover, they demand much greater benefits than the refugees from the Middle East before them, arguing that they have sacrificed their country for the Western experiments. After all, most Middle Eastern countries were not particularly pleased with the experiments planned for them, and some (like Syria) even resisted them. Unlike them, most Ukrainians believed in the brave new world that was promised to them, and sacrificed their statehood, country and independence for the phantom of a fine, fat and comfortable life. When this failed to materialise, they have legged their way to EU countries and now are demanding much greater benefits than any ordinary refugees.

This is not a very pleasant piece of news for the EU countries: they are not planning to leave.

On September 26 a year ago, a terrorist attack was reported on the Nord Stream 1 and 2 gas pipelines near the shores of Denmark and Sweden. That unprecedented attack was a heinous crime and a blatant act of subversion on a vital part of the European energy infrastructure. On September 28, 2022, the Russian Federation opened a criminal case under an article on international terrorism (part 1 of Article 361 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation). The relevant Russian authorities continue to investigate the case. Of course, the West, as always, refused to cooperate with us, to share information or any other factual materials.

Those who ordered the terrorist attack on the Nord Stream pipelines had a practical goal of disrupting mutually beneficial energy cooperation between Russia and Europe. The subsequent actions by the authorities of European countries show convincingly that the attack was ordered and orchestrated from a single centre. Despite the numerous Russian requests to the leadership in

Germany, Sweden and Denmark to share information available to their investigative authorities, they continue to avoid cooperation and have not provided any intelligible answers. Copenhagen and Stockholm claim to be continuing with their investigations, which do not have a definite deadline.

Their heads of government have not replied to the letters that Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin sent to them in October 2022 on conducting a comprehensive and open investigation into the explosions, with the participation of representatives of the Russian authorities and Gazprom.

The Danish and Swedish authorities declined the request for legal assistance that the Russian Prosecutor General's Office sent to the Police of Denmark and the Swedish Prosecution Authority in November 2022, allegedly because granting that request would pose a threat to their national security. They had no answer when we asked whose request it was that was granted resulting in a real threat to the national security of West European countries when that infrastructure facility was destroyed.

Copenhagen and Stockholm responded to our initiative on creating joint investigation groups by saying that their law enforcement authorities had no interest in that. The fact that the collective West is hiding something was confirmed by the feverish activities of the Swedish Prosecution Authority, which stated in late June 2023 that all information in the Nord Stream case could be classified. Who will it be kept secret from? From their citizens, from the international community, from the companies that sustained direct damages, and from environment protection activists, who are concerned about the birds and fish and cannot gauge the real scale of environmental damage done by the explosions. What about the right of access to information? You can say that this is another case of double standards. I will reply that it is a case of no standards.

Denmark and Sweden have stated many times that they allegedly provided Russia with all the necessary information about the investigations, which is not true. The media continue to air new versions of the attack, further strengthening our doubts regarding these states' readiness to expose the organisers and perpetrators of that terrorist attack on a critical element of the energy infrastructure. They would have acted differently otherwise. Suffice it to mention the gripping story about the Ukrainian subversives who sailed to the would-be explosion site, deceiving the Western security services and bucketing water out of their sailboat, and managed to get down to the Nord Stream pipelines. This story clearly aims to divert suspicion from those who stand behind the attack on a key part of the energy infrastructure, which had immense economic and environmental consequences. Everyone seems to have forgotten

that the US President and his numerous officials said in February 2022 that there would no longer be a Nord Stream, they would bring an end to it. But Western Europe is not even allowed to consider an investigation, let alone conduct it.

They are not just diverting attention from the key issues but also mopping up the traces of that crime and creating a false picture of Russia's alleged involvement in it in the information space. By the rules of the genre, they will eventually announce the "culprits." They have used this scenario many times.

In this connection, the massacre in Bucha comes to mind. When Russian troops withdrew, the mayor said in an interview that all was quiet, all residents were fine, and there were no emergencies in the city. The concept changed a day later when the photographs of dead bodies lying in the streets were published. However, nobody has seen the lists of the dead to this day, neither international organisations, nor the Kiev regime, nor civil society, nor human rights agencies. We have even sent a request for the list to the UN Secretariat, and Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov raised the issue with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. There are still no lists.

