

## **ADDRESS**

**by the Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Ireland Yuriy Filatov  
to the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defense  
December 17, 2020**

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished members of the Committee,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to begin by commending Chairman Flanagan for the initiative to have this sort of discussion with the foreign ambassadors present in Dublin. I am sure it provides for a wider view of the world affairs and is of mutual benefit to all of us.

Before we go into more specifics let me turn briefly to the basics – “The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation”, approved by President Putin in the end of 2016 and which is still in force. The Concept establishes that foreign policy activity of Russia shall be aimed at the following main objectives:

- to ensure national security, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Russia, and strengthen the rule of law and democratic institutions;
- to create favorable external environment that would allow Russia’s economy to grow steadily and become more competitive leading to higher standards of living and quality of life for our people;
- to consolidate the Russian Federation’s position as a center of influence in today’s world;
- to strengthen Russia’s position in global economic relations and prevent any discrimination against Russian goods, services and investments by using the options afforded by international and regional economic and financial organizations;
- to further promote the efforts to strengthen international peace, ensure global security and stability with a view to establishing a fair and democratic international system that addresses international issues on the basis of collective

decision-making, the rule of international law and UN Charter; to promote central and coordinating role of the UN as the key organization in charge of regulating international relations;

- to pursue neighborly relations with adjacent States, assist them in eliminating the existing and preventing the emergence of the new hotbeds of tension and conflicts on their territory;

- to promote, within bilateral and multilateral frameworks, mutually beneficial and equal partnerships with foreign countries, inter-State associations, international organizations, based on the principles of independence and sovereignty, pragmatism, transparency, predictability;

- to ensure comprehensive, effective protection of the rights and legitimate interests of Russian citizens and compatriots residing abroad.

One has to admit that the overall international environment in which we try to pursue these objectives is challenging. The world is running a high fever, as we can clearly see, and not entirely because of the pandemic. We have witnessed increasing conflict potential, rise of negativism, aggression, mistrust. The main destabilizing factor has been aggressive policy of a number of Western states, in particular the US, aimed at destroying the international legal framework of security and replacing international law with their own invention – the so-called “rules-based world order”. As a result, the lack of trust in global politics and the economy is being aggravated by methods of unfair competition, such as unilateral sanctions, protectionism and trade wars.

Our goal is clear. We seek stability, fair opportunities for all States. Gunboat diplomacy or “democratic messianism” (or any other messianism) is hardly an option if we want to accomplish this. I believe that more positive and sustainable results can be achieved through joining efforts based on the observance of the norms and principles of the UN Charter. We are upholding this consistently. President Putin’s initiative to hold a summit of the UN Security Council’s permanent members is part of this policy. Heads of all UN Security Council permanent member states gave their consent. The coronavirus pandemic thwarted our efforts to agree on

specific dates. However, we are working on it and agreeing on the concept and the potential outcomes of this summit.

Russia's proposals regarding strategic stability, arms control and European security are indicative of our constant readiness to achieve mutual understanding. You are aware of our position on renewing the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), a moratorium on deploying ground-based intermediate and shorter-range missiles and de-escalating tensions along the Russia-NATO contact line. We came up with a proposal to agree on an arrangement that the exercises on both sides are conducted at a distance from the contact line, and agree on the minimum distances that may not be violated by military aircraft and warships of Russia or NATO. Conceptually, we came up with a proposal a long time ago (and failed to see any reciprocity on the part of the United States) to confirm, in the statement made by our countries, and perhaps in the Russia-NATO format, the unacceptability of nuclear war. We believe that implementing these initiatives or, at least, a professional straight-to-the-point and substantive discussion of the subject, possibly along with other steps, would help to improve the overall atmosphere in Russia-West relations. Dialogue itself on these matters would improve it. However, so far these ideas have been hanging in the air.

