

Sergey Lavrov: We have also discussed many key issues on the UN agenda, including on the agenda of the Security Council. This includes the situation in Syria, Libya, Afghanistan, and Yemen. We've also discussed the very complex issue of the Cyprus settlement. We fully share the United Nations Secretary General resolve this crisis through political and diplomatic means, including mediator efforts.

Secretary General's remarks at press encounter with Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov of the Russian Federation:

Spasibo Bolshoi.

I would like to thank Foreign Minister Lavrov for his invitation to visit Moscow, and for the warm hospitality extended to me and my delegation during our stay.

This visit takes place a few days after Victory Day, and I want to take profit of this occasion to express my deep congratulations to the Government and the people of the Russian Federation.

This visit is an opportunity for in-depth discussions with the Russian leadership on how to further strengthen the close partnership between the United Nations and the Russian Federation in all areas of the UN's work: peace and security; sustainable development including climate action; human rights; and of course the Covid-19 pandemic.

I took the opportunity to thank H.E. Minister Lavrov for the significant contributions of the Russian Federation to the work of the United Nations.

We exchanged views on a number of international and regional peace and security issues, including Syria, Libya, Afghanistan, Yemen and the dramatic escalation that we are witnessing in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, where de-escalation is an absolute must to protect the lives of civilians that are now dying in totally unacceptable circumstances. We also discussed other issues of mutual concern.

We discussed my call last year for a global ceasefire, which remains more relevant than ever. I believe in the urgent need to find political solutions to ongoing conflicts that are causing immense suffering, and in the importance of unfettered humanitarian access to reach all people in need.

As a founding member of the United Nations and a permanent member of the Security Council, the Russian Federation has always been a champion of the work of the Organization and of multilateralism. This is essential in the current complex international environment and in the face of unprecedented global challenges.

United Nations' Member States recognize the necessity of a multilateral system based on cooperation for the greater good. The ongoing pandemic and the existential threat by the climate emergency underscore the importance of global cooperation in even starker terms.

I thank the Russian Federation for its research and development efforts on COVID-19 vaccines, and its generous offer of vaccines for United Nations personnel.

The Russian Federation's commitment to multilateral efforts on the climate crisis, as set out by President Putin at the Leaders' Summit on Climate last month, is extremely important.

There is a growing global coalition for carbon neutrality by mid-century. More than 70 per cent of global emissions are already covered by that commitment, and we look to Russia to play its full part in the shift to green, sustainable energy – while recognizing the difficulties created by the present structure of the Russian economy, and its energy mix.

I urge the Russian leadership and government to come on board with more ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions before COP26 in November.

The United Nations stands ready to support Russia's efforts.

Looking forward, the General Assembly Declaration on the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations has created an impetus to work on revitalizing the global consensus, based on solidarity within and between societies. The report I will submit to the General Assembly in September is aimed at advancing dialogue among Member States on how to move this forward.

The United Nations needs to continue to adjust to the new realities, while ensuring that our efforts towards a more inclusive and networked multilateralism are anchored in the full and meaningful participation of women and youth, intergenerational justice, and the participation of those who still remain marginalized. Strong relationships with regional organizations and international financial institutions are essential. It will also be important to strengthen our links with civil society and the private sector.

At this time of growing global divisions, respect for international law and a commitment to dialogue are more important than ever to maintain international peace and security, protect the health, welfare and dignity of people around the world, and guide collective action.

Trust is an essential prerequisite for collective action, but it has been eroded by growing divisions. We must urgently rebuild it. I count on the leadership of our most influential Member States, through words and actions.

The United Nations supports greater engagement and cooperation among the permanent members of the Security Council in multilateral fora on issues of common interest. We advocate for a recommitment by all to multilateralism, the primacy of international law and the United Nations Charter.

The international community must come together to address the pressing current challenges, including first and foremost, the unprecedented challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In all these areas, the Russian Federation has an important role to play and the United Nations looks forward to our continued partnership.

Spasibo bolshoi!

Question: Israel for many years has not adhered to the UN resolutions. Can we talk about the fact that international law is not applicable to Israel considering the position of the United States, the closest ally of Tel Aviv and how we saw the Security Council just a couple of days ago could not even adopt a statement on the situation in eastern Jerusalem. Considering these factors, what instruments does the UN have to de-escalate the situation? And will Security Council members come up with a joint position at the emergency meeting today? Thank you.

SG: In relation to your question. It is obvious that international law applies to everybody without exception.