Likewise, there was no objective investigation of the Skripal case. I remember the hue and cry raised by Theresa May in the Parliament, articles in the UK's yellow press, numerous shows on British television, the decision to expel Russian diplomats, and the photos of dead ducks in Salisbury. What I don't remember is what Scotland Yard said. It surely should have said something in all these years, no? No, it hasn't uttered a word. They often talk. They did it with the "poisoning" of Alexander Litvinenko and Alexey Navalny. All these performances were staged to put pressure on Russia, to explain why Russian diplomats had to be expelled and why bilateral and multilateral agreements should not be honoured, to convince the public not to attend Russian forums or invest in Russia, and not to act on their visa promises. In other words, they wanted to convince everyone to abandon full-scale cooperation with Russia. And they did this every time.

There is no proof, and there cannot be any proof of Russia's guilt. Despite their massive propaganda campaigns, the Western elite have not deceived their own public. Do you remember their hysterical reaction to the scandalous revelations made by American investigative journalist Seymour Hersh in February 2023? They fell silent, as if there was no journalist by the name of Hersh in the United States. They used to be proud of that Pulitzer-winning journalist, but now they act as if he doesn't exist, even though he is safe and sound and continues to publish his materials. After conducting a thorough analysis of the terrorist attack on the Nord Stream pipelines, Seymour Hersh

concluded that it was a secret operation of the US Navy and the Norwegian military. In March and June 2023, The Wall Street Journal reported that the Western intelligence services knew about Kiev's plans to blow up the pipelines. They surely did, because Joe Biden and Victoria Nuland said six months before the explosion that they would "bring an end to" that infrastructure project.

The German media openly say now, citing sources briefed on the progress of the investigation into the Nord Stream explosions, that all the evidence points to Kiev. I would like to add that money is being pumped there through the same channels. When the Skripal performance was staged, the blame was laid at Russia's door. Nearly all NATO countries and those who accepted their view expelled Russian diplomats. I wonder if Downing Street would have sent money to Russia after Britain's yellow press wrote that Russia was involved in everything associated with the Skripals? Just a stray thought. The German media write that all the evidence points to Kiev. Nord Stream was a project in which the Germans invested their money. Yet the German defence minister says that weapons and money should be sent to Ukraine. I don't understand the logic. It is notable that members of the Western political establishment share my view, although they will never admit this in public. Suffice it to recall what Henry Kissinger told Russian pranksters in July 2023.

A year after the events, it is perfectly clear that the authorities of the EU countries, mainly Germany, deliberately refuse to conduct an objective policy towards Russia. They have unmistakably demonstrated their inability and lack of any interest in identifying the real perpetrators of this terrorist attack, even though it occurred in an EU and NATO zone of responsibility, near their shores, and affected Europeans financially.

As a result of this weakness and stubborn unwillingness to uphold their own interests, the EU has lost even a theoretical chance for "strategic autonomy." The current authorities in Germany and nearly all the other EU countries have silently accepted the anti-Russia policy forced on them by the Anglo-Saxons. History has played an ironic joke on Germany, which always wanted to have colonies but has become a colony itself.

Russia will take this into account in its foreign policy planning and foreign economic relations. We will carry through with the investigation into the terrorist attack on the Nord Stream pipelines in September 2022. We will do our utmost, including within the framework of multilateral formats, to make the truth public.

One of the next steps is the September 26 briefing at the UN Security Council on the Nord Stream explosions. I would like to remind you that over the

past year Russia raised this issue at the UN Security Council more than once. The council held meetings on this issue at our initiative on February 21 and July 11, 2023. On March 27, the Western delegations blackballed the Russian draft resolution on establishing an international body to investigate the explosions. The West does not want to conduct an objective international investigation, which is why it blocked our draft resolution.

Joint statement by the OSCE on the elections in the new constituent entities of the Russian Federation

We have taken note of the joint press release (dated September 7) by the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Northern Macedonia Bujar Osmani, President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Pia Kauma, and Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights Matteo Mecacci, in which they condemned the elections of deputies to legislative and representative bodies of the local self-government in the new constituent entities of the Russian Federation: the Donetsk and Lugansk people's republics and the Zaporozhye and Kherson regions.

Statements like this are nothing new to us. Once again we note that the OSCE functionaries not only fail to understand the essence of their powers, as enshrined in the respective mandates adopted by consensus, but they also fail to even try to take an unbiased approach to assessing existing realities.