The COVID-19 pandemic has severely affected the global economy and led to the worst recession since the Great Depression of the 1930s. This in turn caused decline in international trade, fallen commodity prices, disrupted supply chains, which became especially vulnerable in the face of global contagion. We believe that international trade is one of the key drivers of the global economic recovery, while COVID pandemic must not be used by countries as a pretext for protectionism and trade wars, which could be very damaging for international trade in the longer term. It is widely acknowledged that vaccines can be the very remedy that will pave the way to global economy recovery. In this regard, Russia makes an important contribution, providing safe and efficient vaccines. As you know, Russia was the first country to approve the first COVID-19 vaccine Sputnik V, which received its emergency use registration in full compliance with the Russian law. Mass

vaccination in Russia against coronavirus had already started. We need to address the pandemic jointly; there must be no place for biased, groundless and politicized approach with respect to vaccines development. We encourage international cooperation in this area, especially between producers. We welcome recent decision by AstraZeneca to carry out clinical trials using components of the Russian vaccine Sputnik V in order to increase its own vaccine's efficacy. Hope that Ireland will also be among countries cooperating with Russia on this very important issue.

Let's face it. We do not need interaction with the West any more than the West needs Russia. If our Western colleagues prefer to stick to certain rules and concepts that they themselves invented when they talk with each other, this is up to them. But we believe that a dialogue with other participants in international life, including Russia, can solely be based on a generally accepted code of conduct. You can call it the rules enshrined in the UN Charter, namely, respect for the sovereign equality of states, the principle of non-interference in each other's internal affairs and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

The recent settlement of the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh could be considered as an example of the above-mentioned approach. The November 9 agreement reached by the leaders of Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia stopped the bloodshed and paved the way for a long-term settlement. Due to the Agreement, thousands of internally displaced persons and refugees have returned to their households and secured conditions for the process of rebuilding of the economy and solution of the humanitarian problems. Now we can create real conditions to turn the region of the Southern Caucasus from the instability and internal tense contradictions into the place of stability and flourishing in the interests of all peoples living there and Russia will continue persistently support an advancement in this direction.

Russia will continue its efforts to step up international cooperation in fighting terrorism. We do not divide terrorists into good and bad ones. We act so in Syria by the request of the legitimate local government. At the same time Russia has always been a strong supporter of settling any conflict through a peaceful, inclusive political

dialogue paying special attention to settlement of humanitarian problems and aid to the victims of conflict. We contributed to efforts to overcome conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa, including in Libya and Yemen. The situation in the region could be greatly improved through the implementation of Russia's Collective Security Concept for the Persian Gulf Region.

This year the world celebrates three major anniversaries: the 75th anniversary of the Victory in World War II, the 75th Anniversary of the beginning of the Nurnberg Tribunal, the 75th anniversary of the UN. To make these anniversaries a reality my country had paid an incomprehensible price – more than 26 million of my compatriots became victims of that war. That is the reason Russia stands firmly in defense of truth in the WWII history, preserving the good reputation of victorious soldiers and preventing a revision of the internationally recognized results of the defeat of Nazism. Unfortunately, some EU politicians and even State leaders prefer to demonstrate weird shortness of memory accusing the Soviet Union of collaborating with Nazi Germany in unleashing WWII. It is not only morally unacceptable, it leads to a revision of the results of the war, and, therefore, of the existing world order based on international law. That is plainly dangerous. Let me give you an example. Every year since 2005, the UN adopts the Russian-sponsored resolution on combating the glorification of Nazism and preventing the revival of any form of xenophobia. Only the US and Ukraine vote against and the EU members prefer to abstain motivating their position with the necessity to uphold freedom of expression. If you consider former and neo-Nazi parades to be an expression of freedom of speech, do not be surprised that next day this freedom will knock at your door with a Nazi salute.

