Remarks by
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Cooperation and Challenges in NATO-Russia Relationship

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished Members of the Association,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It's really a great pleasure and privilege for me to be here in Ottawa and to address this meeting.

I'm speaking before you right in the middle of a very impressive roster of participants who already have covered a great deal of ground related to our – Russia's – at times troublesome relationship with NATO. Let me try to give you a perspective of this relationship.

When I served in Washington, D.C. at first half of 2000s as DCM of our Embassy there was a common wisdom on the part of our American colleagues to send a warning signal to us on NATO-Russia relations. Look, they said, this relationship has somehow reached a kind of plateau, from where there are two ways to go – either to climb further up and reach new and more ambitious targets or – to downslide. Yet, as developments showed, neither of these two options has yet materialized.

If I now continue to use the same metaphor, we never were able to get visibly higher, but, on the other hand, we didn't fall down. But we explored that plateau, we managed to criss-cross it several times, to hike it around. And we learned where are the limits, where the borders of this plateau lie, where are places available for cooperative efforts and where the weak soil lies.

Definitely no breakthroughs were achieved since the time of the adoption of the very important declaration at Prattica-di-Mare, Italy, on May 28, 2002. But we established a new body – the NATO-Russia Council – where the allies and Russia participate on equal footing, perform individually (meaning by this that there is no need for NATO-members to "precook" their common positions, to caucus among themselves before issues are addressed in the framework of the NRC). Hand in hand with this consensus-based decision-making procedure (which is highly valued by us in Russia) goes common responsibility for

implementation of our decisions. And to my mind here lies one of the reasons why at times it is so difficult to bridge our differences and to conclude deals. Responsibility burdens. This is simply a factual statement on my part. I'm not going here to try to offer an answer to one of the two famous eternal questions of Russian literature – "Who is to blame?"

My point is a different one. NATO and Russia are truly difficult partners for each other. But notwithstanding this much has been achieved in recent years in very practical terms.

Let me give you some concrete examples.

- We work together quite effectively on the issues of counterterrorism. At ministerial level we agreed on a specific Action plan on counterterrorism. There are exchanges of relevant information, we conduct joint assessment of terrorist threats, jointly develop cooperative approaches on strengthening counterterrorist potentials of NATO and Russia, deal with the issue of managing consequences of terrorist attacks.

  It is already a standard practice of our Navy to send combat ships to Eastern Mediterranean to participate in NATO's counterterrorism operation "Active Endeavour".

- Development of joint response capabilities in cases of civil emergency, natural disasters, accidents of technical character with severe consequences is another promising area of our interaction.

- We value what I would call a growing culture of cooperation on such sensitive issues like airspace control and development of possible future Theatre Missile Defense.

- We continue to focus our efforts within the NATO-Russia Council on strengthening the interoperability of our forces with a view of their eventual participation in joint peacekeeping operations.

  One of the important steps in this direction was, of course, the recent ratification by Russia of the SOFA agreement. Instruments of ratification have already been transmitted to the Government of the United States. And the agreement formally entered into force for Russia on September 27.

- Now on Afghanistan. We do, of course, understand how important this issue is for Canada and Canadians. As it is for Russia and Russians. We have our own complicated and at times painful record of engagement in that country. Our position is very clear – we support ISAF's efforts to stabilize Afghanistan, to remove ground for resurgence of Al-Qaeda activities there. By no means is Russia interested in NATO's defeat in Afghanistan. This kind of negative development would mean a serious deterioration of security situation for Russia.

That's why we want to cooperate with NATO and NATO-led ISAF on Afghanistan. Specific requests by NATO for our assistance to ISAF are being processed by relevant Russian ministries and agencies. These requests should be compatible with our capabilities and requirements of Russian legislation.

One of the major issues is, of course, the issue of transit of loads for ISAF through the Russian territory and the territories of Central Asian States bordering Afghanistan. We have two bilateral agreements covering this area of cooperation – one with Germany and one with France. Parties are satisfied with their implementation. We carefully look into possibilities of concluding similar agreements with the USA and Spain.

Russia and ISAF work together and with good results in the area of transportation of oversized and heavy loads for the troops in Afghanistan. It is called SALIS-project. A Russian private air transport company "Volga-Dnepr" with its' fleet of huge "Antonov-124" aircraft (almost twice as big as American C-5A Galaxies) has already performed more than 215 flights and delivered 13,5 thousand metric tons of loads to ISAF. We are also working on deliveries of high-quality jet fuel for NATO-troops in Afghanistan.