OSCE officials should not be making comments on the territorial structure of the Organisation's member states, but should finally establish a proper procedure for observing election processes, which should be based on rules agreed upon and approved by all the countries in the Organisation.

But if they consider it necessary, important and possible to comment on election processes within each state and cannot refrain from discussing the territorial structure of the member states of the Organisation, I am waiting for their joint press release on Kosovo and everything that is going on there: elections, negotiations, declarations of independence, autonomy and sovereignty. Let me remind you that the decision of the Kosovo authorities to become an independent state has no international legal grounds. It directly contradicts UN Security Council resolution 1244. I forget when the last time the Chairmanship, the OSCE governing bodies in office, the ODIHR directors, or the PACE presidents published anything on this subject. Kosovo is also in the midst of elections.

Russian-Armenian relations

On September 21, the Republic of Armenia celebrates its 22nd anniversary of independence. We are convinced that the development of multifaceted cooperation between Moscow and Yerevan is in the fundamental interests of the peoples of the two countries. We are in favour of deepening mutual understanding on the main issues on the bilateral and regional agendas, as well as strengthening foreign policy coordination both on international platforms and within the framework of common integration associations. We wish the citizens of allied Armenia, including its Foreign Ministry staff, strong health, prosperity and success.

The establishment of a new Russian diplomatic mission in this strategically important region of the Republic confirms the seriousness of our commitment to developing multifaceted and mutually beneficial ties with our CSTO ally, and to strengthen our humanitarian and socio-economic presence in the south of Armenia. In early September, an advance team of Russian diplomats arrived in its administrative centre, the town of Kapan, to prepare for the opening of the Consulate General.

With the establishment of the new mission, it will be easier to develop inter-regional contacts, and to consolidate educational and cultural interaction. Opportunities for local businesses to establish cooperation with Russian partners will expand. Russian citizens living in the region will have full and unhindered access to government services. Our staff has already started preparations for an open workshop on consular issues, where everyone will be able to receive comprehensive consultations on topics of interest to them. The place and time will be announced through the internet resources of the Russian Embassy in Yerevan.

Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine

We have taken note of the studies published on August 29, 2023, in the respectable American medical journal, *Frontiers in Immunology*, concerning the impact of the American-German Covid vaccine, Pfizer-BioNTech, on children's immunity.

The analysis of 30 samples, conducted by a team of Australian scientists, confirmed earlier findings that, compared to other vaccines, the Pfizer vaccine generates far fewer Covid-neutralising antibodies. This latest study established that the vaccine weakens children's immune system resulting in

immunodeficiency. The researchers also noted a high risk of other infectious diseases such as staphylococcus aureus, E. coli, tuberculosis, pneumonia, hepatitis B and Covid-19. There were also cases of brain tissue damage and a lower response to immunostimulants in children.

According to the report (by Western scientists, I should stress), the inhibiting effect persisted for the entire period of study, or six months. The scientists did not rule out lifelong immunity damage in the vaccinated children.

As a reminder, in 2021, a disappointing study was published concerning the effects of the Pfizer vaccine on seniors. The study found that less than one-third of senior study participants maintained full immunity to the new type of the coronavirus six months after vaccination. At the same time, only 50 percent of the participants who received one dose of the Pfizer vaccine had countable antibodies against the alpha and beta variants of Covid-19. The results in seniors with weaker immune systems were worse. The scientists found that these study participants developed even fewer antibodies than unvaccinated participants. Consequently, the vaccine produced a weakening effect on the immune system of senior recipients.

The findings released by the Russian Defence Ministry in April 2023 are also worth noting. It was found that, at the time of vaccine approval, Pfizer Inc. had tangible evidence confirming a higher risk of serious cardiovascular pathologies in vaccinated patients.

All this data indicates that the Pfizer vaccine was released with serious side effects through a collusion between manufacturers and government officials. The US medical community was also well aware of the vaccine's low efficiency that, for the reasons unknown, was never improved. Interestingly, White House advisor on Covid-19, immunologist and big Pfizer advocate Anthony Fauci, was unable to prove the benefits of vaccination as opposed to natural immunity. And yet, when it comes to the Western elite, commercial interests once again prevailed over protecting public health.

We have spoken about Pfizer's astronomical profits and hefty payoffs to the senior officials of the European Commission for giving the green light to mass vaccination in the EU and multi-billion dollar purchases of the US vaccine.