In recent years, relations between Russia and the European Union as a block have continued to deteriorate – and not through our fault. Unfortunately, the EU colleagues made a very shortsighted choice in favor of archaic geopolitical zero sum games, in favor of creating new dividing lines. This includes their support of the unconstitutional armed coup in Ukraine in 2014, the introduction of unilateral illegitimate sanctions against Russia and the destruction of the entire multi-level

system of the Russia-EU dialogue. As a result, our continent is facing a large-scale crisis of confidence and European businesses, including Irish businesses are suffering serious losses. It was the EU initiative to suspend many inter-industry formats and political dialogue; some promising projects were paused, including those aimed at building a common trade, economic and humanitarian space from Lisbon to Vladivostok. At the same time, Brussels tells us that any significant improvement in relations would depend on the implementation of the Minsk agreements on the settlement of the conflict in southeastern Ukraine, pretending that it is up to Russia to unblock the situation. Unfortunately, this artificial linkage persists to this day. That suits Ukrainian government, which ignores its obligations under the Minsk Package of Measures, not even trying to hide their interest in using the unsettled conflict to maintain sanctions pressure on Russia. The core of the settlement remains the same – the Kiev authorities have to come to terms with their own people living in Donbass, and that is the essence of the Minsk Agreements.

All said, I still believe that there is a better prospect for the EU-Russia relationship. President of the European Council Charles Michel initiated discussion within the Union on the pros and cons of the current approach to relations with Russia. We are looking at this process with a certain interest, although, frankly speaking, do not have any big expectations regarding it – the ideologically blinkered and inert thinking in relation to our country is too persistent in some EU states, even to the detriment of their own national interests. Still, there is a better way to live together, being part of Europe. Even today, we consider the EU as a potential participant in the Greater Eurasian Partnership concept proposed by President Putin. We believe this would benefit the European Union as well, combine regional integration potentials and facilitate European economic operators' access to Eurasian markets. We hope that a sober analysis of the multipolar world will eventually prompt the EU to rethink its obviously outdated approaches on the Russian track. For our part, we, as before, are always open to honest and mutually beneficial cooperation.

I would like to say a few words about Russian-Irish relations, which in many ways provide a good example of positive and constructive relationship based on mutual respect. We have been holding well under the COVID-19 conditions. Political dialogue has been going on between our Governments at various levels on many international and bilateral issues. It is an open dialogue – we exchange opinions and work together where we have similar positions. When we disagree, there is still readiness to listen and understand partner's point of view. That approach will be much needed with election of Ireland as a non-permanent member to the Security Council of the United Nations for 2021-2022. My country always highly valued the Irish commitments to the UN Charter. We know well about Irish devotion to the peacekeeping objectives in Africa and Middle East, Irish strong position in favor of peacebuilding and humanitarian assistance to less developed countries. Russia and Ireland have very close positions on the Middle East peace process and settlement of the regional conflicts based on the International Law through the inclusive political dialogue.

Our parliamentary cooperation is impressive and ongoing as witnessed by the re-establishment of the Friendship Group with Russia in the new Irish Parliament. The videoconference between Russian and Irish parliamentarians from friendship groups took place on November 25. Participants from both sides unanimously supported idea of continuing the interparliamentary ties as an important part of the entire complex of bilateral relations.

The Russian-Irish trade and economic relations have always been based on mutual interest and trust. Being the WTO member, we support the trade based on global rules and fair competition. In times, when our economies suffer from the “corona crisis”, international trade has become of paramount importance as it contributes to employment, economic activity and the speed of recovery from the pandemic. This year, as never before our bilateral trade has been impacted by negative global factors. According to the Russian statistics, in January – October of 2020 the value of our trade has decreased by 9% to 1.5 billion euros compared to the same period in 2019 (albeit at a less degree than with other EU countries). Our

countries have opportunities to change this situation. In this respect, I believe that the next session of the bilateral Joint Economic Commission, which is supposed to be held in Dublin, will contribute to further development of business ties and economic cooperation.

There is a strong cultural, humanitarian connection between Russia and Ireland and, as we fight back at the pandemic and things will gradually open up, there is a strong prospect of further expansion in this area.