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**Transcript of Remarks and Response to Questions from Russian Media by
Sergey Lavrov, Russia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, after Meeting of CIS
Council of Foreign Ministers, Bishkek, October 9, 2008**

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Foreign Minister Lavrov: Naturally, the CIS Council of Foreign Ministers' meeting was primarily devoted to the preparations for tomorrow's CIS summit, where the heads of state will review the progress achieved in the implementation of their decisions. It is gratifying that a concrete, constructive and content-rich agenda has been outlined.

In the first place we discussed transport, the main theme of this year's CIS activities. To be submitted for consideration by the heads of state and the Council of Heads of Government, which will take place in November, are the priority areas of transport cooperation to 2020, which document has been endorsed by the Economic Council and is supported by all states.

In furtherance of the previous arrangement whereby we are to define on an annual basis within the CIS the key theme of interaction we also agreed on a recommendation for picking energy as such a theme for next year. In parallel one more tradition has taken root among us: to define in the framework of our cooperation a theme in the humanitarian sphere which will be given heightened attention because the possibility of our people to communicate, interact and cooperate in the fields of culture, education, science and sport depends on it. It is recommended to define youth as the main humanitarian theme for next year. This also coincides with our Russian realities, because the next year is designated in our country as the year of youth, and the theme of science and innovation is proposed in the humanitarian sphere for 2010. We hope that the heads of state will endorse these proposals.

We adopted another array of decisions to be submitted for consideration by the CIS summit. They concern improving coordination between border services, enhancing the monitoring of the biological, radiation and chemical situation in the Commonwealth countries, and increasing cooperation in countering the illicit traffic in arms, ammunition, explosive substances and devices.

Also endorsed were a number of other decisions, among which I will emphasize the accords directed to raise the efficiency and effectiveness in the work of the CIS bodies, including inventorying the juridical base, and optimizing the structures of the sectoral bodies. A draft of new procedural rules has been prepared, along with regulations for the chairmanship and for national coordinators. All this is done in

furtherance of the decisions that were taken when the heads of state last year approved the CIS Further Development Concept and the Plan of Implementation of this concept.

A technical decision was taken to terminate Georgia's membership in the CIS in accordance with its request. This termination will occur a year after the receipt of the respective application, that is in August 2009. It was decided to instruct the Executive Committee to take stock of the agreements under which Georgia still has some obligations to the Commonwealth of Independent States. Upon our proposal a formal technical decision was also made to terminate the activities of the Collective Peacekeeping Force in Abkhazia, which was set up in the past by decision of the CIS heads of state.

Such are in general outline the outcomes.

Question: How will Georgia's withdrawal affect the activities of the CIS?

Foreign Minister Lavrov: Withdrawal from the CIS is the sovereign right of a participating country. In this case one can only express regret that that decision was adopted, because all the countries benefit from participation in the CIS. Little is said about this, but in a whole series of practical spheres of life it is the citizens of our states that feel benefits from this in the first place. On the other hand, the participation of Georgia in the Commonwealth in recent years was not aimed at facilitating its consolidation but rather at eroding the CIS. Therefore I do not see any adverse implications for the activities of our common organization.

Question: A cooperation agreement has been signed between the UN and NATO. The signing of this agreement has caused a mixed reaction. How could you assess this move?

Foreign Minister Lavrov: Cooperation between the UN and regional organizations is a normal thing, even necessary. It is maintained on the basis of the Charter of the United Nations, which has the special Chapter 8 which explicitly states on what principles such cooperation should be based. Beginning with Kofi Annan, the UN has been regularly holding meetings with the participation of regional organizations, including the CIS and CSTO. We support such cooperation. The only thing we want is seeing it develop transparently and without causing any unnecessary questions in anyone. We knew that an agreement between the UN and NATO secretariats was being prepared. We presumed that before signing such an agreement its draft should be offered to member countries for familiarization. In this case this did not happen. The agreement between the secretariats was signed secretly. During the Ministerial Week at the General Assembly I had a meeting with UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and asked to know the reasons for that secrecy. I heard no intelligible explanations. This causes surprise. We were also surprised that the text of the agreement which, by the way, has not yet appeared on the UN and NATO websites, although, naturally, it is circulating in the UN circles, contains, despite the fact that its title speaks about cooperation between the two secretariats, provisions which concern

directly the prerogatives of member states. This, in particular, concerns the intention of the UN and NATO to cooperate in questions of the maintenance of international security not only on the basis of the UN Charter, but also on the basis of certain international directives. We put questions to the leaderships of the two secretariats about what this can mean. We are waiting for answers. But we most strictly warned our colleagues in the UN leadership that such things need to be done without keeping anything back from member countries and on the basis of the powers and within the scope of competence that the Secretariat has.

Question: Did the Ukrainian side hint that it might follow Georgia and free itself from participation in the CIS?

Foreign Minister Lavrov: No, there have been no statements indicating that Kyiv is considering withdrawal from the CIS. Moreover, the Ukrainian delegation participated very actively and energetically in the consideration of the draft procedural rules of the CIS, referring to the CIS Charter. Although Ukraine has not yet signed it, I conclude that Ukraine intends to intensify its participation in the work of the Commonwealth.

Question: Russia withdrew from the CIS regime of sanctions against Abkhazia. Do you think it necessary that the other CIS countries should also withdraw from the regime of these sanctions now, after the recognition of the independence of Abkhazia? Did you discuss at the Foreign Ministers Council the question of an embargo on arms supplies to Georgia? If yes, then did you find response from your colleagues?

Foreign Minister Lavrov: As to the economic sanctions that were imposed on state ties with Abkhazia in 1996, Russia did withdraw from this regime. This was done back in the spring of the present year. We did so because continuing the operation of these restrictive measures had lost all sense. It was now required to bring pressure to bear not upon Abkhazia to conduct the negotiations for settlement more actively, but upon Georgia which was sabotaging all the negotiation formats. This was also done taking into account the fact that the UN Security Council had more than once in the past endorsed the recommendations of the Secretary General which concerned the necessity of ceasing the measures economically and socially isolating the population of Abkhazia. We called on the other CIS countries back at the period when we ourselves made this decision to follow suit and give up the observance of economic sanctions against Abkhazia under state auspices. I expect that formally or de facto economic contacts between our CIS colleagues and Abkhazia, as well as South Ossetia, will continue.

In respect of arms supplies to Georgia it is absolutely clear in what way these arms are used and were used during the attack on South Ossetia. It is also absolutely clear that the statements of the present Georgian leaders attest to their intention to rearm themselves again and try to solve the problems they have by force of arms. On October 15 international discussions are beginning in Geneva on ways to ensure security in the region under the Medvedev-Sarkozy plan. In these discussions we will raise this question. As a first step we are convinced of the necessity of ceasing all

supplies of offensive arms to Georgia. Of course, we are talking about this with our CIS partners as well, drawing their attention to the dangers inherent in any contracts in this field with the Georgian leadership. It later turns all this towards the violation of international law, of the principle of the nonuse of force to settle disputes. But this question did not figure on the agenda of this CIS meeting.

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