Restrictions on the Foreign Ministry's YouTube account

Last week, the Foreign Ministry's verified accounts were once again subjected to open censorship from American IT corporations as restrictions were

imposed on the ministry's YouTube account. A "warning" was issued to us, followed by removal of more than 20 videos, including 12 Foreign Ministry briefings. We have had similar experiences many times in the past.

This time, in addition to the briefings, videos of Sergey Lavrov speaking at the high-level meeting of the 49th Session of the UN Human Rights Council (March 1, 2022) and Sergey Lavrov's interviews with RT, NBC News, ABC News, ITN, France 24 and the PRC Media Corporation (March 3, 2022) were removed from the video hosting site.

Last time a similar incident occurred, we said that, in the event of other removals, we will impose restrictions on Western journalists. I promise they will follow and then, please don't ask what's wrong with US, British or EU media representatives whose accreditation or visas are delayed. With them, there is nothing wrong. There is something wrong with the people who practice this sort of manipulation. Normal journalists do journalism. And those who'd rather engage in information wars do everything to distort the media space. We know how to respond and we will do it.

My only question is, do the channels I mentioned know that their interviews were removed from YouTube? The most curious thing is that no reasons were given. We will notify the corporations that interviewed Foreign Minister Lavrov and that were censored for reasons unknown.

The YouTube content policies state that it is prohibited to post content to "encourage violence against individuals or groups" or "incite hatred against individuals or groups." It is also prohibited to post video content that "repeatedly targets, insults, and abuses individuals or groups."

In this context, all of CNN and the Ukrainian "megaphone" should be removed as they contain nothing but hatred. The BBC has posted many interviews, statements and reports saying what should be done to Russia and to Russians. To say nothing about German media outlets that are through and through hateful towards our country. And what about the words that the Kiev regime allows itself when it openly calls for "killing as many Russians as possible"? "Russia must be wiped off the map." "Ukraine hates you, Russians." These are official statements coming from Kiev and recorded on YouTube. Will they be removed?

Not a single Foreign Ministry briefing or interview by the Foreign Minister or other Foreign Ministry representatives contains words that even slightly imply hate speech. This is against our life philosophy.

All our videos are still available on the Foreign Ministry website in Russian and other languages. Our accounts on YouTube and other social media

continue to operate.

YouTube and its owner (Google) must stop purging the digital space from any alternative points of view, doing the political bidding of US intelligence services as part of their information war and hybrid aggression against Russia.

50th anniversary of independence of Guinea-Bissau

September 24 marks the 50th anniversary of independence of Guinea-Bissau. Diplomatic relations with this country were established on October 6, 1973.

Russia and Guinea-Bissau have traditionally enjoyed friendly relations. The two countries maintain a regular political dialogue, including at the high and highest levels. The delegation of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, led by President Umaro Sissoco Embaló, took part in the second Russia-Africa Summit (St Petersburg, July 27-28, 2023), on the sidelines of which he held talks with President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin.

Interparliamentary contacts are developing consistently. The delegation of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau led by President of the National People's Assembly (Parliament) Cipriano Cassamá took part in the second Russia-Africa International Parliamentary Conference (Moscow, March 19-21, 2023), during which he met with State Duma Speaker Vyacheslav Volodin. An agreement has been reached on the establishment of a Friendship Group between the parliaments of the two countries.

At the 77th session of the UN General Assembly, Guinea-Bissau as always supported Russian's draft resolutions on combating the glorification of Nazism, space issues and international cybersecurity, and abstained from voting on draft anti-Russian resolutions.

There is significant potential for the development of bilateral trade, economic and investment ties. In 2023, there has been an increased interest of Russian mining companies in the Guinean market. In April 2023, a delegation from RUSAL visited Guinea-Bissau to assess the prospects for developing bauxite deposits. In March 2023, Lukoil representatives visited Bissau to explore the possibility of participating in a project for hydrocarbon production on the local shelf.

Russian-Guinean cooperation in the field of education is steadily developing. Over 5,000 Guinean specialists have been trained at Soviet and Russian universities. Over the past five years, the quota of state scholarships allocated to the Republic of Guinea-Bissau has more than doubled. In the

2022/23 academic year, it amounted to 57 people, with another 15 Guinean students receiving the opportunity to study in Russia based on the results of university Olympiads. For the current 2023/24 academic year, it was decided to increase the quota for Guinea-Bissau to 75.