Finally, a project which has become a trademark of our cooperation in the NRC is our joint Pilot project on counter-narcotics training of officers from Afghanistan and Central Asian countries at the training facility of Russian Ministry of Interior in the town of Domodedovo close to Moscow. 7 groups of students totaling 120 persons graduated from the comprehensive courses at this facility financed jointly by Russia, NATO and some partner countries. A week ago I went there for the ceremony of graduating one of these groups. Graduates looked and sounded great. And I can tell you how happy both their professors and managers were about providing this opportunity to the Afghanies and Centralasians. Now we are changing the character of this project from pilot into more permanent one.

One more thing to add to my presentation on cooperation with NATO on Afghanistan – a broader issue of establishing permanent and formal contacts between NATO and the Collective Security Treaty Organization – CSTO – comprising, apart from Russia, - Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Belarus and Uzbekistan. CSTO-countries regularly perform a very result-oriented counter-narcotics operation "Kanal" which means "Channel". Some of the allies participate in this operation as observers, others consider such a possibility. I believe that more interaction and dialogue between NATO and CSTO would be very helpful in terms of achieving very complicated objectives in Afghanistan.

Now on something different without which my tour d'horizon on our relationship with NATO would not be complete.

There are definitely great challenges and several problems related to a number of elements in NATO policies.

First, NATO transformation is far from being over. And we definitely see elements of this transformation that add to an image of the alliance as a global force, able and perhaps willing to act resolutely even at very remote theaters.

Second, we see NATO documents that are quite ambiguous on the crucial issue of the use of force. According to our conclusions and experience of the past, the Alliance is prepared to resort to force even in situations when this is not provided for in the UN charter (in response to the act of aggression or as otherwise authorized by the UN Security Council). Combined with the above-mentioned global ambitions of NATO this element may to my mind have a very destabilizing effect, especially, in tense situations.

Third, we see the rapidly changing military posture of the US in Europe and elsewhere. We do not want to be paranoid about it, but it is sufficient to have even a quick look at the map to see that the American military bases and other types of infrastructure move closer to our borders.

It is the case even for some very destabilizing ones like American ABM-sites in Poland and Czech Republic. We remember what happened when the former Soviet Union deployed missiles in Cuba in 1962. The Caribbean crisis with a real threat of outbreak of a global war is now part of our history. Make no mistake – this time there will be nothing similar. Russia and US, Russia and NATO are not enemies, and the Cold War is over.

But military planning is all about potentials and capabilities. If a capability is there, it can be used when current plans, intentions or policy lines change. We've been constantly told by the Americans that their so-called third site of ABM-system in Europe is of no threat to Russia. OK, taken. But then they should not consider our additional measures to diminish vulnerability of Russian strategic forces as running counter to their security interests.

Fourth, we are concerned about NATO's continued enlargement. Simply, it is a wrong way to go, since there are so many more effective ways and means to deal with real threats and risks to security. We have UN machinery, a lot of partnerships are available, we have all necessary experience in cooperating within different coalitions of the willing, etc. So why to enlarge NATO? Especially when this process in no way strengthens the security of old and new members, neither that of nations with no interest to become parties to the North Atlantic Treaty.

Mr. Chairman, my two latter points – on changing military posture and on NATO enlargement – lie behind well-known recent decisions of Russia regarding the future of the CFE-regime. We took steps towards moratorium on implementing the existing (that means unadapted) treaty because we were not able to further tolerate the absurd situation with no signs of NATO-countries moving towards ratification of the adapted treaty and with no will on the part of NATO to take into account our legitimate security interests. I would be prepared to dwell upon this more extensively during the eventual Q&A session.

I probably already exceed the limits of the time available for me. So to put it in a nutshell. For good and bad we move our relationship forward. Russia is committed to a cooperative approach to security. We believe that much more can and should be done by Russia and NATO together, making full use of the NRC. We cherish our common achievements and we see them as a solid and sound basis for the construction of a genuine partnership with NATO in the area of security. On the other hand, there are considerable troubles and sources for concern connected to our current agenda with NATO. Let's deal with them in a sober manner, systematically, with due respect to the interests of each other.

Thus we will be able to climb a mountain of challenges in front of us from a well-explored plateau where we stand now.

Thank you.