

# **Statement by Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov at the Ministerial Meeting of the Arctic Council, Fairbanks, USA, May 11, 2017**

Mr Chairman, Mr Governor, colleagues,

I would like to express our appreciation for the hospitality of our American hosts and to congratulate them on their successful chairmanship of the Arctic Council.

Russia has been working hard to promote the development of the Arctic as a territory of peace, stability and cooperation. There is no potential for conflict here. International law is reliably protecting the national interests of the Arctic states, which bear special responsibility for long-term development in this region.

During a ministerial dinner yesterday, some of my colleagues raised the issue of security in the Arctic. I would like to remind you in this connection that the chiefs of general staff of the Arctic states met annually until 2013. These meetings were very useful for building trust and mutual understanding. Regrettably, they have been suspended for over three years now, but this did not happen at Russia's initiative.

As the largest Arctic state, Russia continues working to bolster the region's resistance to global challenges and to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development approved by the UN General Assembly.

It is obvious that cooperation cannot develop sustainably without the strengthening of its resource potential. In this context, I would like to highlight the importance of the Arctic Council Project Support Instrument, which provides the means for applying new technological solutions and implementing environmental initiatives, in particular, to reduce black carbon emissions and collect hazardous waste.

Although the Arctic is no longer a terra incognita, the region is still one of the least studied on the planet. The Agreement on Enhancing International Arctic Scientific Cooperation, which we signed today, will give a fresh impetus to the cooperation of researchers from the Arctic states.

The promotion of mutually beneficial economic ties is among our priorities. We welcome the launch of Arctic Council cooperation in the sphere of telecommunications. We propose using this to stimulate the work of the Arctic Economic Council and urge Finland, which is assuming the chairmanship of the Arctic Council, to draft practical proposals on this issue with due regard for the opinion of all members of the Arctic Council.

We invite our partners to contribute to the implementation of the Russian programme of Arctic economic development, which combines environmental protection and measures to improve the quality of life, culture and traditions of the indigenous peoples of the North.

We wish Finland every success as it takes over the chairmanship of the Arctic Council. Russia will provide all-round assistance to ensuring the efficient operation of the eight Arctic states. We are committed to creating more comfortable conditions for the work of representatives of the Russian indigenous peoples in the Arctic Council.

Thank you.