We are ready to continue fruitful multifaceted cooperation with Guinea-Bissau for the benefit of our nations and in the interests of maintaining peace and stability on the African continent.

We wish all people of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau peace, prosperity and health.

20th anniversary of the SCO Charter

The list of important events marked on September 19 includes the 20th anniversary of entry into force of the Charter of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation . Today the SCO has proven to be an independent, influential and reputable participant in the system of international relations.

The Charter lays the ideological and philosophical foundation of the SCO, its fundamental principles focused on equality, mutual consideration of interests, respect for each state's own development path, and openness to a joint search for the best mutually acceptable solutions. Using this innovative document as a guideline, the SCO makes a real contribution to building a new, fair multipolar world order, ensuring reliable security and sustainable development in the SCO space.

The growing number of the members convincingly proves the SCO's attractiveness and countries' growing interest in the work in this format. Today, the SCO has nine member states. Belarus is in its final stage of acquiring the status of a full member. The circle of SCO countries already includes 14 dialogue partners and two observers. The number of people wishing to join the SCO process continues to increase.

Russia regards the strengthening of the SCO and the development of multifaceted cooperation in this format as a key priority of its foreign policy.

Answers to media questions:

Question: President of Türkiye Recep Tayyip Erdogan said that he offered the leaders of Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia to hold a quadrilateral meeting on Nagorno Karabakh. What would be your comment regarding this initiative?

Maria Zakharova: We have seen comments on this topic in several media outlets, but have yet to receive an official communication from Türkiye to this effect. As usual, we maintain a close dialogue with Ankara on the international agenda in its various aspects, including the situation in the South Caucasus and the modalities for working together within the 3+3 Regional Advisory Platform.

Question: On September 15, 2023, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov attended a roundtable discussion on settling the Ukraine situation, during which he said: “The Vatican persists in its efforts, with its envoy planning another visit. We are ready to meet with and talk to anyone.” Could you specify whether there is an understanding on a specific framework for Cardinal Matteo Zuppi’s visit to Moscow?

Maria Zakharova: We view with all due respect the Holy See’s efforts to bring about a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Ukraine, and have been maintaining regular and constructive contacts with the Vatican since the start of the special military operation, as demonstrated, among other things, by Cardinal Matteo Zuppi’s recent visit to Moscow.

We have a tradition of maintaining an open and trust-based dialogue. In addition to this, we have substantially stepped up our bilateral humanitarian ties. Russia stands ready to continue working together with the Vatican along these lines, as well as to engage in further contacts with its representatives.

We will keep you updated once we get any specific information about this visit.

Question: Joe Biden intends to raise the issue reassessing the UN Security Council architecture. This was the statement by Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby ahead of the upcoming address by the President of the United States to the UN General Assembly. How timely do you think this proposal is and does the UN Security Council need a reform in today’s environment?

Maria Zakharova: Everyone has been talking about the UN Security Council reform for a while now, but it may well be that it is only now that President of the United States Joe Biden has learned how relevant this topic is. It is not for me to judge. This topic has been on the agenda for about a decade now, if not longer. The question remains: How should the Security Council be expanded or reformed?

Russia has articulated its position to this effect. This expansion or reform should not be undertaken just for the sake of the process, let alone result in

undermining the UN Security Council's work, considering that it regularly struggles to deliver even without any reform.

There has been much talk about the UN Security Council going through a crisis. We do not want it to be this way. What we want is to do everything to avoid this crisis. If we are to undertake a UN Security Council reform, its ultimate goal must be to make this essential body more effective and enable it to deliver on its mission as conceived by the founding fathers and in a way that reflects the new reality.

We have been constantly emphasising the need to reform the UN Security Council to make it better adapted to present-day reality. Since 2009, Russia has been a proactive contributor to the relevant intergovernmental talks in New York. During these specialised discussions, we reviewed the possible changes in all their aspects, including the categories within the Council membership, veto powers, the regional representation, the number of Security Council members and its rules of procedure, as well as relations between the Security Council and the General Assembly. Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov regularly speaks on this subject. You can go to the Foreign Ministry website, type "Security Council reform" into the search bar and find a plethora of detailed comments, background materials, interviews and statements to this effect.