All Members States are supposed to abide by the resolutions, namely the resolutions by the Security Council, and obviously, the unity of the Security Council is an extremely important instrument in order to make impunity not prevailing. The unity of the Security Council is very important in relation to the Middle East and in relation to all the other crises that we are facing in the present moment all over the world. Be it Afghanistan or Libya or Syria, it's very important that more and more the members of Security Council come together in order for international law to prevail and everybody to abide by it.

We are totally committed to revitalizing the Quartet. We are totally committed to promote all forms of dialogue by the parties and by other key actors that can be supportive of all the measures necessary for de-escalation but also for the revitalization of the peace process that has been dormant for too much time.

The recent incidents demonstrate how important it is to restart effectively the peace process because it's the only way. I am a true believer that we need to promote the two-State solution living in peace and harmony between the two, and normalize the relations with the region and the full participation of the countries of the region and of the international community as a whole in creating the conditions for this peace process to move forward.

Question: You have criticized a lot the vaccine nationalism. So is there, my question is, is there any discussion worldwide of the possibility of all the major fabricants of vaccines suspend their rights in order to make, to distribute, the know-how to make the vaccine world worldwide and accessible and the sub-question under your estimation, what are the perspectives of the Russian vaccine to be approved by the European regulator? Thank you.

SG: First of all, it is totally unacceptable to live in a world in which developed countries can vaccinate most of its population while many developing countries have not have access to a single dose. And this is not only unfair it is also absurd because with the virus spreading like wildfire in different parts of the developing world the risk of mutations, the risk of new variants, is such that we risk to have a situation which the vaccines that exist today will no longer be effective.

So, it's in the interest of everybody that everybody is vaccinated everywhere. Now, we believe that we need two things to double the world capacity of production of vaccines and at the same time to have a more equitable distribution of the vaccines. I have appealed for the G20 to create an emergency task force to have a global vaccination plan in which all the countries have the capacity to produce vaccines or might have that capacity and linking of course with WHO, with Gavi, with CEPI [Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations], the pharma – the pharmaceutical industry – to create the conditions to allow for an effective and equitable vaccination program around the world.

That are important questions to address in this regard what is of course the question of licensing and this is an important discussion taking place in the WTO in that regard there is a question of technological support. It's not enough to have a license available to have the capacity producers. I mean many components have patents too. We need to make sure that things are safe so technological support to countries that can produce and to the entities that can produce is also very important. On the other hand, it's fundamental to support the COVAX, that is a mechanism that is in place that has still a huge financial gap and at the same time problems of supply. Now in this context, we would very much welcome the Sputnik being recognized by the WHO and I know that the process of dialogue is taking place. I'm very grateful for the fact that the Russian Federation has made available the Sputnik vaccine to UN staff. This is

something that shows a very strong commitment of solidarity that we ought to underline and we believe that the Sputnik is one of the key elements in being able to address this challenge. I believe Russian Federation has several agreements in perspective with other countries in this regard.

Question: Good afternoon. Mr Guterres using this opportunity, I would like to draw your attention to a situation in Latvia. In Latvia they continue to persecute journalists. That started in 2020 and those are journalists that work with the Russian media. This is a mass persecution. Criminal proceedings have been initiated against ten journalists. Their houses have been searched and the technical equipment and documents were taken now they cannot leave the country. Formally they are being accused of violating the sanctions regime, although they have nothing to do with sanctions. And those journalists have nothing to do with the sanction regime. This is a political persecution. This is my assessment of the situation. On the third of May on World Press Freedom Day, we sent a video message addressed to you from one of the journalists. So, please tell us are you aware of the situation in Latvia? Are you prepared to take the situation under your control and to call on the Latvian authorities to adhere to the founding documents of the UN for example the universal declaration of human rights, and call upon them not to hinder their free work of journalists in Latvia? Thank you.

SG: I am not aware of the details that you mentioned, but for me the principles are clear. And the principle that is clear is the principle of freedom of press and I consider the freedom of press is an essential instrument in relation to any modern society and it's an essential principle from the point of view of the respect of human rights.

The High Commissioner for Human Rights is as you know, quite active in this regard and of course if there are complaints presented by journalist in any part of the world in any country, I'm sure that the High Commissioner for Human Rights will take very seriously that complaint.

Question: I have a question for the Secretary-General. The blockade of Cuba by the United States has increased in recent years including during the coronavirus pandemic. And it continues during the new American Administrations. What is your opinion on the US policy on Cuba?

SG: I expressed clearly when COVID-19 appeared and when its dramatic social and economic consequences, having devastating impacts in different parts of the world, with terrible humanitarian consequences, I have appealed for a waiver in the sanctions that can undermine the capacity of States to respond effectively to the pandemic and to address the social and economic consequences of it.

This is a position that applies to all situations around the world in which this risk effectively exists”.
