

**Speech of Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov at the eighth ministerial session of the Arctic Council, Kiruna, 15 May 2013**

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Dear Mr Chairman,

Dear colleagues, friends,

First of all, I would like to thank our Swedish hosts for their hospitality, good organization of the today's meeting and to congratulate Mr Carl Bildt with the results that were reached by the Arctic Council under Swedish chairmanship.

Today we sign the second in history legally binding panarctic document – Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic. This is another evidence of high responsibility of Arctic countries for the state of affairs in the region.

The next is the preparation of the Agreement on Marine Oil Spill Prevention.

I would like to say again that we do not avoid the discussion of the problem of black carbon, and we will fix the agreement to create a relevant target group in the Declaration of Kiruna we will adopt today. This issue requires focused and comprehensive study.

We welcome the results of the completed large-scale scientific projects of the Arctic Council accompanied by valuable recommendations. They help better understand the changes taking place in the Arctic region, to forecast the vector of their development and will be in demand when our countries will make decisions.

One of evident achievements of the Swedish chairmanship is a fruitful meeting of ecology ministers of our countries this February, the interaction in the line of military agencies that started last year.

The interest to the Arctic region is growing fast. We welcome observers who will become our members in this status in accordance with the criteria approved in Nuuk. Several applications will be reviewed at the next session of the Council.

The priorities of the starting Canadian chairmanship in the Council are close to us – development of resources of the North, the use of Arctic maritime transport route, support of inhabitants of the Arctic region. They are largely concordant with the Strategy of Development of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation and Ensuring National Security for the period till 2020.

I will note with satisfaction that all Arctic strategies adopted in member-states of the Council fix that national interests may be fully secured only through close cooperation with partners in the region. The changes taking place in the Arctic region bring not only common challenges to us, but also open new joint opportunities.

To that end, I would like to note a rather symbolic trip of senior officials of the Arctic Council to the North Pole this April together with the Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation Nikolai Patrushev and a well-known Russian polar explorer Artur Chilingarov. It is hard to overestimate the value for the history of the photos at the background of flags of our eight countries and the flag of the Arctic Council made by them.

I would like to invite dear colleagues and ministers to the third international Arctic Forum organized by the Russian Geographical Society in Salekhard on 24-25 September of this year.

We are convinced that all the issues not settled in the Arctic region – and their number reduces – will be resolved by the Arctic countries based on the existing and rather sufficient international and legal basis and, of course, good will.

The Arctic region is becoming an example for many others, unfortunately, less peaceful regions. We have no doubts that the future of the Arctic region will define notions like peace, sustainable development, close cooperation and strong Arctic Council. Let us work with this view.

Thank you for your kind attention.