We strongly believe in the need to expand the Security Council as the multipolar world order is taking shape and new centres of power emerge in the Global South, but only by adding developing African, Asian and Latin American countries, which have every right to play a bigger role in global affairs. In our view, India and Brazil stand out as natural candidates for becoming permanent UN Security Council members. We believe in the need to remedy the historical injustice committed against the African continent along the parameters coordinated by the Africans themselves.

As for expanding the Council by adding Western countries or those who fully associate themselves with the NATO-centric axis, regardless of their membership category, would not make this body more democratic and would not bring us any closer to building an international architecture with greater justice for all. I believe that this would prevent the UN Security Council from delivering on its purposes and objectives. With this in mind, we believe Germany's and Japan's ambitions to become permanent members of this body to be totally groundless.

We need to exercise extreme caution and make informed decisions when it comes to reforming the Security Council. The reputation of this key element in UN architecture is at stake here. Serious differences exist among nations

regarding the reform agenda in all its aspects, and we need to work diligently to examine and overcome them. The eventual reform model must enjoy the support from an overwhelming majority of member states, and it would be ideal for it to be approved by consensus. In fact, we must seek guidance from the UN's fundamental founding principles, which have been at the core of the United Nations since its establishment.

In the current international environment as we see it, we believe that the necessary conditions for taking concrete steps along this track have yet to emerge.

Question: Armenia and Azerbaijan will not sign a peace treaty at the 3rd European Political Community Summit in October in Granada, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said. What do you think can prevent the countries from reaching agreement?

Maria Zakharova: I have said it already. And it is being reiterated at every briefing, literally the same thing. There is a solid legal basis for the implementation of the agreements reached. Not just verbal agreements, but those fixed on paper.

It may be counterproductive to discuss the exact timing or specific parameters of the potential peace treaty and how it will be implemented and signed. It is important to fulfil everything that has already been agreed. The document should ensure a balance of interests between Azerbaijan and Armenia while working towards the main goal, namely, to establish a lasting and sustainable peace in the region.

Let's get back to the main thing. This can be done by implementing all the roadmaps that were agreed upon and documented, including on paper.

Question: NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg recently said: "We must prepare ourselves for a long war in Ukraine." That is, he does not believe the conflict will end any time soon. Indeed, more and more Western weapons are being supplied to Kiev. Washington may soon supply Ukraine with long-range missile systems with cluster munitions. At the same time, many countries are looking for opportunities for a political settlement of the conflict. Chinese Ambassador to Russia Zhang Hanhui recently called for talks again to avoid an escalation of the conflict. But the NATO Secretary General says "prepare for a long war." How can you comment on this?

Maria Zakharova: He said something that NATO members preferred to keep secret for a long time. To us, however, it was obvious and quite clear, as it was to many. What they really want is a protracted, long and painful crisis in the

region. This is similar to the so-called controlled chaos, which is the cornerstone of the Western foreign policy and international worldview. But the chaos that they planted has been out of control for decades. There were no signs of controlled chaos. When NATO members say “prepare for a protracted crisis,” they are being somewhat disingenuous. What they should have said is they are preparing a protracted crisis, because this is what they are doing. All the ingredients are on the table: arms supplies, sponsorship, political support, incitement to hatred, sanctions and illegal actions on all fronts. Jens Stoltenberg just called a spade a spade, only his wording should have been a little more precise. Not “the world should prepare for a protracted crisis,” but that NATO is preparing a protracted crisis in Ukraine.

Question: What is the Foreign Ministry's assessment of Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's statement that the Russian peacekeeping contingent has failed its mission in Nagorno-Karabakh?

Maria Zakharova: We have seen various statements by Yerevan. On October 7, 2020, Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan said, “Nagorno-Karabakh cannot and will never be part of Azerbaijan. This is ruled out, 100 percent.” And then he said something different. I think his new statement should be considered in the same vein.

We know what needs to be done to settle the situation. I repeat this from briefing to briefing. And every mediator who participates in the negotiation process from the Russian side keep saying that every agreement reached needs to be fulfilled, so as not to provoke a further escalation and work to calm things down and resolve the crisis, and everyone needs to be responsible in terms of fulfilling their obligations.

Question: Azerbaijan announced local anti-terrorist measures in Nagorno-Karabakh. Had Baku notified Moscow about this? How do you think these events will affect Russia's peacekeeping efforts in the region?

Maria Zakharova: First of all, we are currently in contact with the Azerbaijani side. Secondly, in the near future, the Foreign Ministry will make a statement based on the results.

