

# Interview

## The Work Before Us

An Interview with His Excellency Sergey Viktorovich Lavrov,  
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Russian Federation



Sergey Viktorovich Lavrov

**EDITORS' NOTE** Sergey Viktorovich Lavrov graduated from the Moscow State Institute of International Relations at the Soviet Union's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1972. He began his career in the Soviet Embassy in Sri Lanka in the same year, and between 1976 and 1981 he worked at the Department of International Organizations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. From 1981 to 1988, he served as First Secretary, Councilor, and Second Councilor of the Soviet Union's Permanent Mission to the United Nations, and from 1988 to 1990, he was Deputy Head of the Department of International Economic Relations at Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Lavrov assumed the role of Director at the Department of International Organizations and Global Problems in 1990, a position he held until 1992, when he was appointed Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. From 1994 to 2004, he served as the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, and was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs by President Vladimir Putin in March 2004. The recipient of numerous state honors and awards, Lavrov holds the rank of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation.

**The Russian Federation is engaged with many other countries in the battle against global terrorism. You have been outspoken in calling for the international community to compile an official list of all terrorists and terrorist organizations. In what ways do you see Russia's role in this battle evolving in coming years?**

The decision on the preparation and submission of recommendations to the U.N. Security Council on practical measures to be imposed upon individuals, groups, or entities involved in, or associated with, terrorist activities was reflected in Resolution 1566 of the U.N. Security Council, adopted on October 8, 2004, on Russia's initiative. Unfortunately, today the sanctions regime agreed upon at the global level is only applied to those terrorists or terrorist organizations that are either members of Al-Qaeda or the Taliban movement, or are associated with them. What about other terrorist groupings and their participants? The time has come to work globally with a view to elaborating universal approaches to the definition of these individuals and entities as terrorist. This would constitute a serious step toward eliminating double standards in the fight against terrorism.

In accordance with our proposal, Resolution 1566 of the Security Council includes a provision asking for the compilation of a terrorist list within the United Nations, and the elaboration of a set of measures to be applied to those inscribed on it by each state. Today, this task has become ever more urgent. Many states are taking steps to have terrorist lists compiled at the level of regional organizations; some of them – such as the European Union – have already done so. This may lead to an unfortunate situation in which some regional associations will define a given individual or organization as terrorist, while others will not. In order to avoid such situations, and to continue to exert more pressure on terrorists worldwide and severely limit their possibilities to plan new acts of terrorism, Russia strongly advocates the elaboration of criteria to serve as a basis for defining certain indi-

viduals or organizations as terrorist through U.N. mechanisms and putting them on the corresponding list. This definition would imply that the organization or individual in question represents a terrorist threat to all countries, and that the United Nations should impose strict sanctions on them.

**President Putin has called upon your ministry to provide diplomatic support for Russian businesses endeavoring to secure contracts abroad. In what ways is your ministry promoting Russian companies in other countries, and what information about the expertise of certain Russian multinationals should our readers be aware of?**

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Russia ensures active diplomatic support for national businesses abroad. Our diplomatic missions monitor market conditions in their host countries on an ongoing basis, and collect and summarize information on promising areas of cooperation.

First of all, we provide assistance to major Russian companies with a public share, such as Gazprom, RAO EES Russia, Alrosa, and others. The specifics of the industries they represent, and their impact on national economic security necessitate close interaction with governmental bodies, as well as the coordination and joint facilitation of economic projects abroad. Lately, owing to the assistance of the ministry, the foreign investment activities of the Russian business community have significantly expanded. Successful investment projects implemented recently with diplomatic support include the purchase of U.S. enterprises by Lukoil, Severstal, and Norilsky Nickel, and of a metallurgical industrial complex in the Czech Republic by Eurazholding.

We support our companies' most promising projects abroad in the fields of engineering and high technology, including power engineering and nuclear power. In our view, the promotion of these projects brings Russia's economic cooperation with foreign partners to a qualitatively new, state-of-the-art level, and contributes to the development and diversification of our economy.

Close routine contact with major Russian economic operators and their associations – such as the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Russia, the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs, and others – allows us to keep our eye on safeguarding the external economic interests of domestic business community.

**Russia's accession to the World Trade Organization [WTO] should come, you've said, "soon and in a nondiscriminatory way, and any politicization of this question would have the most negative consequences." Could you elaborate?**

Accession to the WTO is one of our main foreign economic policy priorities. Russia is looking forward to an early WTO

accession on terms that are acceptable both to ourselves and to WTO members, and that reflect the level of our country's economic development. The accession talks are now in their final stage. Virtually everything has been done to harmonize Russian legislation with WTO standards. We have reached bilateral agreements on admission terms with most members of the working group.

Our accession to the WTO is important primarily because it will give Russian manufacturers and exporters an opportunity to work under the same rules as the rest of the international community. It will give us access to the dispute settlement system that has been very efficient within the WTO. What is also important is that Russia will thus be able to participate in the development of international trade rules.

At the same time, it should be borne in mind that after WTO accession, our country will have to facilitate the access of foreign goods and services to its domestic markets. The level of liberalization of relevant markets would be subject to negotiation.

I would like to emphasize that we are more concerned about the terms, rather than the actual dates, of accession. Russia's WTO commitments should reflect the current level of our country's economic development. However, some WTO members continue to impose requirements that seem to exceed the usual WTO standards. To give but one example, until recently the United States was pressing Russia to authorize the activities of direct branches of foreign financial institutions in its territory, even though the U.S. business community was not insistent on this point.

We believe that talks on Russia's WTO accession should not be used to test controversial ideas and concepts that do not enjoy consensus among WTO members. Our current objective is to work consistently with our partners to avoid delays in accession talks and to avoid the imposition of excessive or unacceptable admission requirements.

**"We have a huge amount of work before us – 2006 does not promise to be an easy year," you said recently, noting that this year, Russia will chair the G8, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization, and the Arctic Council. Given the number of contentious issues these councils and organizations are concerned with, could you highlight a few areas in which you see real potential for progress being made?**

During our presidency of the G8, we expect to make real progress along all agreed G8 work directions. We mean to intensify the work of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on such topics of European significance as the reinforcement of national mechanisms for the protection of human and



*The Minister at work*

national minority rights, and the establishment of a common European legal space for the protection of individuals against present-day challenges and threats, including terrorism and organized crime. The agreed priorities also include better enjoyment of social rights, the protection of vulnerable population groups, the development of efficient forms of democracy and civil society, and the introduction of good governance. Recent events add particular urgency to strengthening mutual understanding and tolerance, among other things, through inter-civilization dialogue.

We are intent on doing our best to ensure that the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization facilitates the implementation of a series of inter-governmental projects. This also refers to starting the development of elements for the Black Sea Energy Ring, the restoration of a regular passenger service between the Black Sea ports, and the improvement of regional transportation infrastructure as a whole, as well as its integration with European and Asian transportation routes. It is particularly important to develop a project for new ice-free waterway between the Caspian and the Black Seas, and to agree upon a concept for the coordinated development of express freeways along the Black Sea coast. Moreover, it is extremely important for us to increase interaction in the field of communication and information, emergency management, and combating organized crime.

The Russian chairmanship of the Arctic Council is focused on such aspects of joint action as the social and economic development of regions, the improvement of living standards among the indigenous peoples of the north, the environmental protection of the Arctic, natural resource management, and emergency prevention. We express our gratitude to our partners for their support for a series of projects we have proposed for the International Polar Year [2007 to 2008] and our initiative to convene the first conference on the cultural dimension of cooperation among the Arctic Council member countries. ●