As to being notified – we receive this information from the Azerbaijani side.

Question: Seoul has responded quite harshly to the recent visit of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un to the Russian Far East. In particular, President of South Korea Yoon Seok Yeol said in an interview with the Associated Press that military cooperation between North Korea and Russia

was illegal and wrong, since it contradicts UN Security Council resolutions and various international sanctions. There were also threats of retaliatory measures if Moscow and Pyongyang conclude deals on arms supplies and the transfer of missile technology. Would you comment on such statements by South Korean officials?

Maria Zakharova: I find them inappropriate and even not quite adequate. If Seoul has remembered about sanctions, as well as international law, then I would like to remind them that, first of all, South Korea must be responsible for its own actions in this area and not join illegal unilateral sanctions, in particular against Russia. This should not be done in relation to any country. But we are talking about Russia and its bilateral relations with South Korea.

We find this reaction too emotional. We urge Seoul to stop listening to various rumours and speculations. Rash decisions made on such a shaky basis may cause serious damage to relations between our countries, which are already going through difficult times due to Seoul joining the illegal anti-Russian sanctions and participating in the US policy of “extended containment” as part of a trilateral alliance with the United States and Japan.

We believe that the past summit, as well as all other contacts between Moscow and Pyongyang, not only do not escalate tensions on the Korean Peninsula, but, on the contrary, help to reduce it. Ultimately, this will serve Seoul’s own interests.

If there are any issues to clarify, or details to double-check, then, based on the diplomatic practice and theory, one does not need to grab a microphone or rely on articles in newspapers (there can be professional analysis there, but not in tabloids), but should work along the diplomatic line: develop contacts, maintain regular opportunities for dialogue, and communicate as diplomacy implies. Then there will be no omissions but an opportunity to receive information promptly; there will be an exchange of views and answers to questions of interest.

For our part, we are always ready for such work and equal dialogue, despite the differences in views and approaches. We are always ready to answer questions on a mutually respectful basis.

Question: After Ukraine’s recent strikes at Crimea, posts appeared on social media that these strikes, in particular on the shipyard in Sevastopol, were carried out with the British Storm Shadow cruise missiles. Do you have information that these were indeed British missiles? If so, what would be Moscow’s possible response to London?

Maria Zakharova: Let me begin with the second question. We respond to missile strikes with the use of force. This is the prerogative of the Russian Defence Ministry. I am not sure they will announce what they are planning to do in advance, but they do inform everyone afterwards.

The specific aspect of the use of foreign weapons supplied to the Kiev regime, including from Great Britain, will be checked with our military experts. You can do it too.

Question: Our colleagues from the New York Times reported that the strike on Konstantinovka in early September, something Ukraine blamed on Russia, was the result of an errant Ukrainian air defence missile fired by a Buk launch system. Can you comment on this?

Maria Zakharova: We can. A long comment is being drafted. We will definitely publish it in the near future once the experts have finished their work. It is a fascinating subject that has many aspects and a rich historical background. I think that most likely we will publish it today.

Question: Until recently, the big difference between US and Russian foreign policy was that America had a tendency to replace governments that opposed their influence with obedient puppets. So far, Russia has not done so.

However, modern Russia, like the Soviet Union before, is again active on the world stage, supporting not only Africa, but also countries such as Syria, Venezuela and Nicaragua in their struggle for sovereignty against Western influence. Can sober-minded citizens in Western Europe – especially in Germany – hope for more active support from Russia to throw off the yoke of Washington and its vassals in Berlin? At least half of the German population is dreaming about it.

Maria Zakharova: Foreign affairs aren't a football game, and should not be treated as such. As it is, many observers, as well as the public, people who are genuinely concerned about international relations – one gets the impression that they are watching a football cup, with some rooting for one team, and their opponents rooting for another. But this is not a game or an exciting show where one team wins and the other loses, but the next day, everything can start again and there will be another match. This is not a game. This is not just about the lives of people in some remote regions, or people the West historically saw as second-rate, like, for example, Eastern Slavs.

This is about our world. The lives of people participating in the open phase of the conflict in Ukraine have been put on the line, as well as the region's

food, radiological, bacteriological and biological security, given the number of biological laboratories the Americans have created in our region and around the world. It is about security, considering the vast areas contaminated with landmines, and also ideological and psychological security, given that Nazism, neo-Nazism, fascism, discrimination and xenophobia run rampant and are eagerly sponsored by the West. There is a whole set of aspects of security.

Do I need to mention environmental safety? We have already talked about this today: the Nord Stream pipelines were blown up, but this is almost routine in the West these days, so they continue as if nothing happened. There is also illegal mining of oil and natural resources in Syrian regions occupied by the Americans. What's going on there? What about environmental safety there?

It seems that the West has forgotten that counterterrorism was a sphere of cooperation. Terrorist and extremist cells are being used by the West to attack undesirable countries. What we are seeing now should not be discussed as a dramatic and exciting battle; it should be stressed that they are putting the fate of the planet on the line. No more and no less.

You're saying the US and Russian foreign policy are different because the Americans overthrow governments around the world and Russia has not done this so far, but now it would be great if our country started doing this. Well, we have not done so and we will not do so. I can only say that we have acted, are acting and will continue to act in exactly the opposite way. We are always on the side of the rule of law and legitimate governments. We proved it in Syria. It seems to me that the situation in that country has demonstrated our principled approach. We are not interested in enrichment or geopolitical redrawing; we support the preservation of the country's statehood based on the law, which documents the people's will in the legal framework. This is the basis of security, both regional and global. This is its most important component.

Ukraine. We have done so much to keep open the opportunity for a peaceful settlement by drafting the Minsk Agreements, which were later signed by many international parties, including as part of the UN Security Council resolution. They were never fulfilled. The West later said it was not going to implement them. And people continued to be killed, brutally and violently. When it became a regional and global threat, we launched the special military operation, but the basics remained the same that I spoke about.

If you expect us to become like the West, we will not do it. That would mean defeat. When you fight something you abhor, you can't start using the same methods as your adversary because that would make you as evil as them. That would be much worse than defeat. That would be a double defeat. So we

will remain who we are – we will uphold the rule of law and legality, and will strive for justice, protect people within the law, preserve historical memory and resist any alien destructive ideology imposed on us.

Question: Can the Foreign Ministry confirm that former commander of the Joint Group of Forces in the Special Military Operation Zone Sergey Surovikin took over as chief of the CIS Air Defence Coordination Committee? How can you comment on the rumours that he may lead a peacekeeping mission in the Sahel zone?

Maria Zakharova: Are you sure you are not confusing me with Igor Konashenkov? All these questions should be addressed to the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation. In accordance with the February 10, 1995 Agreement on the Establishment of CIS Air Defence Coordination Committee, the body reports to the Council of the CIS Defence Ministers.

Accordingly, current comments on its operation are the competence of the Defence Ministry. Everyone should do their job, to avoid discrepancies.

Question: What can you say about the parallel reopening of the Lachin and Agdam corridors? Does Russia intend to send humanitarian aid there in the near future?

Maria Zakharova: Yesterday we posted a comment saying that Russia continued to contribute to the resolution of a challenging humanitarian situation in Nagorno-Karabakh based on the Foreign Minister's initiative concerning the parallel reopening of the Lachin and Agdam routes for humanitarian transport. It said that on September 18, thanks to the efforts of the International Committee of the Red Cross with support from the Russian peacekeeping contingent and the Foreign Ministry, shipments of food and medicine were delivered to the region simultaneously from both directions.

It also said that we anticipate the continuation of regular unimpeded humanitarian shipments for the benefit of the local people. I can only confirm our position. We welcome humanitarian deliveries, and we will continue to act energetically to improve the humanitarian situation in the region.

Question: Can you comment on President Biden's intention to meet with the heads of state of the five Central Asian states? How might Moscow respond to that?

Maria Zakharova: We respect the sovereign right of states to develop cooperation with other countries. We are sincere about this, as we have proved over many years.

The only issue is that such cooperation should be beneficial and that it should not create additional tensions or new dividing lines. Regrettably, practice shows that the United States usually plays a destructive role. It has wonderfully positive intentions, which in practice have opposite results. Instead of mutually beneficial bilateral and multilateral cooperation, Washington creates dividing lines and tries to force independent states to choose between “us or them.” Look at the scenario which the United States has played out in interfering in the internal affairs of various states. It is trying to force a false and unnatural choice on them and to stage a set of foreign policy priorities that are not characteristic of the natural course of historical development in a given region.

In this case, we see an attempt to cut off Central Asian states from countries that have been their natural allies for geographical, historical and cultural reasons.

To be continued...



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